









Affiliate Marketing After AI

How AI and Creator Content are Reshaping Product Discovery

A Levanta Consumer Research Study
November 2025

Based on a survey of 1,000 US consumers ages 18-64

Table of Contents

	Executive Summary	2
	Section 1: AI Accelerates Research, Trusted Sources Drive Conversions	3
	Section 2: Creators Drive Discovery, Marketplaces Drive Sales	4
	Section 3: Human Sources Rank Above AI in Trust	5
	Section 4: Video Formats Dominate Consumer Attention	6
	Section 5: Affiliate Disclosure Doesn't Undermine Trust	8
	Section 6: Trust Drives Fast Purchase Decisions	9
	What This Means for Affiliate Marketing	10



Executive Summary

The rise of AI-powered search has sparked predictions about the end of affiliate marketing. We surveyed **1,000 US consumers** who actively shop online and use AI tools to understand how they actually discover and buy products today.

These findings reveal how product discovery, engagement, and ultimately conversion have shifted, and why affiliate marketing is, in fact, more relevant now than ever.



1,000 US Consumers
Surveyed in this Study

Key Findings

- Less than 10% of US online shoppers who use AI tools for product research report clicking AI-recommended links
- Nearly 87% see products on social platforms or blogs, then go to marketplaces to complete their purchase.
- Consumers trust marketplace reviews (93.3%), review sites (90.9%), and YouTube reviewers (85.9%) more than AI assistants (81.5%).
- While short-form video (53.2%) and YouTube reviews (35.7%) dominate attention, 78.1% of consumers are neutral or positive when creators disclose affiliate relationships.
- 62.3% purchase within 24 hours of discovering products through trusted content.



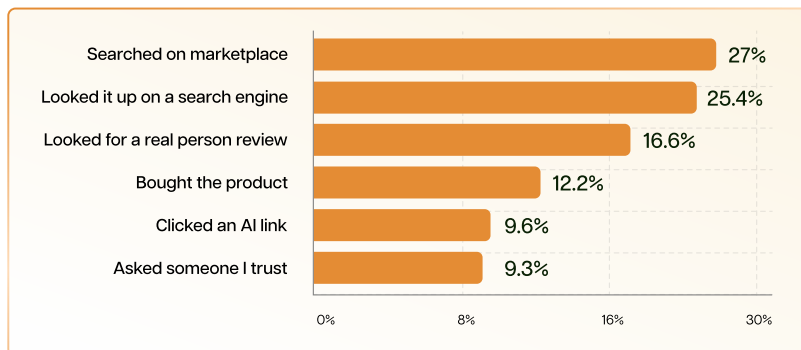
Affiliate marketing now serves dual purposes:
driving conversions and shaping how products appear in AI-driven discovery.

AI Accelerates Research, Trusted *Sources Drive Conversions*

Among consumers who use AI for product research, adoption is universal. Every respondent in our survey uses tools like ChatGPT, Perplexity, or Gemini to research products. These platforms have moved from experimental to mainstream in less than two years.

But adoption doesn't equal influence over purchase decisions.

After Using AI for Product Advice, What Did You Do Next?



After Using AI for Product Advice, *What Did You Do Next?*

When consumers use AI for product recommendations, only 9.6% click the link the tool provides. The remaining 89.4% take a different path: 27% go directly to marketplaces, 25.4% search on Google or Bing, and 16.6% seek out reviews from real people.

AI serves as a research accelerator. Consumers use these tools to quickly understand features, compare specifications, and narrow their options. But the final purchase decision requires validation from sources with firsthand experience: marketplace reviews from verified buyers, creator demonstrations, or editorial comparisons.

This creates a layered discovery model. AI handles the initial filtering. Human content provides the validation that drives conversion. When answer engines construct their recommendations, they draw from the same sources consumers turn to after using AI: review videos, editorial sites, community discussions, and marketplace feedback. Affiliate content influences both layers of this journey.

Brand takeaway

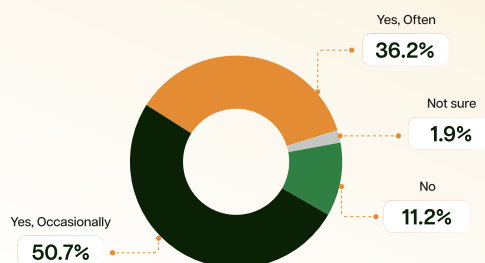
This shift reinforces that AI alone doesn't close the sale, people do. While AI tools streamline research, it's trusted human voices that validate the purchase. Brands that invest in authentic affiliate partnerships position themselves at the critical decision point between AI recommendations and real-world conversion.

Creators Drive Discovery, Marketplaces Drive Sales

Even as AI tools have achieved universal adoption for product research, the content-driven discovery path remains dominant. Nearly 87% of consumers discover products on social platforms, blogs, or community sites, then go to marketplaces like Amazon or Walmart to complete their purchase.

Consumers encounter products through creators and publishers on content platforms, then complete transactions on marketplaces that provide the often preferred infrastructure for checkout and fulfillment that increases the likelihood of conversion.

Have you seen a Product on Social/Blogs, then a Searched Marketplace to Buy?



Why Do You Buy on Marketplaces?



Note: Respondents could select more than one answer. Percentages represent the share of respondents who chose each reason for buying on marketplaces.

Marketplaces provide the infrastructure consumers need: better pricing (58.8%), free or fast shipping (54.5%), marketplace trust (40%), and aggregated customer reviews (35.2%), and 44.4% reported it is just easier.

Brand takeaway

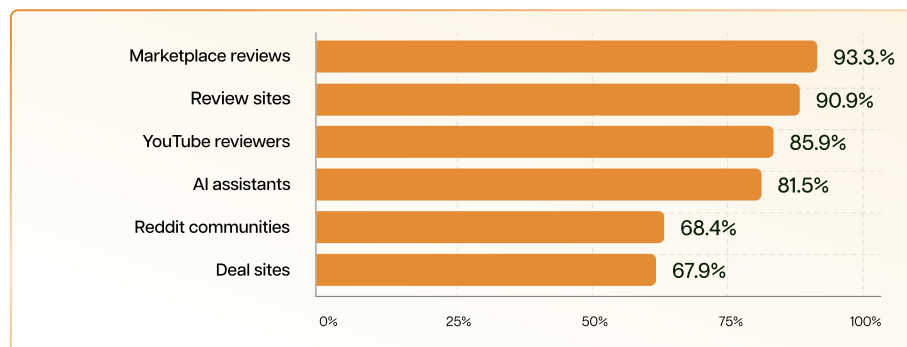
Discovery and conversion are no longer confined to a linear funnel. What used to be a clear top, middle, and bottom has become a set of scattered touchpoints. Affiliate programs bring structure to that path, guiding consumers from any entry point toward the marketplace where the conversion is tracked.

Human Sources Rank Above AI in Trust

Marketplace reviews rank highest at 93.3%, followed by review sites at 90.9% and YouTube reviewers at 85.9%. AI assistants earn 81.5% trust –high, but not the highest. Reddit communities (68.4%) and deal sites (67.9%) round out the list.

The trust hierarchy explains why consumers behave the way they do. Despite AI's universal adoption for research, consumers trust human sources more when making purchase decisions.

Which Sources Do You Trust Most for Product Recommendations?



Note: Respondents could select more than one source they trust for product recommendations, so total percentages exceeds 100%.

Human sources rank above AI because they offer firsthand experience. Marketplace reviews come from verified buyers. Editorial sites stake their reputation on recommendations. YouTube creators demonstrate products in real-world use. AI synthesizes information but lacks direct experience.

This validates the role of affiliate content. Quality reviews, creator demonstrations, and editorial comparisons drive purchase decisions because consumers trust them more than algorithmic recommendations. When answer engines like ChatGPT or Perplexity construct product recommendations they cite these same trusted sources, like YouTube reviews, editorial sites and community discussions, reinforcing rather than replacing their influence.

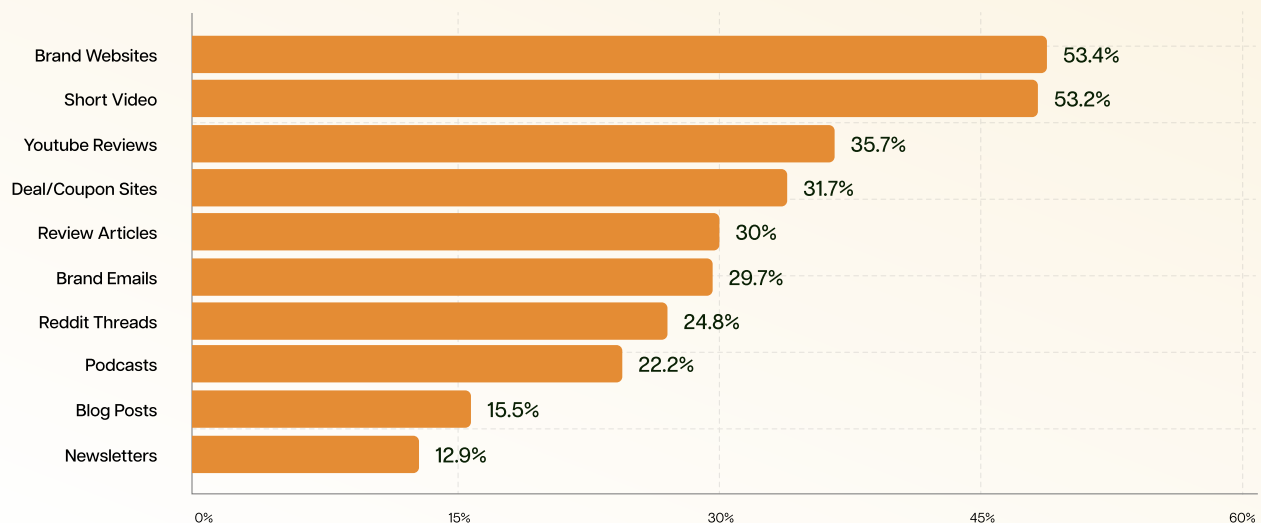
Brand takeaway

Despite the rise of AI, shoppers still overwhelmingly trust their peers. Credible reviews, creator videos, and community content continue to drive the majority of referral conversions. Not only do people rely on authentic affiliate content to validate their decisions, but AI systems also surface it as trusted input, amplifying its impact over time.

Video Formats Dominate *Consumer Attention*

Video-first formats dominate consumer attention for product content. Short videos on TikTok, Instagram Reels, or YouTube Shorts capture 53.2% of consumers, while long-form YouTube reviews engage 35.7%. Review articles reach 30%, and blog posts 15.5%.

What Types of Product Content Do You Regularly Check?



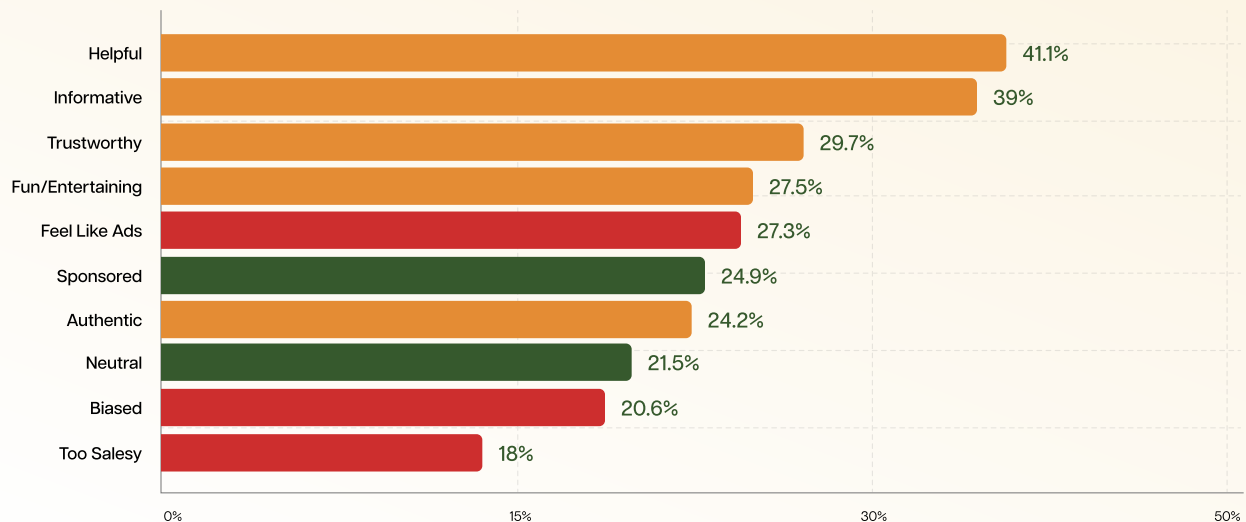
Note: Respondents could select more than one type of product content they regularly check, so total percentage exceeds 100%.

This attention shift toward video explains why creators drive discovery. Video formats allow demonstrations, real-world testing, and authentic reactions that text alone cannot convey.

Consumer sentiment validates why creator content works.

How Do You Feel About Content from Creators That Recommend Products?

Positive Sentiment
Neutral
Negative Sentiment



Note: Respondents could select more than one sentiment or perception about creator content, so total percentage exceeds 100%.

When asked how they feel about creator product recommendations, consumers overwhelmingly use positive descriptors: helpful (41.1%), informative (39%), and trustworthy (29.7%). Negative sentiment exists—feels like ads (27.3%) and biased (20.6%), but represents the minority.

Quality matters more than format. Consumers value authenticity and expertise whether it appears in a TikTok video, a YouTube review, or a detailed article. What drives trust is genuine experience and useful information, not the medium itself. This explains why affiliate content from credible creators continues to influence purchase decisions even as attention shifts toward video formats.

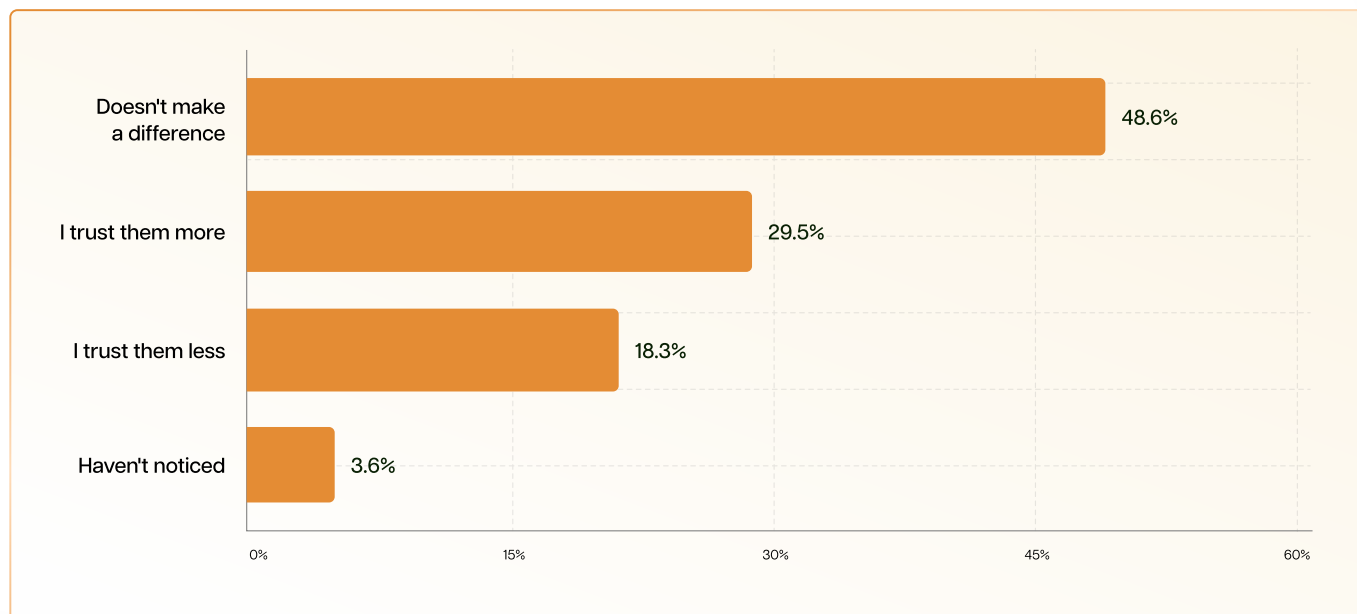
Brand takeaway

Imagine a footwear brand partnering with lifestyle creators who show how to style boots with seasonal outfits or pair sneakers with trending looks. This kind of video content not only displays products, but it demonstrates real-world use, building trust and driving faster conversions.

Affiliate Disclosure *Doesn't Undermine Trust*

Transparency about affiliate relationships doesn't undermine creator trust. When creators disclose they earn commissions through affiliate links, 78.1% of consumers are neutral or positive about it.

How Affiliate Disclosure Affects Your Trust



Nearly half (48.6%) say disclosure makes no difference to their trust. Another 29.5% actually trust creators more when they're transparent about earning commissions. Only 18.3% trust them less.

This validates the affiliate model. Sections 2 through 4 showed that creators drive discovery, earn consumer trust, and influence purchase decisions through video and authentic content. The business model behind that influence doesn't diminish its effectiveness when disclosed openly.

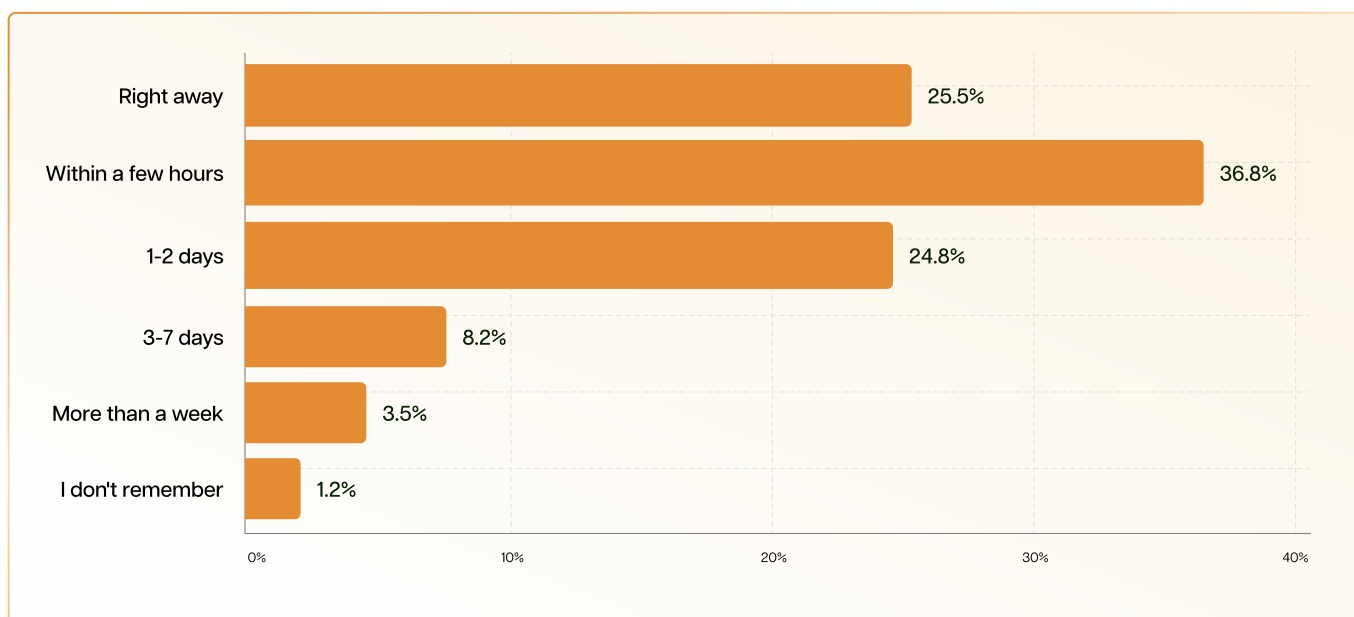
Brand takeaway

Consumers understand creators earn commissions, what matters is that their recommendations feel genuine. When creators are clear and upfront about partnerships, that transparency builds lasting trust between brands, creators, and their audiences.

Trust Drives Fast *Purchase Decisions*

62.3% of consumers purchase within 24 hours of discovering a product through trusted content. Another 24.8% buy within two days.

How Long After Discovering a Product Did You Buy It?



When consumers find products through sources they trust, they convert quickly. There's no lengthy deliberation or research paralysis. Trust eliminates hesitation.

This validates the findings from earlier sections. Creators and publishers who earn consumer trust through authentic content, demonstrations, and genuine recommendations drive immediate action. The majority of shoppers who encounter products through these trusted sources move to purchase within a single day.

Brand takeaway

Across every stage of discovery, trust determines speed. AI may guide research, but people will always drive decisions, and creators sit at the center of that influence. That trust-driven path is what delivers the fastest route from discovery to conversion, even if touchpoints are scattered.

What This Means for *Affiliate Marketing*

The data challenges the narrative that AI is killing affiliate marketing. Affiliate marketing isn't disappearing, it's evolving. It now operates at the center of modern commerce, bridging the vital but increasingly scattered path from discovery to conversion. The content that builds awareness and trust also fuels marketplace transactions. Success depends more on quality than reach, where genuine expertise, useful information, and transparent relationships drive speedy conversions. Those are the signals consumers respond to and the same ones AI systems amplify when shaping their recommendations.

Levanta was built for this era. Our platform connects brands with creators across the full discovery journey, recognizing that success in affiliate marketing requires presence where consumers actually discover, trust, and buy.

[Request a demo ↗](#)

About this *Study*



1000

US consumers

Sample Size



18-64

years old

Age Range



52%

Male

47%

Female

Gender Distribution



United States

(geographically distributed)

Geographic Scope

Screening *Criteria*

All respondents confirmed they:

- Shop online at least once per month
- Have used AI tools (ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, or similar) for product research

