Coupon and Deal Affiliates: Key Drivers of E-commerce Growth

Created by:
PMA Coupons & Deals Council

Performance Marketing Association, Inc.

The Strategic Value of Coupons and Deals in Modern Affiliate Marketing

In 2025, coupon and deal affiliates will remain an important pillar of affiliate marketing. The continued rise in inflation and other economic downturn factors have made consumers more price-sensitive, making discounts and promotional codes vital. As most companies reposition their strategies to focus on content and influencer marketing, the role of deals and coupons cannot be ignored.

Additionally, coupon affiliates offer high scalability and cost-efficiency. Their pay-for-performance model ensures that brands only pay for tangible results. This mitigates risks for advertisers and enhances ROI in their affiliate programs, especially in an era where consumers expect to see value in every transaction.

The Role of Coupon and Deal Affiliates in 2025

A report by the Retail Customer Experience indicated that 54% of online shoppers in the United States have increased their coupon redemptions over the past year, primarily due to economic factors such as inflation and the cost of living. This demonstrates the relevance of this channel during times of noticeably higher prices for everyday goods. In addition to the important role played by the economy, coupon affiliates also make it easier for advertisers seeking to increase their reach.

Unlocking Growth: Diversifying Your Affiliate Program

To ensure strong growth in 2025, content providers need to look for partners beyond influencers and content creators for their affiliate programs. Coupon affiliates have a specific advantage because they enhance the purchase experience for the user at the consideration and decision stages of the purchase funnel or journey. Including different types of affiliates ensures that every stage of the funnel is addressed.

Certain coupon affiliate benefits include:

- Increased sales volume due to improved conversion rates.
- Cost-effective marketing based on performance.
- Wider audience reach, as price reductions attract specific types of shoppers.

The addition of various affiliate types, including cashback partners and deal websites, makes it possible to develop a compelling affiliate marketing program to suit the changing needs of the marketplace and customers.

Coupon and Deal Affiliate Strategies: Best Practices for 2025

As brands seek to maximize affiliate channels, specific best practices have emerged for working with coupon affiliates. These practices help advertisers optimize their programs for both revenue generation and customer retention. In 2025, providing affiliates with exclusive or semi-exclusive offers is crucial for differentiating your brand from competitors. Vanity codes (codes with customized branding, such as

FORBES25) and time-sensitive offers can also increase conversions while maintaining control over brand messaging.

Effective Coupon Strategies:

- Use time-sensitive, exclusive coupons to create urgency.
- Implement tiered discounts to increase average order value (AOV).
- Partner with affiliates for seasonal and thematic campaigns.

Navigating the Modern Consumer: Affluent and Price-Conscious

One intriguing trend in 2025 is the use of coupons by high-income consumers. While coupons were historically associated with low-income, price-sensitive individuals, studies show that coupon use is prevalent among high-income earners as well. 61% of people with incomes over $100,000 actively use coupons. This behavior defies the perception that coupons inherently diminish a brand's status in the eyes of premium-segment consumers.

Slickdeals identified one of their top audience segments as being highly affluent, boasting high household incomes, driving luxury vehicles, donating to charities, and actively participating in their local communities. From their research, they found that shoppers in this group were 3.3x more likely to be savvy researchers, 2.6x more likely to prioritize quality over price, and 2.1x more likely to use coupons.

High income consumers are also predisposed to adopting a digital wallet as well as loyalty applications that often promote coupon and deal-based offers. Marketers can target this group with attractive offers by utilizing affiliate models enabling them to venture deeper into various markets all the while maintaining their premium positioning.

Coupon Best Practices for Advertisers

Advertisers looking to work with coupon affiliates in 2025 must adhere to best practices that not only boost sales but also protect their brand. Structuring promotions to increase average order size while incentivizing new customer acquisition is essential. Additionally, coupon stacking (using multiple coupons in one transaction) should be carefully monitored to avoid unintentional margin erosion.

Some best practices include:

- Dollar- or percentage-off discounts with minimum purchases.
- Exclusive coupons for email subscribers or loyalty program members.
- Bundle offers (buy 1, get 1 free) and other strategies to improve average order values.

Coupon Creation and Formatting Guidelines

Regarding coupon creation, simplicity and clarity are the key elements. It is incredibly important to redeem coupons universally. The wide adoption of mobile phone internet usage is causing mobile to be the preferred platform for many consumers where technology for traditional coupon publishers like browser extensions that automatically add coupon code are not available. According to Adobe Analytics, mobile e-commerce encompassed 53% of all eCommerce retail sales in 2024 and is not likely to change in 2025. Because of this, coupon codes should use characters which are short, easy to recall, and can be used on handheld devices.

Formatting guidelines include:

- Short, clear, and easily memorable alphanumeric descriptors, with clear differentiation between similar characters (e.g., O and 0).
- Visible expiration dates and offer details on every platform.
- Case-insensitive input.

Coupon and Deal Affiliates and Inflation

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, for 2024, the Consumer Price Index was up 5.3% compared to the same time last year. This caused prices for elastic and inelastic goods to spike causing shoppers to find themselves looking for discounts in every sector. This has made a lot of consumers turn to the use of coupons and deals to save money. As for the brands, the acquisition of customers, who are potentially using coupon affiliates in order to save money bargaining, becomes a necessity.

Affiliates that focus on deals and coupon codes are in a good position to take advantage of the emerging market of price-conscious consumers. Brands with coupon affiliates can fight the impact of inflation through sales volume and customer retention as inflationary times come.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday: Coupons Fueling Mobile Growth

A key trend in 2024 was the widespread use of mobile app-exclusive coupons, which significantly boosted e-commerce performance. 57% of Cyber Monday online sales came from mobile devices, a record-breaking figure, with mobile transactions totaling $7.6 billion, up 13.3% year-over-year, according to Adobe.

Coupons played a central role in this growth:

- 42% of consumers in the United States used a coupon or discount code before making an online purchase during Black Friday and Cyber Monday
- Push notifications delivered a click-through rate 7 times greater than email. This was a key winning strategy over the holiday season, especially when combined with average holiday order value.

Holiday Season: The Impact of Coupons on Holiday Spending

The Holiday period highlighted the critical role of coupons in both mobile and desktop e-commerce. U.S. online holiday spending rose by 8.7% to $241.4 billion, with 35% of transactions involving digital coupons.

Key strategies included:

- Average Order Value during the Holidays: Holiday shoppers broke a new high of $144.57 AOV which was up 8.7% annually and up 26.68% since 2020.
- Multi-Platform Accessibility: Ensuring coupons could be redeemed across mobile and desktop platforms increased coupon usage rates by 18% YoY.

Coupons and Diverse Consumer Segments

Coupons continued to appeal to a wide range of consumers regardless of income. 61% of adults with household incomes of $100,000 or more have redeemed a coupon within the past half year. This is further demonstrating their universal appeal and ability to drive value regardless of income brackets.

For brands, coupon affiliates provided:

1. Impact of Inflation on Coupon Usage: Inflation has driven increased coupon usage, with the highest segment of consumers using coupon codes while online shopping in the earnings bracket of $175,000 to $199,999 at 89%.
2. Omnichannel Preference for Mobile Coupon Delivery: A substantial portion of consumers prefer receiving coupons on their smartphones, with 51% indicating this preference. This number rises to 73% among millennials and 76% among parents.

AI and Coupons: Revolutionizing Holiday Campaigns

Artificial intelligence revolutionized and transformed coupon optimization during the 2024 holiday season. Major technological changes such as retailers engaging with vast amounts of consumer data in real-time led to tailoring coupon offers based around the consumers preferences and shopping behaviors.

AI-driven improvements included:

- Real-Time Personalized Coupon Allocation: A new trend from Coupon and Deal publishers has been the development in AI-driven systems that analyze customer and product data to offer real-time, customized coupons. The added personalization has led to increased conversion rates and revenue, demonstrating the effectiveness of AI in personalizing consumer incentives.
- Enhanced Coupon Success Rates: AI technologies also have a great advantage when it comes to validating coupon codes in real time compared to older validation technology which might be a reason for the increase in coupon usage due to the increased success rate.

Data-Driven Decision Making: Tracking Success with Coupon Affiliates

Brands need robust tracking on the data each of the affiliates are driving and which deals are the most incremental. The majority of advertisers who use affiliate networks rely on advanced data analytics to measure the success of their campaigns and optimize performance, demonstrating the critical role of data in affiliate marketing to deliver the best value to clients.

Key Performance Indicators or key metrics that can be used for success tracking can include:

- Sales figures achieved utilizing each specific coupon code.
- Average conversion rate per coupon code campaign.
- Customer equity in coupon customers compared to other customer categories.

Ethics and Standards of Coupons

The ethical use of coupons improves customer satisfaction, while unethical coupon advertising or coupon code exploitation is likely to damage a company's reputation and attract lawsuits. The FTC continues to combat deceptive marketing practices, requiring companies to avoid deceptive and unfair coupon marketing.

To maintain high ethical standards:

- Avoid overpromising and under-delivering, as the risk of losing consumer trust is significant.
- Collaborate with approved advertisers and affiliates to mitigate the risk of code abuse.
- Perform regular compliance checks of affiliate directories and any other websites representing the company's products.

Conclusion: The Future of Coupon Affiliates

The outlook for coupon affiliates in 2025 is promising. As long as economic pressures persist and online shopping continues to grow, coupons will remain relevant for consumers and brands. The rise of artificial intelligence in the affiliate space, coupled with current economic trends, has made coupons and deals more important than ever. For brands that adopt this approach, coupon affiliates not only serve as a competitive tool but also facilitate stronger customer connections and maintain sales and advertising effectiveness in today's evolving digital world.

Sources:

1. Nielsen Report, 2024 Consumer Outlook 2024
2. Rakuten, 2024 Rakuten Advertising Announces AI-Driven Partnership Discovery Solution to Connect Advertisers with the Most Effective Publisher Partners
3. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024 Consumer Price Index Summary Report
4. Adobe Analytics, 2024 Adobe Analytics: Mobile shopping expected to drive 53 percent of online sales during 2024 holiday season
5. Statista, 2024 Digital coupons and deals in the United States - statistics & facts
6. Rakuten, 2024 FTC/ASA Disclosure Guidelines for Coupon, Rewards, Shopping, and Comparison Sites
7. Adobe Analytics, 2024 Holiday Shopping Report.
8. Rakuten Advertising, 2024 Consumer Shopping Behavior. Link
9. Demandsage, Coupon Statistics for 2025 – Usage & Redemption Rates
10. Adobe, 2024 Cyber Monday Hits Record $13.3 Billion in Online Spending with Majority of Sales Driven by Mobile
11. Onesignal, 2024 How Push Notifications Drive Revenue and Customer Loyalty
12. Reuters, 2024 US online holiday sales rise nearly 9% on mobile shopping boom, report shows
13. Oberlo, 2024 Average Order Value in Ecommerce (2016–2024)
14. BusinessDasher 2024 32+ Coupon Statistics & Usage Data For Businesses To Know
15. RetailCustomerExperience 2024, Inflation frustration drives consumer discount, coupon use
16. Insights, 2021 Meet Consumer Expectations and Drive Conversions With Deals and Savings

Coupon and Deal Affiliates: Key Drivers of E-Commerce Growth

Created by:
PMA Coupons & Deals Council

2025 Update:
Dylan Bertalli, PartnerCentric (Chair, Coupons and Deals Council)

Original Paper Lead Contributors
Craig McGlynn (Chair, Coupons and Deals Council)
Larissa Feuerstein

August 2021 Updated Version Council Contributors
Craig McGlynn, (Chair, Coupons and Deals Council)
Amanda O'Brien
Max McClary
Amy Walsh

For more information on the PMA, our resources, or membership please visit www.thepma.org