Affiliate Marketing Myths Debunked

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There are a lot of misconceptions when it comes to affiliate marketing.

Many are old tropes that simply keep getting repeated despite being untrue.

Often these myths and falsehoods keep businesses that could benefit from the value of affiliate marketing from implementing it.

However, we want to set the record straight by debunking these affiliate myths and giving you the facts.

Don't let misinformation stop your brand from reaping the rewards that affiliate marketing brings to your marketing mix.

Growth & Industry Health

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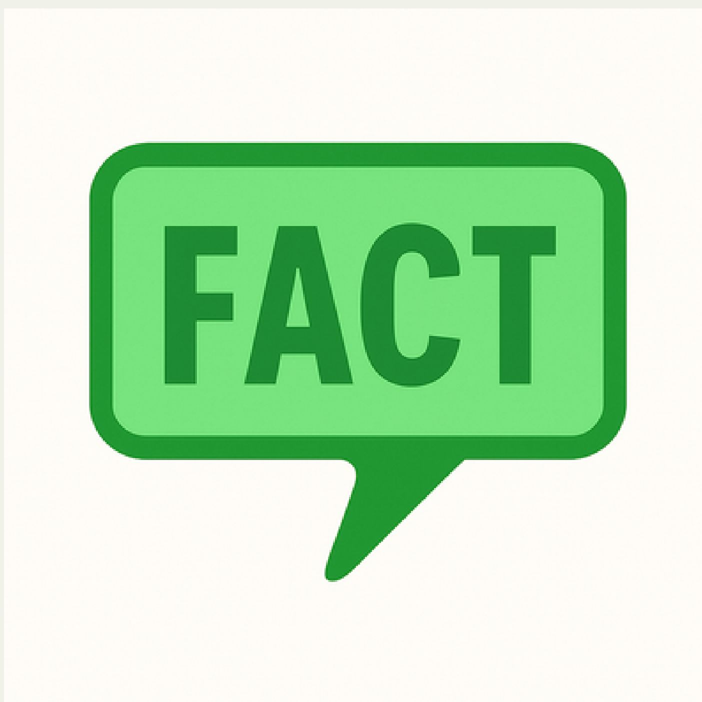
Affiliate marketing is dying.



It's actually growing. In the U.S. alone, spending hit $13.6B in 2024, driving $113B in online sales that's almost 10% of ecommerce. Return on ad spend (ROAS) averages 11:1. Forecasts show more growth ahead.

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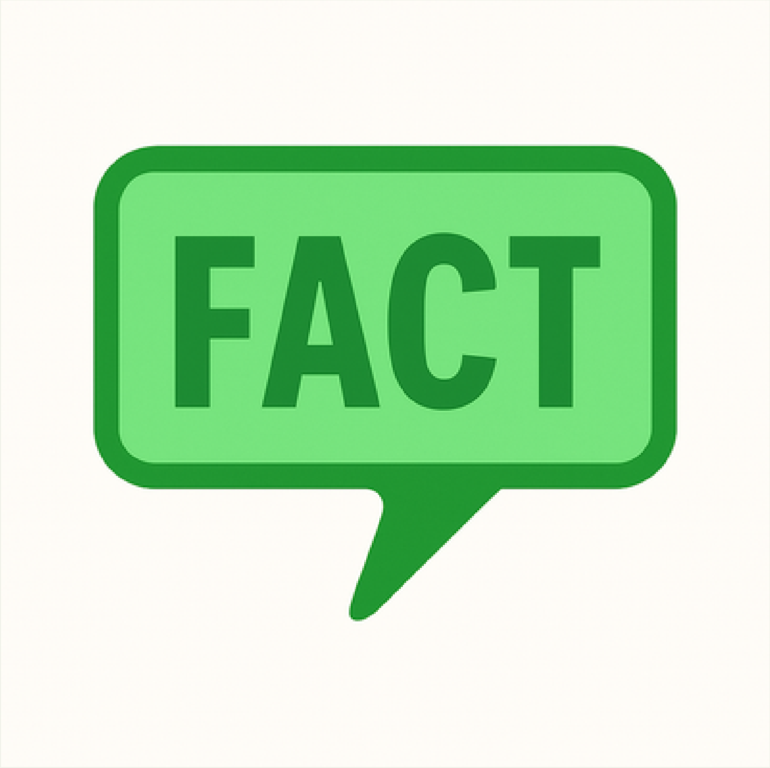
It only works for retail and ecommerce.



Travel, finance, and telecom are now some of the fastest-growing affiliate categories.

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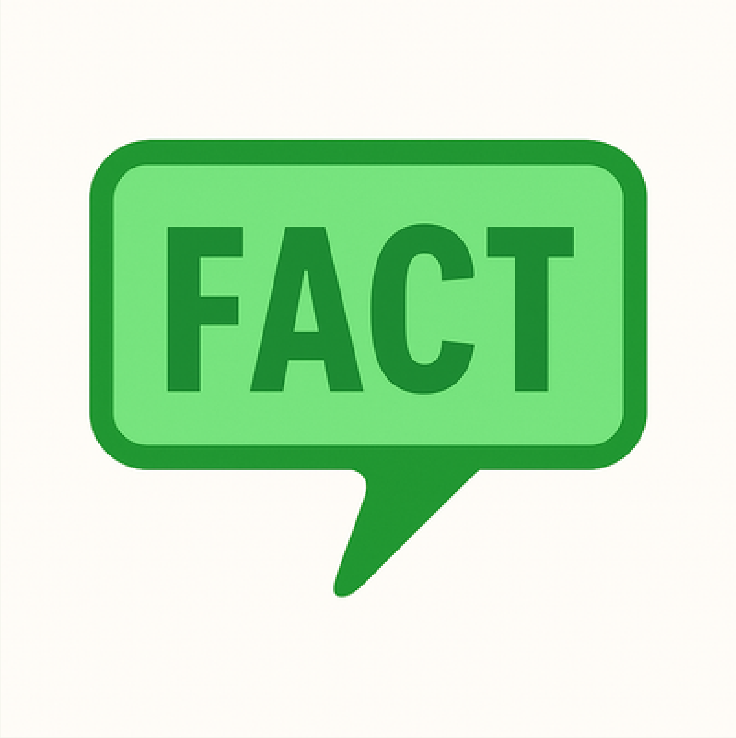
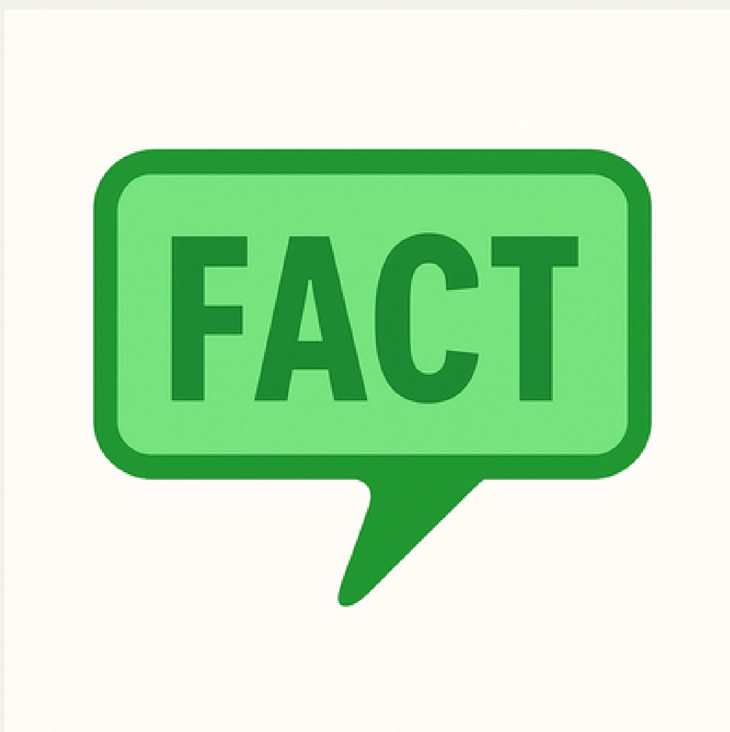
Market headwinds mean the channel is shrinking.



Despite tough economic times, brands are moving more money into affiliate marketing because it's lower-risk and performance-based.

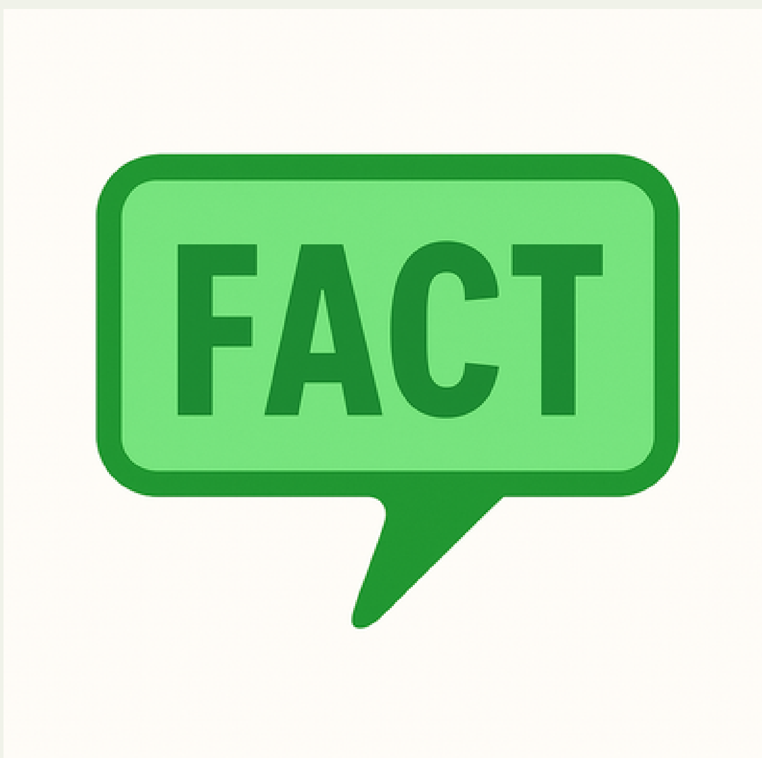
Amazon is the best or only option.



There are dozens of major networks, as well as in-house tracking alternatives, serving hundreds of tens of thousands of advertisers and millions of affiliates.

Getting Started

You need a huge budget to start.



Small businesses can start with self-serve platforms (such as MyAP) for just a few hundred dollars per month.

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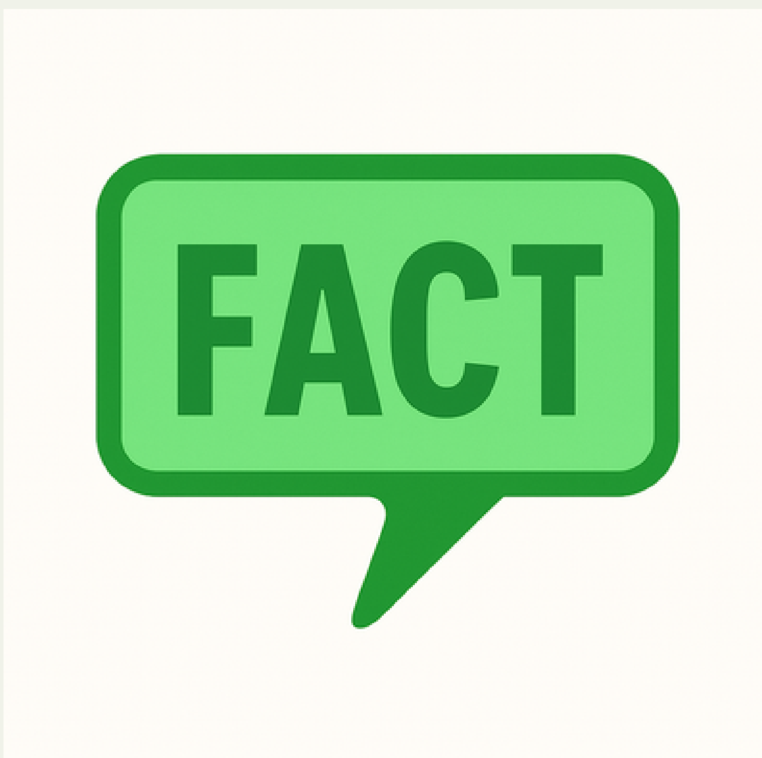
Running an in-house program is impossible without an agency.



Tools like MyAp let brands manage programs in-house with dashboards and automation.

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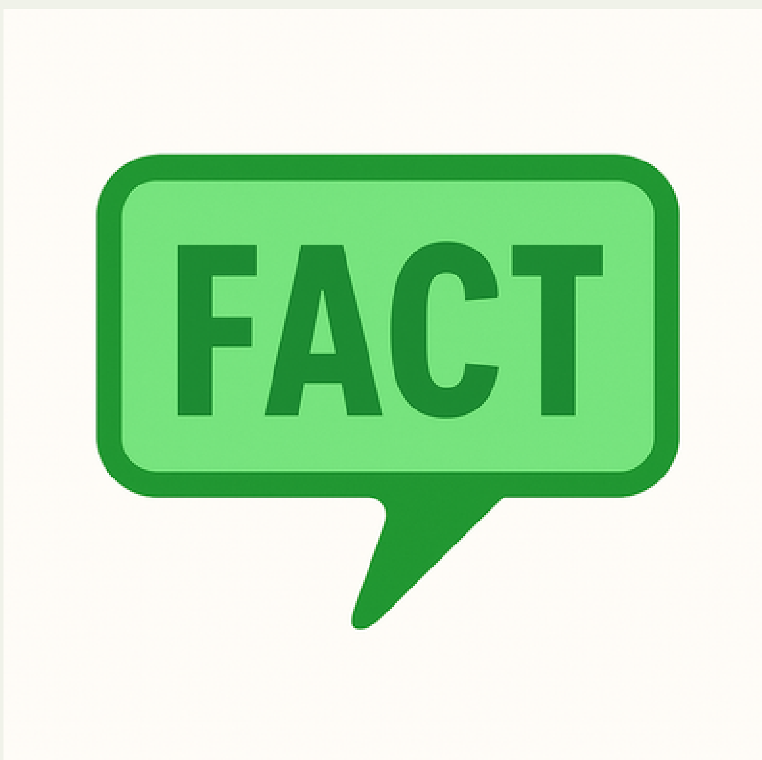
Affiliate is only for low-ticket products.



High-value sectors like luxutry brand, travel and financial services thrive in affiliate with excellent ROAS.

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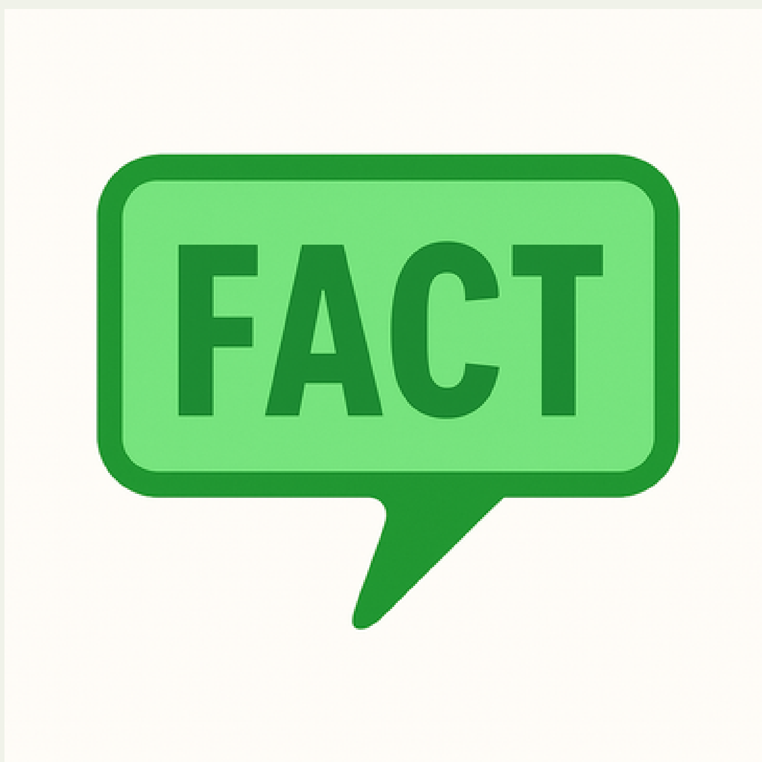
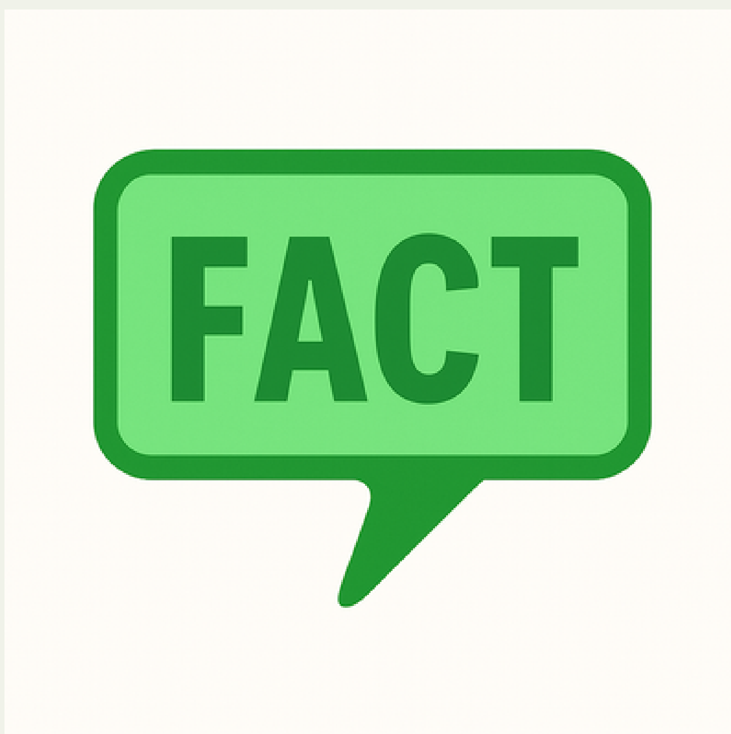
Affiliate doesn’t work for B2B or SaaS.



B2B SaaS companies run partner/affiliate programs that drive significant revenue through referral partners.

You can't scale an affiliate program.



Global networks and in-house affiliate solutions (like MyAP) have millions of affiliates, leaving plenty of room to scale a program once it works at a smaller level.

Affiliate Roles & Value

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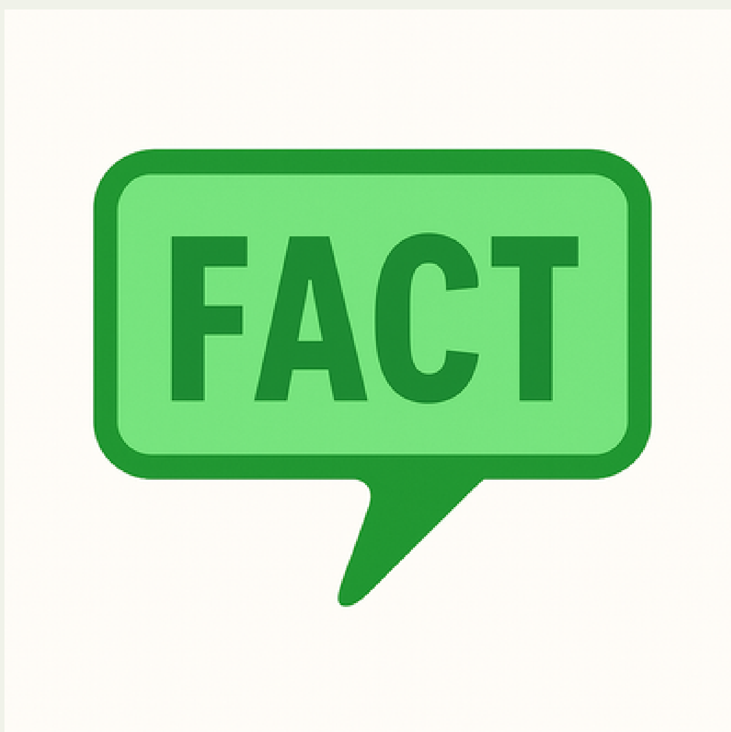
Affiliate is just coupons and cashback.



The channel covers the whole funnel, including influencers, content creators, loyalty programs, card-linked offers, and more.

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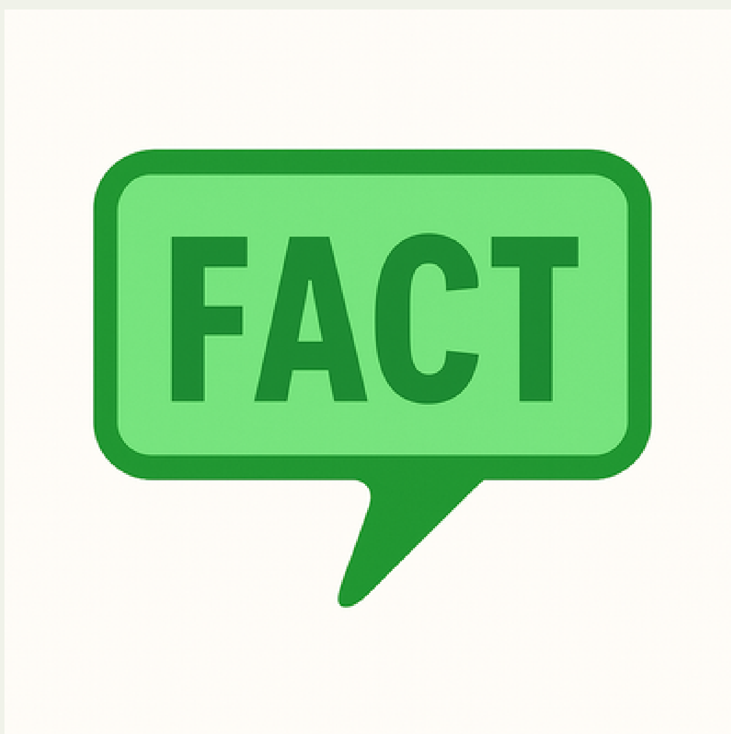
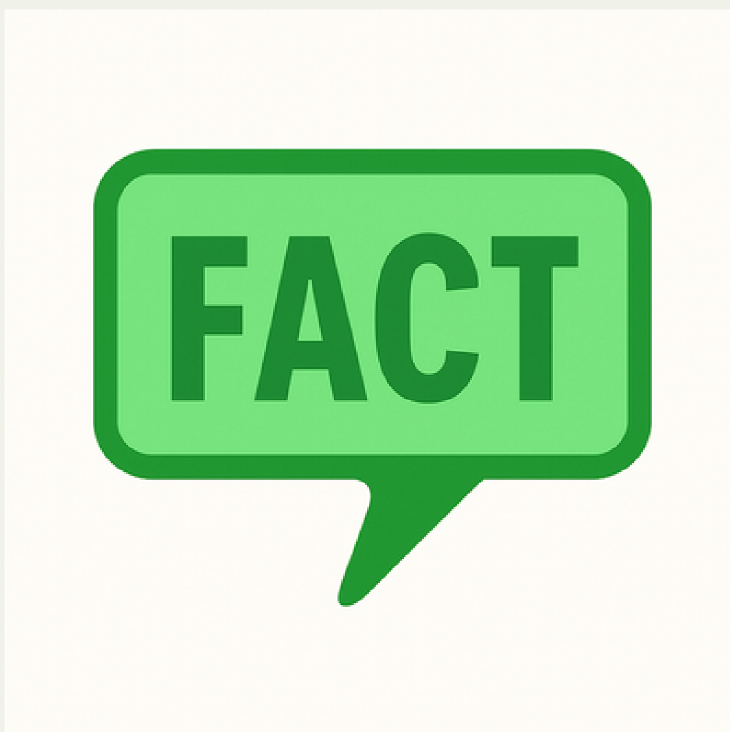
It’s basically multi-level marketing (MLM).



MLM relies on recruiting people under you. Affiliates earn a commission only when a real customer buys or signs up—no recruitment involved (FTC clearly distinguishes this).

Affiliate customers are low-value bargain hunters.



Large-scale studies show shoppers found affiliate-influenced customers spent 31% more per order and were 140% more likely to be new customers.

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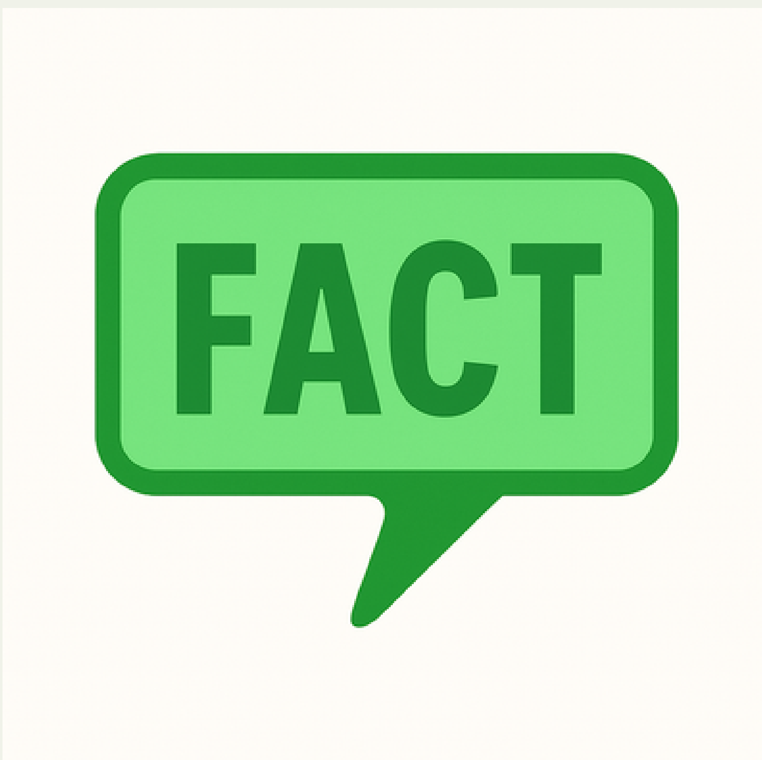
Affiliate doesn’t help discovery or branding.



Research shows affiliates influence shoppers from early research through post-purchase, not just at checkout.

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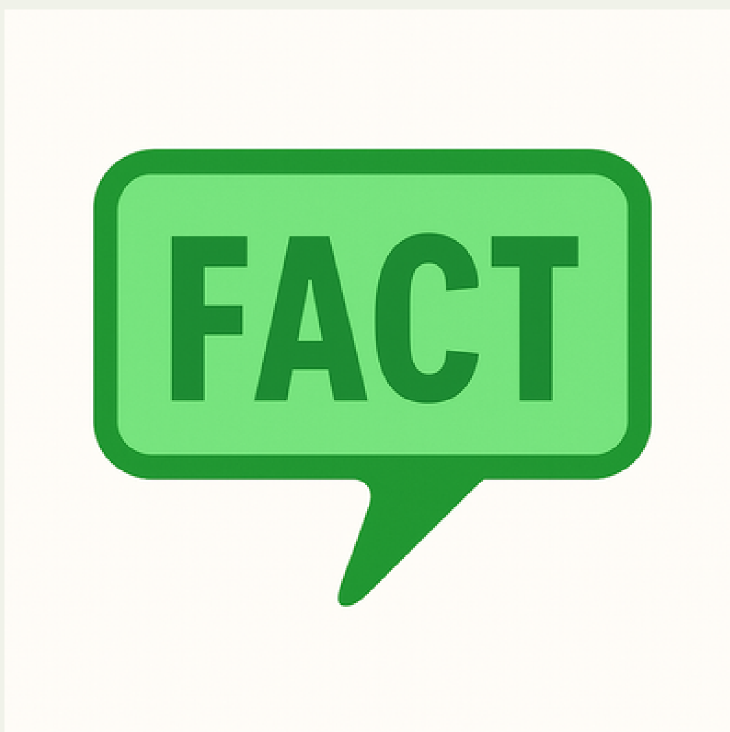
Influencers replaced affiliates.



Many influencers actually monetize with affiliate links. Affiliate is still one of the most trusted and cost-effective channels for marketers.

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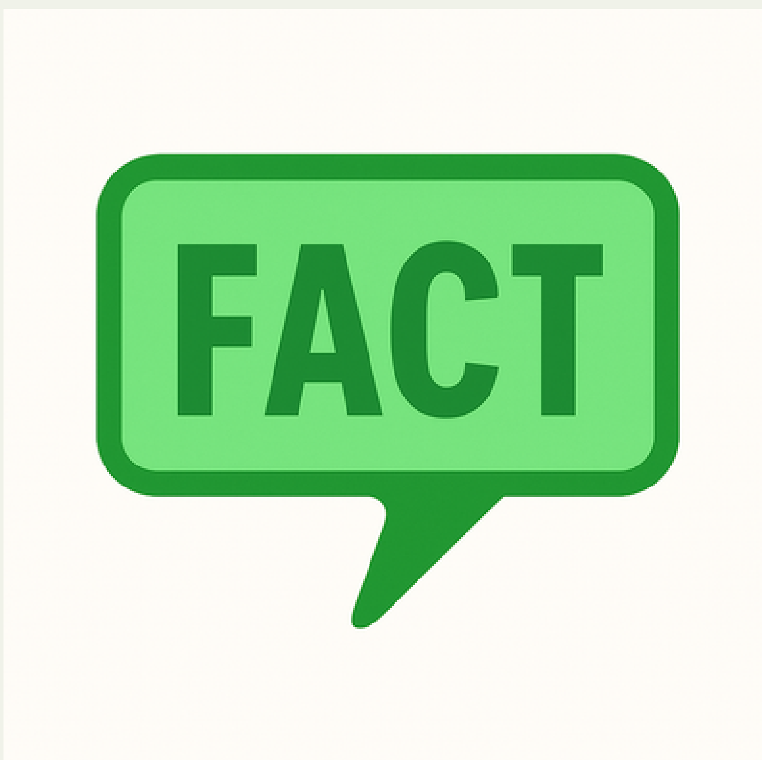
Tracking & Technology

Tracking will break once cookies go away.



Tracking tools already use first-party and server-to-server tracking that doesn't rely on third-party cookies.

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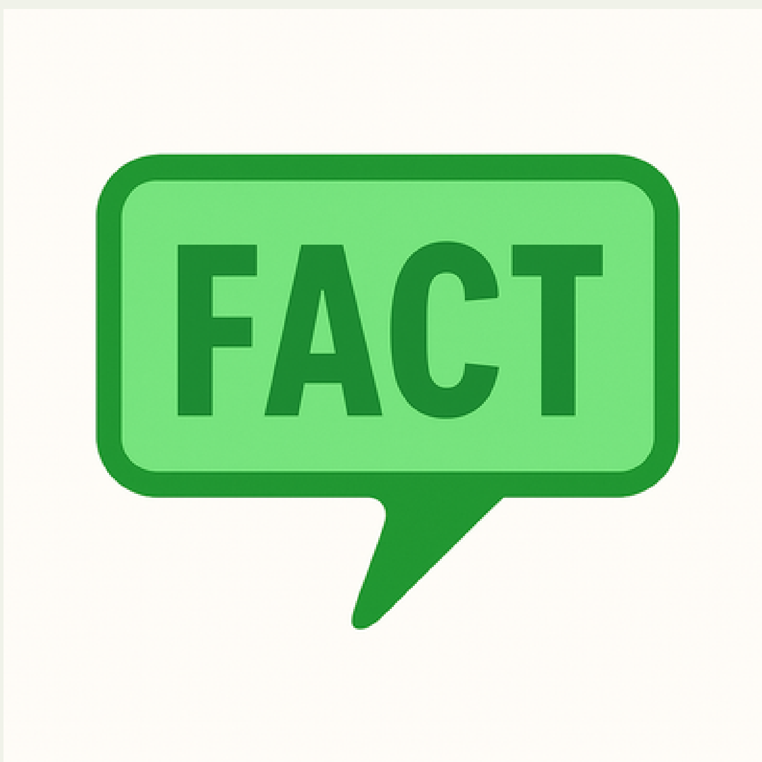
Affiliate can’t track mobile or apps.



With app SDKs and cross-device solutions, mobile and in-app sales are fully tracked.

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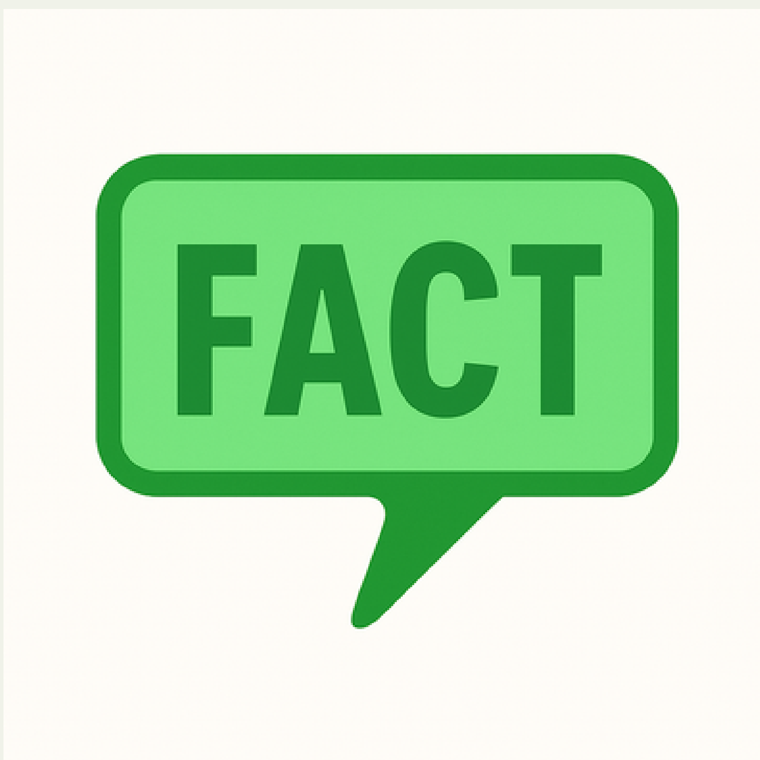
Offline or in-store purchases can’t be tracked.



Card-linked offers (CLOs) tie affiliate rewards directly to credit card purchases in-store.

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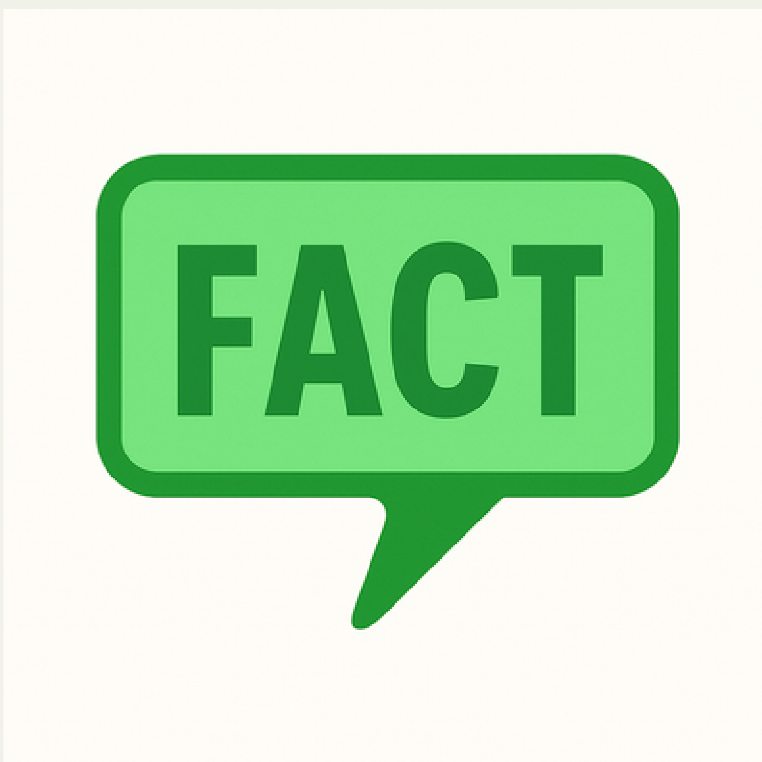
Browser extensions and sub-networks are always bad.



When set up correctly, they can add value and drive incremental conversions.

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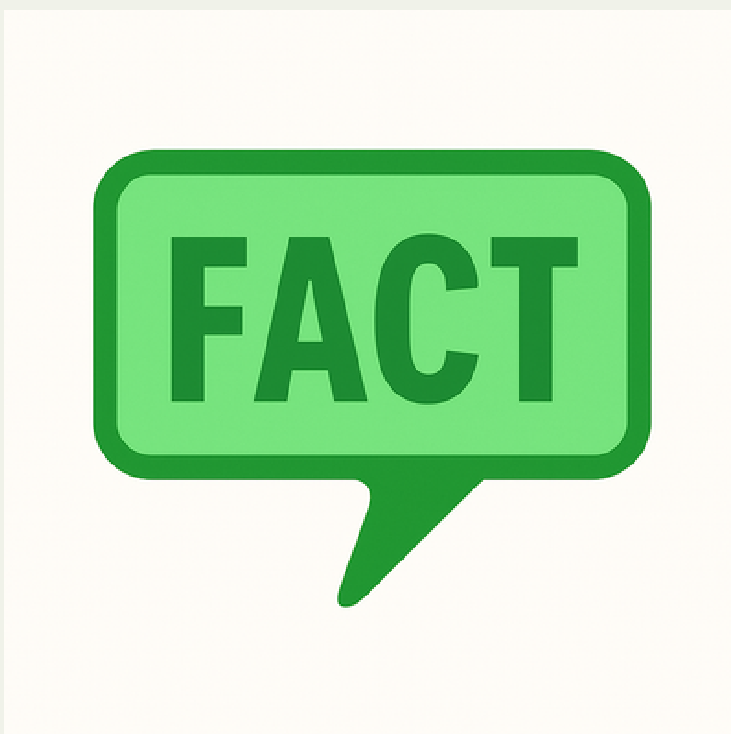
Attribution & Incrementality

Affiliate sales aren't incremental.



Shoppers exposed to affiliates were 88% more likely to convert and had a larger average order value (AOV). These are sales that wouldn't have happened otherwise.

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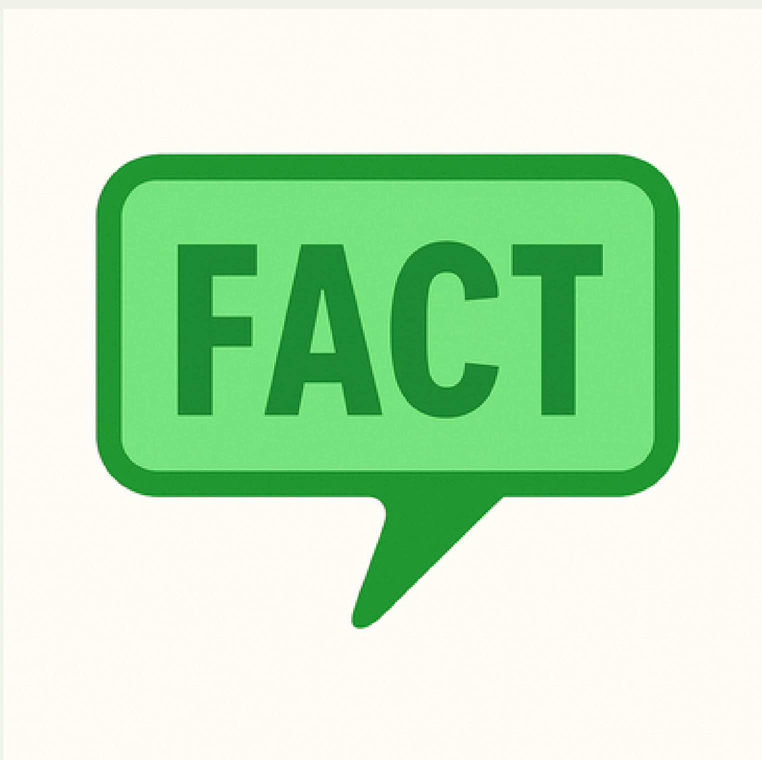
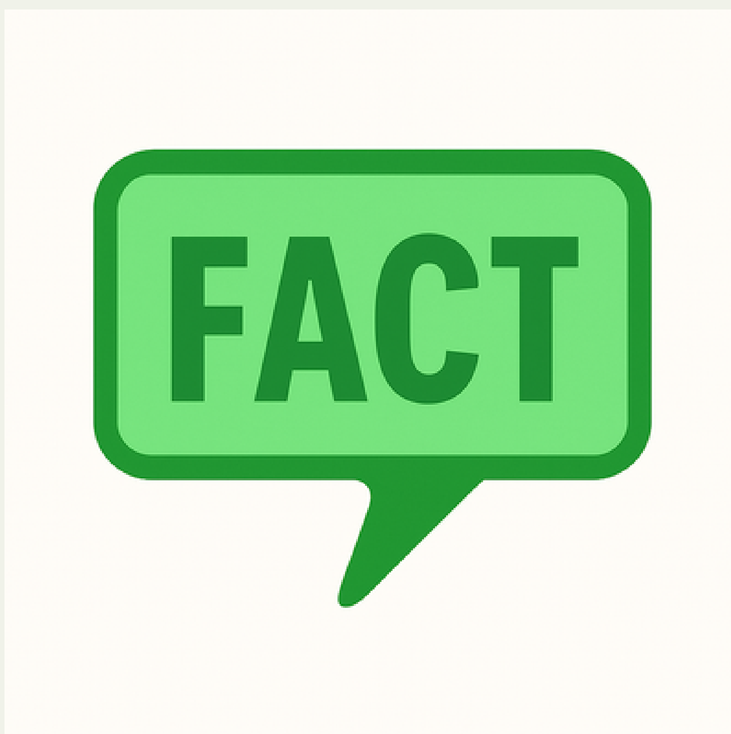
It steals sales from SEO or paid search.



Incrementality studies prove affiliates add sales on top of other existing channels.

Affiliate only pays for the last click.



Modern systems (including MyAp) track the full customer journey and let you reward partners who assisted earlier in the funnel.

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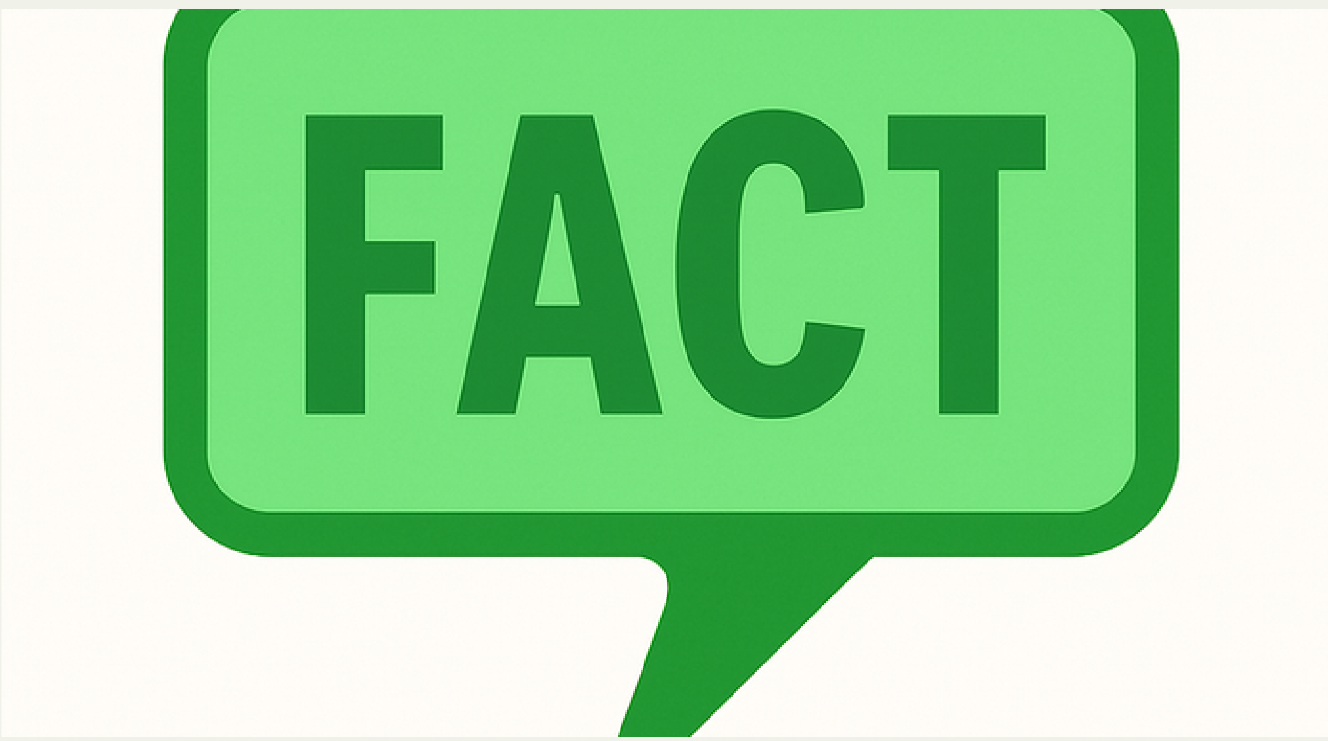
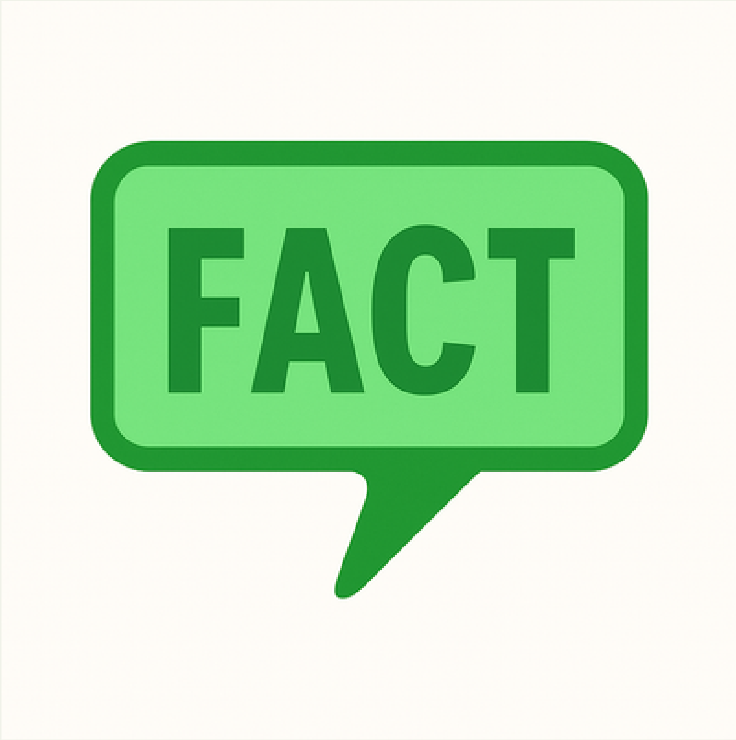
Commission rules are fixed.



Brands can set custom commission rules by partner type, promotion, or product category.

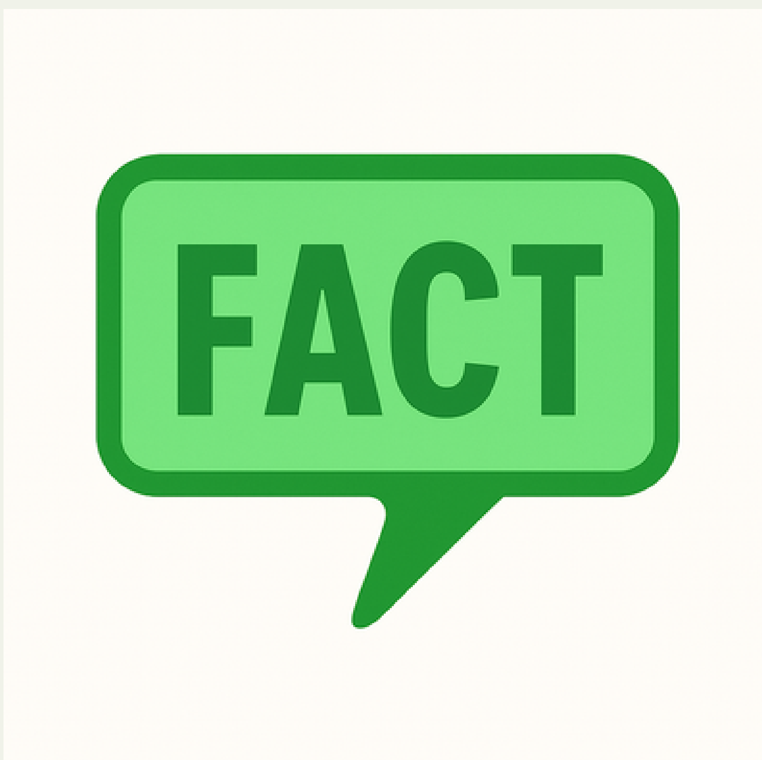
Risk & Compliance

Affiliate is too risky and full of fraud.



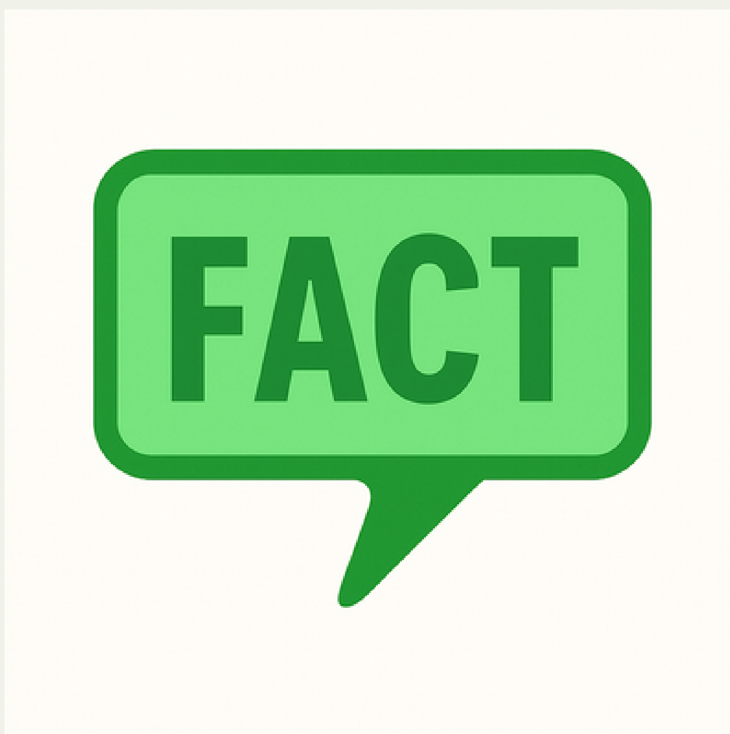
Like any channel, fraud exists, but affiliate's pay-for-performance model limits wasted spend, and trscking platforms invest heavily in built-in tools for fraud prevention.

Influencers and affiliates don't follow disclosure rules.



The FTC updated guidelines in 2023, and networks/platforms enforce them with compliance tools.

There's little to no transparency.



Networks and other tracking solutions now offer real-time reporting, path-to-conversion data, and brand-safety features.

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Affiliate now drives nearly 10% of U.S. ecommerce sales and consistently delivers a return on investment that outperforms many other channels.

With tools to track across devices, prevent fraud, and measure incrementality, today's affiliate marketing is built on transparency, technology, and measurable results.

For brands, the flexibility of the channel means it can fit programs of any size, using self-serve platforms to global networks that are managing complex partnership ecosystems.

Affiliates influence the entire customer journey, not just the last click, by helping customers discover, evaluate, and ultimately purchase with confidence.

When set up strategically, the channel drives new customers, larger average order values, and stronger long-term loyalty.

Affiliate marketing is evolving into one of the most powerful and cost-effective growth channels available.

Ditch the myths, trust the facts, and start building partnerships that scale your sales and strengthen your brand.