

The analysis of using TikTok Affiliate to increase DTF printed t-shirt sales in Wifiprincess Small Enterprise

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of TikTok Affiliate in enhancing the sales of DTF printed t-shirts at Wifiprincess, a small fashion business in Indonesia. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the owner, an employee handling affiliate operations, and a customer, alongside participatory observations. The findings reveal that TikTok Affiliate significantly boosts sales through a cyclical process involving affiliate recruitment, negotiation, new product development, content promotion, and order conversions. The process aligns with the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), where affiliate content captures attention, builds interest, stimulates desire, and drives purchases. At the same time, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) highlights the dominance of the peripheral route in influencing consumer behaviour through visual appeal. Key indicators such as authentic content creation, trend responsiveness, and strategic affiliate collaboration were critical to success. Theoretically, this research enriches the application of AIDA and ELM in digital marketing contexts, particularly on short-video platforms. Practically, it offers actionable insights for small businesses to leverage TikTok Affiliate for cost-effective market expansion, emphasising the importance of authenticity and cultural relevance in content strategies.

Keywords: *Digital, Business, Transformation, Tiktok, Affiliate*

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a key element in modern life, influencing various aspects of consumer behaviour, including purchasing decisions. As a short video-sharing platform, TikTok has recorded significant global user growth. As of 2024, TikTok has more than 1.5 billion active users worldwide, making it one of the most popular social media platforms (DataReportal, 2024). TikTok is very popular in Indonesia, especially among the younger generation, making it a potential marketing tool. The TikTok Affiliate program allows content creators to promote products and earn sales commissions, making TikTok an entertainment medium and an effective marketplace. This research analyses how TikTok Affiliates can increase sales of screen-printed t-shirt products. The importance of this research lies in the need to understand optimal digital marketing strategies for local

businesses. (Zhang and Zhang, 2023) emphasised that short video platforms such as TikTok significantly influence consumer behaviour through attractive visual content.

Many social media platforms, including TikTok, have changed how small businesses reach their audiences. Wifiprincess, founded in 2020 in Blitar, is an SME that produces screen-printed t-shirts using the Direct-to-Film (DTF) technique, which allows printing high-quality designs with sharp details and bright colours. This business initially focused on offline sales, but since the COVID-19 pandemic, Wifiprincess has shifted to online marketing, including through the TikTok Shop. By utilising TikTok Affiliate, Wifiprincess collaborates with content creators to promote DTF screen-printed t-shirts through creative videos that highlight the unique design and quality of the product. Wifiprincess' internal data shows a 74% increase in sales after TikTok Shop resumes operations in December 2023, underscoring the platform's potential to increase visibility and sales.

Previous research shows that marketing via social media significantly impacts purchasing decisions. (Chen and Shen, 2023) found that influencer marketing, including affiliate programs, increases consumer trust and purchase intent through authentic content. This research highlights the importance of the relationship between influencers and audiences in shaping consumer behaviour. Additionally, (Wang & Li, 2022) conducted a systematic review of affiliate marketing in e-commerce and concluded that this strategy is effective in increasing sales, especially when involving influencers with relevant audiences. However, this research focuses more on traditional e-commerce platforms, leaving a gap to explore the effectiveness of short video-based TikTok affiliates. Other research by Kim & Ko (2020) shows that influencer support on social media can increase brand equity and consumer response, especially in the fashion industry. A gap in this literature is the lack of focus on specific fashion products such as screen-printed t-shirts, which have unique market dynamics. This research is relevant to fill this gap by analysing TikTok Affiliates in the context of screen-printed t-shirts. (Wang and Li, 2022) emphasize that affiliate marketing is an effective strategy for increasing sales in e-commerce.

TikTok Affiliate offers an innovative marketing approach by utilising content creators' creativity to promote products. This program allows affiliates to create engaging video content to influence audience purchasing decisions. In the case of Wifiprincess, using TikTok Affiliate increased sales by up to 74% after the TikTok Shop resumed operations in December 2023 (Wifiprincess data, 2024). This increase shows the great potential of short video-based marketing in attracting consumers. Screen-printed t-shirts, which rely on design and visual appeal, are perfect for promotion via TikTok, emphasising aesthetics and creativity. The success of this strategy depends on selecting the right affiliates, relevant content, and an audience that matches the target market. This research will analyse the process and impact of TikTok Affiliates in increasing sales of screen-printed t-shirts, providing valuable insights for SMEs in the fashion sector. (Haenlein and Libai, 2021) Emphasise that social media has transformed from entertainment into a powerful trading tool, supporting the relevance of this research in the context of digital marketing.

The research question in focus is: "How do you use TikTok Affiliate to increase sales of screen-printed t-shirt products?" This question arises from the need to understand the mechanisms and effectiveness of affiliate programs in local fashion businesses. This research focuses on Wifiprincess, an SME in Blitar that produces DTF screen-printed t-shirts and markets them online. With a qualitative approach, this research will analyse the marketing process, from selecting affiliates to their impact on sales. Data will be collected through interviews with Wifiprincess owners, employees, and customers, as well as an analysis of sales data and affiliate content. This approach provides a holistic understanding of TikTok Affiliate integration in marketing strategies. (Chen and Shen, 2023) stated that influencer marketing, including affiliate marketing, significantly shapes consumer purchase intentions, supporting the importance of this research question in competitive digital markets.

This research aims to understand how TikTok Affiliates can increase sales of screen-printed t-shirt products on Wifiprincess. Specifically, this research will identify the marketing process, affiliate selection criteria, and their impact on sales performance. This research also aims to analyse the supporting and inhibiting factors for the success of affiliate programs. This research will provide strategic recommendations for business actors by understanding these dynamics. This goal is relevant given the changes in how businesses interact with consumers through digital platforms like TikTok. This research will explore how content quality and affiliate audiences influence purchasing decisions. (Kim and Ko, 2020) confirmed that influencer support on social media increases brand equity and consumer response, supporting the importance of this goal for increasing local businesses' competitiveness.

The benefits of this research consist of both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research will enrich digital marketing literature, especially affiliate marketing on social media. The results can provide new insight into the effectiveness of TikTok Affiliates in increasing sales of fashion products. Practically, this research will guide SMEs in developing effective marketing strategies. For Balitar Islamic University, this research can promote institutions in the industrial world and support the development of business science. For readers, this research can inspire sales strategies via social media and increase understanding of online businesses. (Dwivedi et al., 2021) emphasise that digital marketing research needs to evolve to support business innovation, supporting the broad impact of this research for various stakeholders.

The limitations of this research were determined to focus the analysis so that it remains focused. This research only examines TikTok Affiliate in the context of selling screen-printed t-shirts on Wifiprincess, without discussing other platforms such as Shopee Affiliate. This research is limited to analysing two affiliates as a sample, which may not represent all Wifiprincess affiliates. Without in-depth quantitative analysis, the data focuses on interviews, observations and sales documentation. This limitation was implemented to ensure the depth of qualitative analysis. This research does not discuss production or logistics aspects, but only marketing strategies. (Li and Wang, 2022) confirmed that social

media marketing is effective for SMEs, but requires a clear focus, supporting the focused approach in this research.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the use of TikTok Affiliate in increasing sales of DTF screen-printed t-shirt products on Wifiprincess. A qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to explore social phenomena in real contexts through rich narratives and interpretations. The case study allows researchers to focus on one entity, namely Wifiprincess, to understand the dynamics of digital marketing holistically. This approach is relevant for uncovering affiliate programs' processes, interactions, and impacts in local business contexts. Thus, this research aims to produce in-depth insights into social media-based marketing strategies. Qualitative research with case studies supports detailed contextual analysis (Yin, 2014). Case studies are adequate for exploring phenomena within the limits of a specific context.

The primary data sources in this research are primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants and observations of marketing-related activities at Wifiprincess. Informants include Caca, owner of Wifiprincess, who provides insight into marketing strategy and decision making; Elvinda, employee in charge of the affiliate program, who shared operational experience; and Sandra, a customer who has purchased a DTF screen-printed t-shirt, who provides a consumer perspective. Apart from interviews, researchers observed marketing activities, such as creating affiliate content and interactions with customers on the TikTok platform. This combination of data sources allows for a thorough understanding of the TikTok Affiliate process and impact. (Creswell and Poth, 2018) Emphasised that using key informants and observations in qualitative research increases the richness of contextual data.

Research data is in the form of interview transcripts and observation notes, which are collected systematically. The interview transcript includes the informant's responses to questions about affiliate strategy, affiliate selection, and its impact on sales. Observation records include video content creation, interactions in the TikTok Shop, and customer responses. This data was organised to ensure accuracy and relevance to the research objectives. Using transcripts and observation notes allowed for in-depth analysis of emerging patterns and themes. (Braun and Clarke, 2006) Textual data, such as transcripts and observation notes, are a strong basis for systematic qualitative analysis. Data was collected through direct and indirect interviews, which included structured and unstructured formats and participant observation. Direct interviews with Caca and Elvinda were conducted face to face to gain in-depth insight, while indirect interviews with Sandra were conducted via an online platform for flexibility. Structured interviews use pre-arranged question guides, while unstructured interviews allow exploring topics that arise spontaneously. Participatory observation was carried out by observing marketing activities at Wifiprincess, such as the collaboration process with affiliates and interactions on TikTok. This approach ensures rich and contextual data. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015) Confirmed

that a combination of structured, unstructured interviews and participant observation increases the depth of qualitative data.

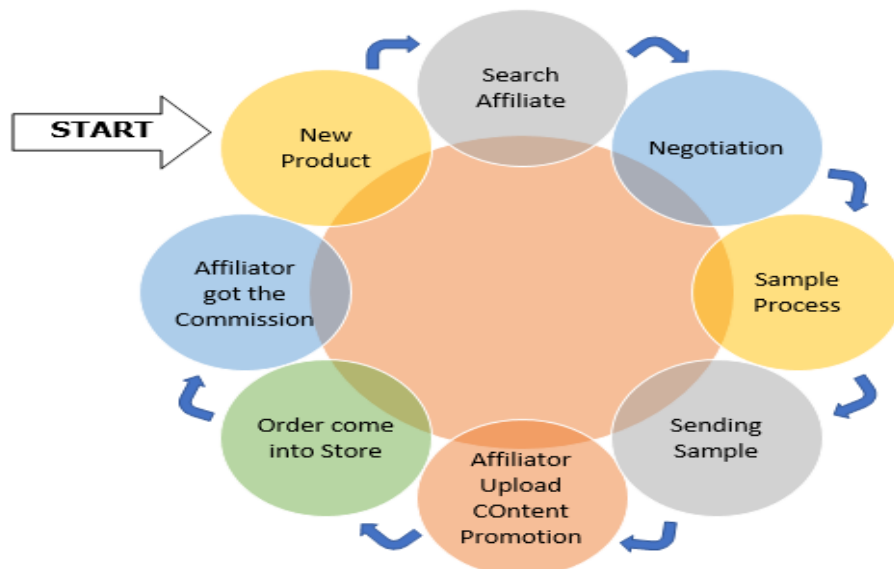
Data analysis in this research uses the Thematic Analysis (TA) approach developed by Braun & Clarke (2006). TA involves six stages: data introduction, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme naming, and report preparation. Data from interview transcripts and observation notes were analysed to identify patterns related to TikTok Affiliate use. This analysis is linked to the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model to understand how affiliate content attracts attention, builds interest, triggers desire, and drives purchases. Additionally, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is used to analyse how consumers process affiliate content via central (critical evaluation) or peripheral (visual appeal) pathways. TA's integration with AIDA and ELM enables a comprehensive understanding of marketing effectiveness. (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) explained that ELM is effective for analysing persuasion in marketing communications.

Data credibility testing was carried out through several strategies to ensure the validity of the findings. Observations were carried out over a more extended period to get a consistent picture of marketing activities at Wifiprincess. Expert validity is obtained through consultation with research supervisors who have expertise in the field of digital marketing. Data triangulation was carried out by comparing interview results, observation notes, and sales documents to verify the consistency of the findings. This approach minimises bias and increases confidence in research results. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) asserted that triangulation and expert validity are important strategies for ensuring credibility in qualitative research.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

The Flow Chart of Tiktok Affiliate Promotion Process in Wifiprincess



Source: Author 2025

This research reveals that using TikTok Affiliate significantly increases sales of DTF screen-printed t-shirt products on Wifiprincess through various stages, as illustrated in the diagram. Based on the transcript of an interview with Caca, owner of Wifiprincess, the strategy starts with looking for affiliates who suit the target market, where he stated, "We are looking for affiliates who understand local youth trends and have an active audience on TikTok" (Caca, Interview, April 10 2025). The researcher's observations also indicate that this process involves initial negotiations to determine the commission, consistent with the "Seeking Affiliate" and "Negotiation" circles in the diagram. This stage shows the important role of affiliate selection in building effective collaboration.

The following process involves affiliates receiving commissions based on their performance, which was confirmed by Elvinda, the employee who handles affiliates, with the statement, "We pay commissions based on orders that come in from affiliate links, usually 10-15% per sale" (Elvinda, Interview, April 12 2025). Observations show that affiliates actively promote products through creative content, such as videos featuring DTF screen-printed T-shirt designs, which align with the "Affiliator Receives Commission" and "Affiliator Uploads Promotional Content" circles in the diagram. The observation notes also noted an increase in engagement on TikTok Shop, especially after viral content, confirming the effectiveness of this strategy in capturing audience attention.

New product development is a key element in the TikTok Affiliate strategy, as Caca explained, "We often launch new products based on input from affiliates and trends on TikTok" (Caca, Interview, April 10 2025). The "New Products" circle in the diagram reflects this dynamic, where DTF screen-printed t-shirt designs are tailored to the preferences of a young audience. The researcher's observations show that this process involves selecting product samples sent to affiliates for promotion, according to the "Processing Sample" and "Sending Sample" circles. This increases product visibility and supports an influx of orders, as seen by the spike in orders following the launch of a new design.

Incoming orders are an indicator of the strategy's success, which is supported by Sandra, a Wifiprincess customer, who stated, "I bought this t-shirt after seeing the affiliate video on TikTok, the design is unique and the promo is interesting" (Sandra, Interview, April 15 2025). The "Inbound Orders" circle in the diagram reflects conversions due to effective promotional content. The researchers' observations also noted that direct interactions accelerated this process via live streaming features, where affiliates answered customer questions in real-time, increasing trust and encouraging purchases. Further analysis shows that affiliate promotional content increases sales and builds brand awareness. Elvinda noted, "Viral affiliate content makes the name Wifiprincess better known, especially among young people" (Elvinda, Interview, April 12 2025). Observations show that videos using TikTok challenges or popular hashtags amplify the viral effect, according to the "Affiliator Uploads Promotional Content" and "Send Samples" circles. This process creates a positive cycle in which sales increase, which motivates the development of new products, confirming the integration of the elements in the diagram.

Negotiations with affiliates also play an important role in determining the campaign's success, as Caca stated, "We negotiate with affiliates so that the content

matches our vision and sales targets" (Caca, Interview, April 10 2025). The "Negotiation" circle in the diagram reflects this stage, which involves discussions about commissions, content schedules, and outcome expectations. Researchers' observations show that good negotiations result in harmonious collaboration, improving the quality of promotional content. It is consistent with increased orders observed after successful negotiations with several well-known affiliates. Further observations show that sending product samples to affiliates is a strategic step to ensure authentic promotions. Elvinda stated, "We sent samples to affiliates so they could make realistic videos" (Elvinda, Interview, April 12 2025). The "Sending Sample" and "Processing Sample" circles in the diagram reflect this process, where affiliates use samples to demonstrate the quality of DTF screen-printed t-shirts. Observation notes show that videos with live product demonstrations increase customer trust, which is reflected in positive comments on TikTok Shop.

TikTok Affiliate's success is also driven by the affiliate's ability to process and upload engaging promotional content. Sandra noted, "Affiliator videos that use trendy songs and dance moves make me interested in buying" (Sandra, Interview, April 15, 2025). The "Affiliator Uploads Promotional Content" circle in the diagram shows that creative and trend-relevant content increases audience engagement. Researchers note that affiliates often utilise the duet or stitch feature to expand reach, contributing to increased incoming orders. Looking for the right affiliate continues as part of an ongoing strategy, as Caca admits, "We always update the list of new affiliates so we can reach a wider audience" (Caca, Interview, April 10 2025). The "Searching for Affiliates" circle in the diagram reflects this approach, which involves a data-driven search of the affiliate's performance and audience. Observations show that Wifiprincess regularly evaluates affiliates based on metrics such as views and conversions, which supports a long-term strategy to increase sales.

The research results confirm that TikTok Affiliate creates a dynamic cycle integrating affiliate search, negotiation, product development, promotion, and incoming orders. Elvinda concluded, "This cycle is running well because affiliates and we support each other for maximum results" (Elvinda, Interview, April 12 2025). The researcher's observations noted that close collaboration between Wifiprincess and affiliates, supported by TikTok Shop data analysis, was the main success factor, under the diagram's interrelated circle structure.

DISCUSSION

This research answers the question: "How do you use TikTok Affiliate to increase sales of DTF screen-printed t-shirt products on Wifiprincess?" The results show that TikTok Affiliate is effective through a cycle involving affiliate search, negotiation, product development, promotion, and conversion into incoming orders, which reflects the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model. Video content attracts attention (Attention) through DTF screen-printed t-shirt designs, builds interest (Interest) with local trend narratives, triggers desire (Desire) through authentic promotions, and encourages purchases (Action) via TikTok Shop links. The peripheral path dominates in the Elaboration

Likelihood Model (ELM) because short videos influence the audience through aesthetic appeal. (Zhang and Zhang, 2023) Support that short video platforms influence consumer behaviour through visual content. (Haenlein and Libai, 2021) Emphasise that social media has become a trading tool, supporting the role of TikTok, and add that interactive features such as live streaming strengthen trust, consistent with findings on Wifiprincess.

Affiliate search indicators show the importance of selecting affiliates with relevant audiences, as Wifiprincess does by focusing on young audiences who understand local trends. This aligns with the Attention stage in the AIDA model, where the right affiliates attract the target market's attention. In ELM, affiliates act as peripheral cues, increasing the attractiveness of the content through their credibility. (Lou and Yuan, 2019) stated that influencer credibility increases consumer trust.

Additionally, selecting influencers who suit the brand's audience increases the campaign's effectiveness. (Hughes et al., 2019) confirmed that audience engagement depends on influencer relevance, supporting Wifiprincess's selection strategy.

Negotiation indicators with affiliates show that harmonious collaboration improves the quality of promotional content. Wifiprincess negotiates commissions and content expectations, ensuring promotions match the brand vision, which supports the Interest stage in the AIDA model. In ELM, negotiation ensures the authenticity of the content, which is important for peripheral persuasion. (Wang and Li, 2022) State that affiliate marketing is effective when collaboration is based on trust. (Vrontis et al., 2021) Confirmed that content authenticity is the key to successful influencer marketing. (Kim and Lee, 2020) added that authentic emotional content increases engagement, which is consistent with the Wifiprincess approach. New product development indicators show Wifiprincess' responsiveness to TikTok trends, with DTF screen-printed t-shirt designs reflecting audience preferences. It reaches the Desire stage in the AIDA model, triggering purchase desire through relevant design. In ELM, new product visual elements strengthen peripheral channels, attracting a young audience. (Yang et al., 2022) stated that TikTok accelerates the spread of fashion trends through user content. (Song and Kim, 2022) emphasise that visual appeal is important in digital fashion marketing. (Park and Lee, 2020) added that products with local cultural elements increase competitiveness, supporting Wifiprincess's strategy.

Promotion indicators through affiliate content are the primary driver of increasing sales, with creative videos that take advantage of TikTok trends. In the AIDA model, this content spans the Attention to Action stages, with live streaming accelerating conversion. In ELM, emotional elements such as trending music and dance influence the audience through peripheral channels. (Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut, 2020) Emphasised that live streaming builds trust and engagement. (Nelson-Field et al., 2020) stated that emotional content increases viral spread. (Lee and Lee, 2021) added that content personalisation increases consumer response, supporting the effectiveness of Wifiprincess promotions. Incoming order indicators reflect the success of the TikTok Affiliate cycle, with conversions increasing following viral content and live streaming engagement. This corresponds to the Action stage in the AIDA model, where belief drives purchase. In ELM, the trustworthiness

of authentic content strengthens the peripheral pathway. (Park and Lee, 2020) emphasised that products with local cultural elements are highly competitive. (Chen and Shen, 2023) stated that influencer marketing shapes purchase intentions, supporting a surge in orders on Wifiprincess. (Tuten and Solomon, 2018) added that social media enables fast conversion, which is consistent with these findings.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in strengthening the AIDA and ELM models in the context of TikTok Affiliate. AIDA effectively depicts the consumer journey on short video platforms, while ELM explains the dominance of peripheral channels in young audiences. This research also enriches the affiliate marketing literature by focusing on local fashion products. (Dwivedi et al., 2021) Emphasise that digital marketing research must support innovation. (Haenlein and Libai, 2021) Added that social media has become a trading tool, supporting the relevance of this finding and stated that social media allows direct relationships with consumers, which is reinforced by this research. The practical implications of this research are relevant for SMEs in the fashion sector. Wifiprincess shows that TikTok Affiliate is cost-effective for increasing sales through collaboration with affiliates. Affiliate selection, negotiation, and responsiveness to trends are the keys to success. (Li and Wang, 2022) Support that social media marketing is effective for SMEs. (Tuten and Solomon, 2018) emphasised that social media provides flexibility for SMEs to compete. (Song and Kim, 2022) added that visual appeal is important in digital fashion marketing, supporting the Wifiprincess strategy.

Content authenticity is an important element in TikTok Affiliate marketing. Authentic and relevant videos to local trends increase engagement and trust, which is crucial for conversions. Authenticity strengthens peripheral persuasion in ELM, while the AIDA model shows the importance of structured content in encouraging purchases. (Hughes et al., 2019) confirmed that the authenticity of influencer content drives brand engagement. (Kim and Lee, 2020) stated that emotional content increases engagement. Nelson-Field et al. (2020) added that positive emotions in content accelerate viral spread, supporting Wifiprincess's strategy. This research offers strategic guidance for SMEs to utilise TikTok Affiliate to market local fashion products. This research provides an analytical framework for understanding digital marketing dynamics by integrating the AIDA and ELM models. This strategy can be replicated by similar businesses to increase competitiveness. (Dwivedi et al., 2021) emphasise the importance of innovation in digital marketing. (Song and Kim, 2022) highlight the role of visual appeal in fashion marketing. (Yang et al., 2022) support that TikTok accelerates the spread of trends, which is relevant to the findings in Wifiprincess.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that TikTok Affiliate is an effective strategy for enhancing the sales of DTF printed t-shirts at Wifiprincess, a small fashion business in Indonesia. The process involves a systematic cycle of affiliate recruitment, negotiation, new product development, content promotion, and order conversion, which aligns with the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). Affiliate content attracts attention through visually

appealing videos, builds interest by incorporating local trends, stimulates desire with authentic promotions, and drives action through seamless TikTok Shop integrations. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) further explains that the peripheral route, driven by visual and emotional appeal, dominates consumer decision-making in this context, particularly among younger audiences. The success of this strategy is evident in increased sales, improved brand visibility, and stronger consumer engagement, highlighting the potential of TikTok Affiliate for small businesses in the fashion industry.

The study also identifies key indicators contributing to this success, including carefully selecting affiliates with relevant audiences, effective negotiation to ensure content alignment, responsiveness to market trends through new product designs, and creating authentic and engaging promotional content. These findings underscore the importance of strategic collaboration and content authenticity in digital marketing, particularly on platforms like TikTok that thrive on short, visually engaging content. By leveraging local cultural elements in t-shirt designs and utilising TikTok's viral features, Wifiprincess demonstrates how small businesses can compete in a crowded digital marketplace.

For small businesses in the fashion sector, such as Wifiprincess, it is recommended to continue leveraging TikTok Affiliate by prioritising the selection of affiliates whose audiences align with the target market, particularly those with a strong understanding of local trends and youth culture. Businesses should focus on negotiating clear expectations with affiliates to ensure content authenticity and brand alignment, as this fosters trust and engagement among consumers. Additionally, maintaining responsiveness to market trends by regularly developing new DTF printed t-shirt designs can keep the brand relevant and appealing to TikTok's dynamic user base. To further enhance the effectiveness of TikTok Affiliate, Wifiprincess should invest in training affiliates to create high-quality, authentic content that incorporates trending elements such as popular music, challenges, or hashtags, while ensuring the content remains genuine and relatable. Utilising TikTok's analytics tools to monitor content performance and consumer engagement can help refine strategies and optimise future campaigns. Moreover, integrating interactive features like live streaming more frequently can strengthen consumer trust and drive conversions by facilitating real-time engagement.

For future research, exploring the long-term sustainability of TikTok Affiliate strategies for small businesses is recommended, particularly in terms of cost-effectiveness and scalability as the platform evolves. Comparative studies across different industries or platforms could provide deeper insights into the adaptability of this approach. Additionally, investigating the impact of affiliate marketing on customer retention and loyalty in the context of TikTok could further enrich the understanding of its broader implications for small businesses in the digital marketing landscape.

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