

# **AFFILIATION OR INNOVATION? A LITERATURE REVIEW ON YOUNG GENERATIONS' ECONOMIC PREFERENCES IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

**Ni Nengah Dwi Awantari**

Faculty Economy, Ganesha University of Education, Singaraja, Indonesia  
(dwi.awantari@student.undiksha.ac.id)

**Ni Made Anintia Trisna Sari**

Faculty Economy, Ganesha University of Education, Singaraja, Indonesia  
(nsari@undiksha.ac.id)

## **ABSTRACT**

Digital transformation has influenced the economic behavior of the young generation, particularly through the rise of digital product affiliation programs such as TikTok Affiliate. This study aims to analyze the tendency of young people to prefer affiliation over building independent businesses and to examine its implications for innovation and entrepreneurship. Affiliation programs provide instant income, flexibility, and low financial risk, making them highly attractive to youth. However, this trend raises concerns that the motivation to build independent businesses and pursue innovation may decline, which in the long run can weaken the entrepreneurial ecosystem. While previous studies have examined digital affiliation and entrepreneurship separately, limited research directly compares youth preferences between these two paths. This paper contributes by highlighting how affiliation and entrepreneurship interact and what this means for future innovation. This study applies a literature review method by synthesizing ten peer-reviewed journals published between 2022 and 2025. The journals were purposively selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency. Data were analyzed descriptively and comparatively to identify motivations, perceptions, and potential impacts of affiliation trends. The analysis shows that ease of access, flexibility, and minimal capital strongly drive youth to engage in digital product affiliation. Independent entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is perceived as riskier, requiring more capital and long-term commitment. As a result, affiliation dominates youth economic activities, but with the consequence of reducing entrepreneurial spirit and innovation. Affiliation provides short-term economic opportunities but may weaken long-term innovation if not balanced with entrepreneurship education. Collaboration among educational institutions, digital platforms, and policymakers is needed to ensure that instant income opportunities align with efforts to foster creativity and innovation among the young generation.

**Keywords:** digital product affiliation, young generation, tiktok affiliate, digital economy, innovation, entrepreneurship

## INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has reshaped various aspects of life, particularly the economic behavior of the young generation. One visible trend is the increasing interest in digital product affiliation programs, such as TikTok Affiliate, which allow young people to generate income quickly, flexibly, and with minimal risk. While this trend creates new opportunities, it also raises concerns about the declining motivation of young people to pursue independent entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship requires innovation, risk-taking, and long-term commitment, whereas affiliation focuses on promoting existing products for instant income. According to Schumpeter (1934), innovation a key driver of economic growth. If youth rely only on affiliation, the entrepreneurial ecosystem may lose future innovators.(Haribowo et al. 2025)

Indonesia still faces an imbalance between job seekers and employment opportunities. In this context, the digital economy should ideally function not only as a platform for instant earnings but also as a space for innovation and entrepreneurship. However, many young people perceive entrepreneurship as too risky and capital-intensive compared to affiliation. Based on this gap, this study focuses on analyzing the factors that drive young people to prefer digital product affiliation over building independent businesses, examining their perceptions of entrepreneurship in the digital economy, and identifying the potential impacts of this trend on innovation and youth entrepreneurship.

Based on the background above, the research problems in this study are as follows What factors drive young people to prefer digital product affiliation programs over building independent businesses? How do young people perceive independent entrepreneurship in the digital economy era? What are the potential impacts of digital product affiliation trends on the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship among young people?

The objectives of this study are to Analyze the factors driving young people's preference for digital product affiliation programs. Examine young people's perceptions of independent entrepreneurship in the digital economy era. Identify the potential impact of digital product affiliation trends on innovation and the youth entrepreneurship ecosystem.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Digital Economy and Youth Preferences

The digital economy has changed how young people participate in economic activities. Studies (Zaini et al., 2025; Winarti et al., 2022), show that economic motivation, time flexibility, and digital skills encourage students to engage not only as consumers but also as actors in the gig economy. While digital platforms provide opportunities for entrepreneurship, many youths use them primarily for affiliation programs, which promise faster and easier returns.

### Entrepreneurship and Innovation Theories

Entrepreneurship is strongly linked to innovation. Schumpeter (1934, in Haribowo et al., 2025) emphasizes that innovation drives market transformation and economic growth. However, youth entrepreneurial interest is shaped by readiness, creativity, and risk tolerance (Jefry and Lydiawati 2023; Ruswandi and Suciati 2023). These factors suggest that building independent businesses requires more than digital skills; it requires psychological resilience and motivation to innovate.

### Digital Product Affiliation Trends and Youth Behavior

Several studies highlight the rapid rise of digital affiliation. For example, (Brilianita and Sulistyowati 2023) found that TikTok Shop affiliation increases student interest due to convenience and

flexibility. Sugiyanto et al (2024) emphasize product variety and incentives, While, (Annisa and Apriyana 2025) show that product visuals and affiliate credibility trigger impulsive buying. Viral marketing and influencer credibility (Maghfiroh and Abadi 2025) and (Nurvianti and Hartiningtyas 2023) further reinforce affiliation trends among Gen Z. (Syihab 2025) also states that affiliation and influencer marketing greatly influence consumer behavior on TikTok.

### **Comparative Synthesis**

Overall, prior studies confirm that affiliation programs are attractive because of their low barriers and quick rewards, while entrepreneurship is seen as more challenging but offers innovation potential. However, there is still limited research that directly compares these two economic paths in the digital era. This gap highlights the importance of understanding how affiliation trends may affect the entrepreneurial spirit and innovation capacity of young people.

## **METHOD, DATA, AND ANALYSIS**

This study employed a literature review method to analyze youth economic preferences in the digital era. A total of ten peer-reviewed journals were selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: (1) published between 2022–2025 to ensure recency, (2) focused on topics related to digital product affiliation, youth entrepreneurship, and digital economy, (3) indexed in reputable databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and national accredited journals (Sinta), and (4) written in Indonesian or English. The limitation to ten journals was based on the principle of thematic saturation, where additional sources produced similar findings without adding new insights. Each source was evaluated for credibility by checking journal accreditation, peer-review process, and citation relevance.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and comparatively by identifying recurring patterns, differences, and relationships across previous studies. The results were then organized thematically according to the research objectives: (1) motivations for choosing digital product affiliation, (2) perceptions of independent entrepreneurship, and (3) the impact of affiliation trends on innovation and youth entrepreneurship.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to understand the tendency of young people to prefer digital product affiliation over building independent businesses, as well as to analyze its potential impact on innovation and youth entrepreneurship. Through a literature review of ten relevant scientific journals, a comprehensive overview of this phenomenon was obtained. The results of the literature synthesis are presented in Table 1. Table 1 summarizes ten relevant studies on youth affiliation and entrepreneurship. Based on this synthesis, the following discussion highlights common patterns, contradictions, and implications according to the research questions.

### **Patterns Across Studies**

The synthesis shows a consistent pattern that digital product affiliation attracts young people mainly because of convenience, time flexibility, and minimal financial risk (Brilianita and Sulistyowati 2023) found that the convenience of running TikTok Shop affiliation significantly increases students' interest in joining as affiliates (Brilianita and Sulistyowati 2023; Sugiyanto et al. 2024). These factors align with the lifestyle of today's youth, who prefer fast and adaptive ways to generate income in the digital economy.

Table 1. Synthesis of Relevant Literature Findings

No	Author(s) & Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to the Topic
1	Brilianita & Sulistyowati (2023)	TikTok Shop affiliation	Increases students' buying interest due to ease and flexibility	Explains youth interest in affiliation
2	Sugiyanto et al. (2024)	Product variety & affiliation incentives	Product variety and incentives increase participation	Identifies strong drivers for choosing affiliation
3	Annisa & Apriyana (2025)	TikTok Affiliate & impulsive buying	Product visuals & affiliate credibility encourage impulsive behavior	Impact of affiliation on fast-paced consumption patterns
4	Maghfiroh & Abadi (2025)	Viral marketing & affiliation pricing	Viral marketing and pricing influence Gen Z's buying interest	Role of viral marketing in affiliation trends
5	Nurvianti & Hartiningtyas (2023)	Online reviews & influencers	Combination of reviews, influencers & affiliation affects purchasing decisions	Affiliation as part of digital consumption ecosystem
6	Syihab (2025)	Affiliation & consumer behavior on TikTok	Affiliation & influencers significantly change consumption behavior	Confirms affiliation's role among young consumers
7	Zaini et al. (2025)	Gig economy & student preferences	Economic motivation, flexibility & digital skills encourage gig economy	Explains youth preference for instant income paths
8	Winarti et al. (2022)	Technology & student entrepreneurship	Digital technology opens opportunities for independent entrepreneurship	Potential for entrepreneurship through the digital economy
9	Jeffry & Lydiawati (2023)	Factors influencing Gen Z entrepreneurship	Locus of control, achievement needs & risk tolerance encourage entrepreneurship	Psychological factors influencing entrepreneurship
10	Ruswandi & Suciati (2023)	Creativity & social media entrepreneurship	Creativity & social media increase youth entrepreneurial interest	Potential for innovation & entrepreneurship among young people

### Contradictions and Tensions

However, the literature also reveals important tensions. While affiliation provides easy access to the digital economy, it often discourages entrepreneurial risk-taking. Some studies (Ruswandi and Suciati 2023; Winarti, Amelia, and Wahyuningsih 2022) emphasize that digital technology can empower innovation and independent businesses. On the other hand, others (Annisa and Apriyana 2025; Maghfiroh and Abadi 2025) highlight how affiliation practices stimulate impulsive consumption and dependence on existing products rather than innovation. This contradiction reflects the dual role of digital platforms as both enablers of opportunity and drivers of instant gratification.

### Implications for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support Schumpeter's (1934) argument that innovation is central to entrepreneurship and economic growth. If youth rely only on affiliation, the entrepreneurial ecosystem may risk producing more product promoters than innovators. Practically, this implies the need to strengthen entrepreneurship education and reposition digital platforms as spaces for creativity and innovation, not only for instant income generation.

## Discussion Summary

In summary, while digital product affiliation provides an accessible and low-barrier entry to economic participation, it may weaken the innovation capacity and entrepreneurial spirit of the young generation if left unbalanced. To address this, collaboration among educational institutions, digital platforms, and policymakers is required to ensure that instant economic opportunities coexist with long-term innovation and entrepreneurship development.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides theoretical, practical, and policy contributions to the discourse on youth economic preferences in the digital era. The study concludes that the growing interest of young people in digital product affiliation is mainly driven by convenience, flexibility, and minimal financial risk. While affiliation offers fast and accessible economic opportunities, it also reduces the interest and courage of young people to engage in independent entrepreneurship, which is often perceived as risky and capital-intensive.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the literature by comparing digital affiliation and entrepreneurship, showing how the dominance of affiliation may weaken the role of youth as future innovators. This insight highlights the relevance of revisiting classical innovation theory within the context of the digital economy. From a practical perspective, the results emphasize the role of educational institutions in strengthening entrepreneurship education and integrating digital platforms into curricula as tools to foster creativity and innovation. From a policy perspective, the study suggests the importance of designing youth entrepreneurship programs that balance short-term digital participation with long-term innovation, supported by incentives, training, and policy frameworks that encourage sustainable entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, digital affiliation and entrepreneurship should not be seen as opposing choices but as complementary paths. A balanced approach will enable the young generation to benefit from instant economic opportunities while still nurturing innovation and contributing to sustainable economic growth.

## IMPLICATION/LIMITATION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study carry important implications for the development of youth entrepreneurship in the digital economy era. Practically, the results show that digital affiliation can be a gateway for youth participation in economic activities, but it needs to be balanced with entrepreneurship education to prevent the decline of innovation capacity. Theoretically, this study contributes by mapping the intersection between affiliation and entrepreneurship, which has been rarely compared directly in the literature. For policymakers, the results highlight the urgency of designing youth empowerment programs that integrate digital skills training with innovation and risk management, so that young people are prepared not only as affiliates but also as innovators.

This study has several limitations. The analysis was limited to ten academic journals published between 2022 and 2025, which may not fully capture the complexity of youth preferences in the digital economy. In addition, the absence of primary data such as surveys or interviews restricts the ability to validate findings empirically.

Future research is suggested to expand the scope by including more diverse sources, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, and conducting comparative studies between youth engaged in affiliation programs and those who pursue independent entrepreneurship. Such studies would provide

a more comprehensive understanding of how digital affiliation trends affect innovation, creativity, and long-term entrepreneurial development.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author expresses gratitude to Ganesha University Of Education, especially the Faculty of Economics for the support and academic guidance provided throughout the preparation of this article. Appreciation is also extended to the supervising lecturer, classmates from 2B Economic Education, and the author's family, who have offered motivation, encouragement, and continuous support in the completion of this research.

## REFERENCES

- Annisa, F.N., & Apriyana, N. (2025). Pengaruh Fitur TikTok Affiliate Terhadap Pembelian Impulsif Pada Produk Fast Fashion *Jurnal Bisnis Mahasiswa* 5(2):578–87. <https://doi.org/10.60036/jbm.598>
- Brilianita, S., & Sulistyowati, R. (2023). Affiliate Marketing Terhadap Minat Beli Mahasiswa Di TikTok Shop. *JPEKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi, Manajemen Dan Keuangan* 7(2):157–67. doi:10.26740/jpeka.v7n2.p157-167.
- Haribowo, S. F., Wibowo, IG. J. F. S., Rahayu, W. P., & Winarno, A. (2025). Inovasi dan Kreativitas, Kunci dari Kesuksesan Kewirausahaan. *Profit: Jurnal Manajemen, Bisnis Dan Akuntansi*, 4(2), 127–137. <https://doi.org/10.58192/profit.v4i2.3207>.
- Jefry, & Lydiawati, S. (2023). Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Minat Berwirausaha Mahasiswa. *Indicators : Journal of Economic and Business* 2(1):217–23. doi:10.47729/indicators.v2i1.66.
- Maghfiroh, N., & Abadi, M. D. (2025). Pengaruh Marketing TikTok Affiliate, Kualitas Viral Marketing Dan Harga Terhadap Minat Beli Konsumen TikTok Shop (Studi Kasus Pada Gen Z Pengguna TikTok di Lamongan). *PARADOKS Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi*, 8(2), 1409–1420.
- Nurvianti, R., & Hartiningtyas, L. (2023). Pengaruh Online Customer Review, Influencer dan Affiliate Marekting Pada Media Sosial TikTok Terhadap Minat Beli Produk Fashion Mahasiswa. *Journal of Business, Management and Accounting*, 5(1), 443–456.
- Ruswandi, W., & Suciati, F. (2023). Menumbuhkembangkan Minat Wirausaha Generasi Muda Di Sukabumi Kota Melalui Kreatifitas Dan Penggunaan Media Sosial. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen, Ekonomi, & Akuntansi (MEA)*, 7(1), 770–781. <https://doi.org/10.31955/mea.v7i1.29233>.
- Sugiyanto, E., Yunita, L., Sari, J. D., & Adelia, M. (2024). Pengaruh Variasi Produk Dan Insentif Penjualan Terhadap Peningkatan Affiliate Marketing TikTok Shop (Studi Pada Generasi Z Pengguna Tiktok Di Kab. Tangerang). *Jurnal Manajemen Diversitas*, 4(1), 13–21.
- Syihab, B. H. (2025). Peran Penting Afiliatsidan Influencer dalam Mengubah Perilaku Konsumen Untuk Pemasaran Produk Di Era Digital: Perspektif Tiktok. *Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Dan Bisnis*, 6(1), 34–41.
- Winarti, A. L., & Wahyuningsih, Y. (2022). Membangun Jiwa Entrepreneurship Mahasiswa melalui Bisnis Teknologi Digital. *Journal of Education*, 5(1), 933–941.
- Zaini, M., Miladiyah, S. J., & Salim, A. (2025). Eksplorasi Faktor Pendorong Mahasiswa untuk Terlibat

dalam Aktivitas Ekonomi Berbasis Platform Digital (Gig Economy). *Balance: Jurnal Akuntansi Dan Manajemen*, 4(1), 322–331.