

**WHY LEADING COMPANIES CHOOSE LINE OFFICIAL
ACCOUNT AS A MAJOR MARKETING TOOL? AND
CONSUMER BEHAVIORS TOWARD THE MARKETING
STRATEGY**



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Thematic paper
entitled
**WHY LEADING COMPANIES CHOOSE LINE OFFICIAL
ACCOUNT AS A MAJOR MARKETING TOOL? AND
CONSUMER BEHAVIORS TOWARD THE MARKEING
STRATEGY**

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, there is a variety of online marketing channel for people to receive information, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogging, etc. LINE application has become a major communication channel between a company and customers in Thailand.

LINE Official Account is a major marketing tool that leading companies choose to play in the marketing strategy. In order to study the factors why a leading company popularly selects the marketing tool as a promotional communication medium and the consumer behaviour to response to the marketing strategy, the research uses a qualitative approach and the data was collected by in-depth interview. The interview was conducted with 15 respondents in the age group of 25-39 years old.

This study revealed that the frequency of messages to send is the most significant variable to consider for enhancing the satisfaction and “Sticker” is the most required function to attract customer attention to involve with a brand.

KEY WORDS: LINE Application / LINE Official Account / Social Media / Customer Behavior / Thailand

36 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In everyday lives, consumers are surrounded with types of advertising through a variety of integrated marketing communication (or IMC) tools. IMC blends promotional tools and advertising, marketing in order to communicate messages to consumers. As the result, companies can increase sales, customers' satisfaction and bring other advantages. The working of advertising schema has been subjected in traditional media such as TV, newspaper, magazine and print ad.

Even though the traditional advertising is a significant medium that can reach a mass target audience and have a high influence on motivation to purchase, traditional media is very costly and expensive. Especially the cost of buying TV spots, advertising may needs to buy many spots with thousands of dollars in order to get greater benefit and results. Moreover, traditional marketing also takes time. Marketers may have to create a message in weeks or months in advance when launching advertising with the spending on production expenses.

However, in recent years, the world has changed by the rapid growth of a new class of information technologies, commonly known as social media, which support interpersonal communication and collaboration using internet-based platforms (Kane and Alavi 2014). Social media is seen as the rebuilding of social connections around the individual rather than around a physical space (Scheepers, Stockdale and Nurdin.,2014) in which the growth of social media paralleled the increasing development of computing and Internet transfer technology since 1990. Within ten years, broadband technology such as DSL and cable internet would become available instead of dial-up connections, increasing transfer speeds by thousands of times (Melissa, Donald, Nicholas and Krista., 2013).

While more data was transferred quickly, social media networks became more advanced and included elements other than just plain text such as Napster, Flickr, MySpace, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, WhatsApp and LINE application.

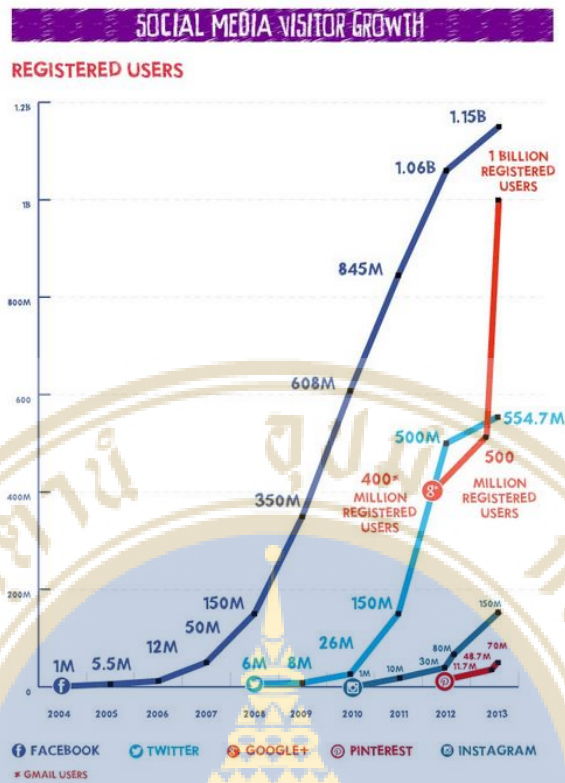


Figure 1.1 Social media visitor growth (Source: Search Engine Journal)

and LINE Application. Therefore, there is an opportunity for advertisers to create new ways to send a message and reach consumers or developing new advertising through online content because of the continued growing number of people visit various social networking platforms as an integral part of their daily routine (Anon., 2011). Refer to the statistic of social media registered users, the number has dramatically increased to more than 2 billion users in 2013 comparing with 1 million users in 2004 (SerchEngineJournal., 2013). It can be considered that the media or online content obviously became our meaningful communication channel nowadays. Additionally, social media is accessible through a broad range of applications, it has become a heavily used tool in marketing. Companies can manufacture advertisements that users can easily share at no cost to the company, making it an inexpensive alternative to traditional marketing (Kirkpatrick, Lovink, *et al.*, 2013)

1.1 Social Networks Go Mobile

In late 2000s, the trend of usage smartphone has increased continuously throughout the world. Mobile is one of the fastest-growing platforms in the world. With 40% of U.S. mobile subscribers regularly browsing the internet on their phone and a projected 12.5% of all e-commerce transaction going mobile (Melissa, Donald, Nicholas and Krista., 2013). As per a statistic of smartphone usage worldwide, smartphone devices have been used around 56 percent of world population in 2013 comparing with 35 percent users in 2011 (Digitalbuzzblog.,2013). In Thailand, the total number of smartphone users as of 2013 is at 15 million people which is a 53 percent increase from 2011 (Informa., 2013). Moreover, Google also revealed that smartphones are embedded into daily life in which 89% of people use their smartphone throughout the day and users aim to use the smartphone to browse the internet and using application the most as smartphones serve as pocket PCs and extend desktop experience (ThinkMobile with Google., 2013). Moreover, social networks get a large effect on this situation because social networks also increasingly are being accessed through mobile devices. Therefore, smartphone users are interesting target to reach and build awareness. Marketers have taken the opportunity to promote and advertise via mobile, as per 54 percent of advertising is promoted via mobile application (Digitalbuzzblog., 2013).

1.2 LINE Application

As per above discussion, one of the most popular social networks format nowadays is LINE application. LINE application is originated by Naver, a Japanese company that offers the free cross-platform application since 2011. The application allows both free messages and free voice calls connected through internet-based comparing with WhatsApp that allow only text messages. Until April 2014, LINE has achieved 400 million registered users worldwide. LINE is considered as a most popular mobile social network in Thailand and LINE revealed that Thailand is ranked as one of the top users as of 24 million people (Line Official, 2014). Due to the



Figure 1.2 Global user numbers of LINE application (Source: LINE Official)

features of LINE itself such as text message, free voice call, timeline, video and photos sharing, and cute stickers to express emotion and still connect together, LINE application gains such a high number of users.

Furthermore, LINE is recognized as an efficient digital marketing platform and its sales and marketing effect surpass above-the-line marketing (The Nation., 2013). The feature of the application allows organization and advertiser to promote and communicate with individual consumers directly with a set of stickers to attract consumers to download and stay connected with the company, called as official account. In Thailand, leading companies in the market choose LINE application to be one of their medium to enhance relationship with consumers such as Kbank, DTAC, True, AIS, McDonald's, Tourism Authority of Thailand and CP Foods in which customers can gain information and communication message in real-time. However,

各LINEキャラクターの中で一番多く送信されているスタンプ



Figure 1.3 Examples of sticker character by LINE application (Source: LINE Official)

LINE application requires advertisers or companies to pay higher cost of advertising comparing with other Social networks such as Facebook. Therefore, it must be a significant meaning of choosing LINE as a medium.

Table 1.1 Top three popular official accounts as of April 2014

BRANDS	MEMBERS
True Move H	16.7 Million
DTAC	15.8 Million
Muang Thai Life	15.1 Million

1.3 Problem Statement

An increasing of internet usage and social media in daily routine can create a changing in consumer behavior to receive information and the transformation of advertising platform, move from the traditional marketing to online marketing. The purpose of this report will focus on LINE application as the application becomes Thailand's major communication medium with 20 million users and continue growing in the number. Additionally, the official account to promote the brands also increases along with the growing number of users that might be a significant criteria or benefit behind the decision.

1.4 Objective of the Study

Promoting via the social network, there are advantages comparing to traditional marketing. The communication channel provides lower cost to a company than TV advertising and lack of timeliness to create message and publish with *Official Account*. Therefore, the objective will be as followings;

- To identify the possible factors that a leading company choose LINE application to promote the brand.

- To consider its effectiveness of this pull strategy along with the consumers advocate to the messages from a brand.

- To study the relationship between the communication and brand equity; brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty

To conclude, the result is able to be a guideline for a company to know how consumers perceived about the advertising via LINE application whether they would like to advocate or ignore those message sending by brands and the advertising method can encourage the purchase or not.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

LINE application has appeared to be more than an instant messaging application and cutie sticker. The brand revealed that its revenue of LINE application accounted at 12.2 billion yen or 120 million dollars in quarter 4, 2013 which increased from quarter 4, 2012 for 450 percent. Surprisingly, the revenues are from official accounts and sponsored stickers approximately 20 percent which implemented by companies worldwide (LINE Corp.,2014). This review will primary focus on factors that leading companies made a decision to promote and apply advertising through one of the highest user in social networking elements in Thailand, LINE application. The growing of the social network users year by year and become part of people daily routine, it attracts marketer or entrepreneur to publish advertising in this platform which shows superior marketing power with less than 10 percent of the normal marketing budget (Lee Jin Woo., 2013).

For the purpose of this paper, promotion and advertising via LINE application refers specially to any form of paid advertising to create official account. Publishers will bring customer awareness by sending messages and it becomes the notification in the application, similarly to mobile marketing. Leading companies that implement advertising in LINE application are McDonald's, CP Foods, SCB Bank, Tesco Lotus, Toyota Buzz, etc. Therefore, the medium is a potential method to communicate with consumers, or else consumers notice, read those messages and response to the promotion or not.

2.1 SMS Marketing increase brand equity

According to the function of the application, it is more likely to be a mixture of social network and mobile marketing. Mobile devices allow for greater inactivity than any other tool because of their “always on” connectivity and short set-

up times (Schierholz *et al.*, 2007) which enhance customer relations and build customer database. Permission is important for mobile marketing because it reduces customer irritation. Without permission, messages are perceived as spam (Phumisak, Donyaprueth, Do Ba Khang., 2012). The official accounts of publishers are normally added by target market as a friend, which means they give explicit permission to a brand to send advertisements.

Refer to a study about effect of SMS marketing on dimension of brand equity implemented by Phumisak, Donyaprueth and Do Ba Khang, Aaker's and Yoo *et al.*'s model is chosen as the basis for the research framework. The study's purpose is to investigate the impact of SMS (Short Message Service) advertising on consumer perceptions of Au Bon Pain's brand equity in Thailand. This research used 3 types of text messages: personalized ads, interactive ads, and general ads to analyze 4 dimensions of brand equity effectiveness which consists of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

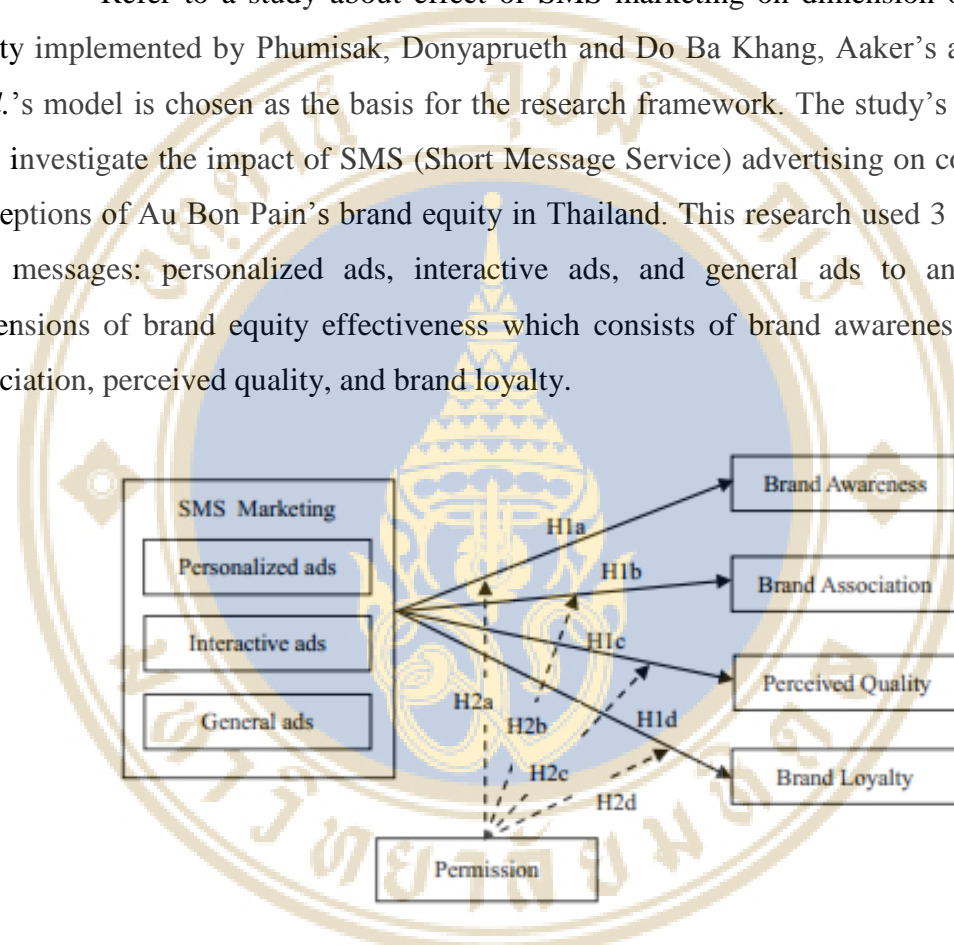


Figure 2.1 SMS Marketing and Brand Equity Relationship

After testing the hypotheses with 2 groups of participant on basis of their willingness to receive messages from Au Bon Pain: permission and non-permission group, the results indicated that text messaging has a significant positive impact only on brand awareness and perceived superior quality because text messaging can strengthen a brand's presence in the consumers mind. By the way, a mobile advertising message requiring customer involvement could be perceived as intrusive

and unappealing information because it requires customers to pay for the cost of sending a return message in order to interact with the brand.

In the contrary, customer feedback toward brand association and brand loyalty indicate negative relationship with SMS marketing. Due to the nature of text message itself, text-based ads, and the level of consumer devote to information cannot generate many strong brand association. For brand loyalty, the study stated that the experimental period was not long enough for such a relationship to be formed.

Considering the above study, the limitation of the research is to conduct on only mobile marketing basis, excluding social networking and instant messaging, especially LINE application. Although the feature of advertising and promotion between the mediums are almost similar, the effect of LINE application advertising on brand equity dimension might different. Unlike mobile device, LINE application is on internet-based which consumers do not have to responsible for the cost of interaction and involvement with the brand while returning a message. Then, advertisers can communicate with target consumers by more than just a plain text and MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service), LINE application allows advertisers to send photo, video advertising, long messages, URL link with Facebook and website, etc. For example, DTAC rewards with Disney on Ice free ticket promotion program which allows customers to answer question by returning message via the official account, advertising poster photo from McDonald's for customers to get a free breakfast. Therefore, the result of using LINE application might contain a positive effect for all four-brand equity dimensions.

2.2 Encourage Customers Purchase by the Use of Pull Strategies

Theory of promotional strategy

Promotion is one of the key communication mix to promote any messages to consumers, an organization has to make an important decision about whether to use a push strategy, pull strategy, or both in it channel of distribution in order to build brand awareness and increase sales. A *push strategy* places the product in front of the customer, via a form of advertisement, to make sure the consumer is aware of the

existence of the product, such as tradeshow, showroom. However, a *pull strategy* stimulates demand and motivates customers to actively seek out a specific product. It is aimed primarily at the end users. In order to advertise in the application, an organization obviously implements pull strategy by directing its promotional mix at ultimate consumers to encourage them to ask for a product and service (Roger, Steven, William and Lau.,2013), as can be seen in below figure.

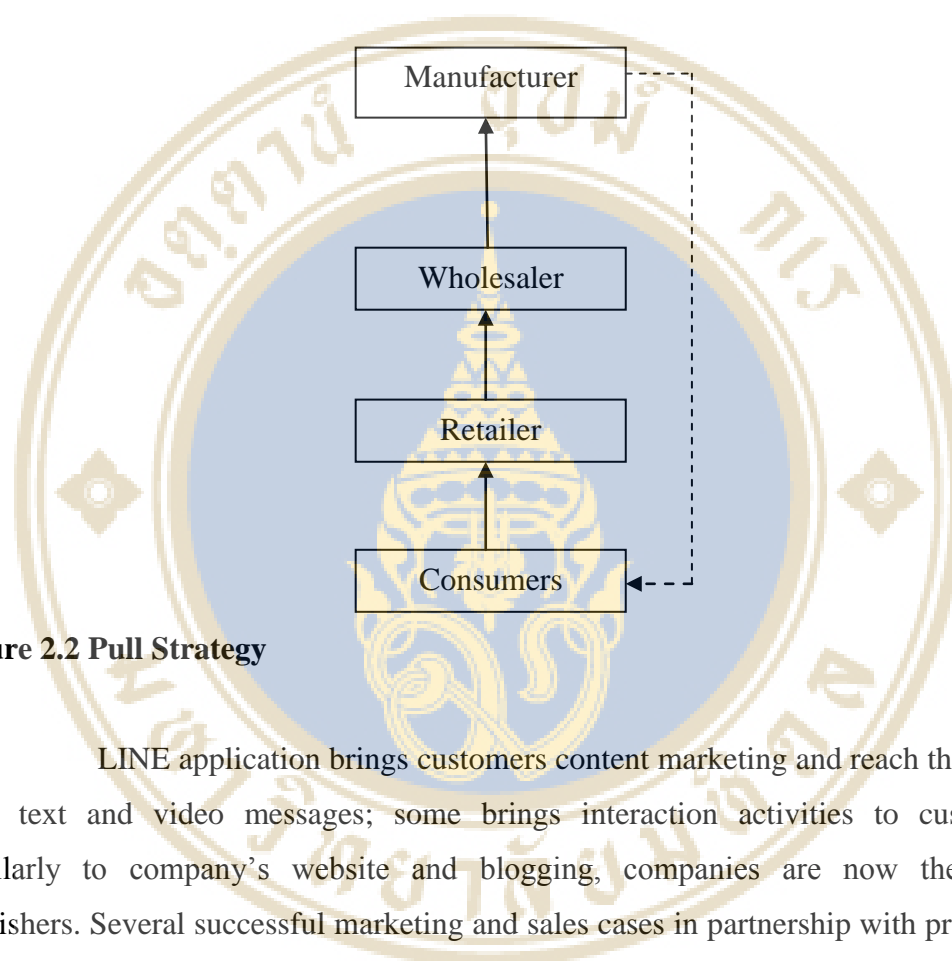


Figure 2.2 Pull Strategy

LINE application brings customers content marketing and reach them with both text and video messages; some brings interaction activities to customers. Similarly to company's website and blogging, companies are now their own publishers. Several successful marketing and sales cases in partnership with prominent local brands and public institutions were presented, proving LINE's excellence as a mobile platform that is beyond a simple mobile messenger.

Supaneewan Chutrakul, senior vice president of KBANK, proved that KBank's official account on LINE Application able to increase revenue by 15 percent within three months. Additionally, the function helps directly communicate with customers and respond to any issues immediately (The Nation.,2013). Therefore, it can be assumed that LINE provides the best marketing and advertisement platform which helps a company set the marketing strategy and objectives by listening to

customers' voices directly and motivate customer to gain awareness and purchase the products and services. Considering the theory, the effectiveness of advertising through LINE by the *pull strategy* can really make customer whether to recognize the brand and response in positive relation with the promotion, or else motivation to buy.

2.3 Levels of Consumer Engagement on Social Media

Barger and Labrecque, 2013, stated in their study of an IMC perspective on social media metric that consumers can be viewed as progressing through a series of four stages in their relationships with brands on social media platform, as the following figure.

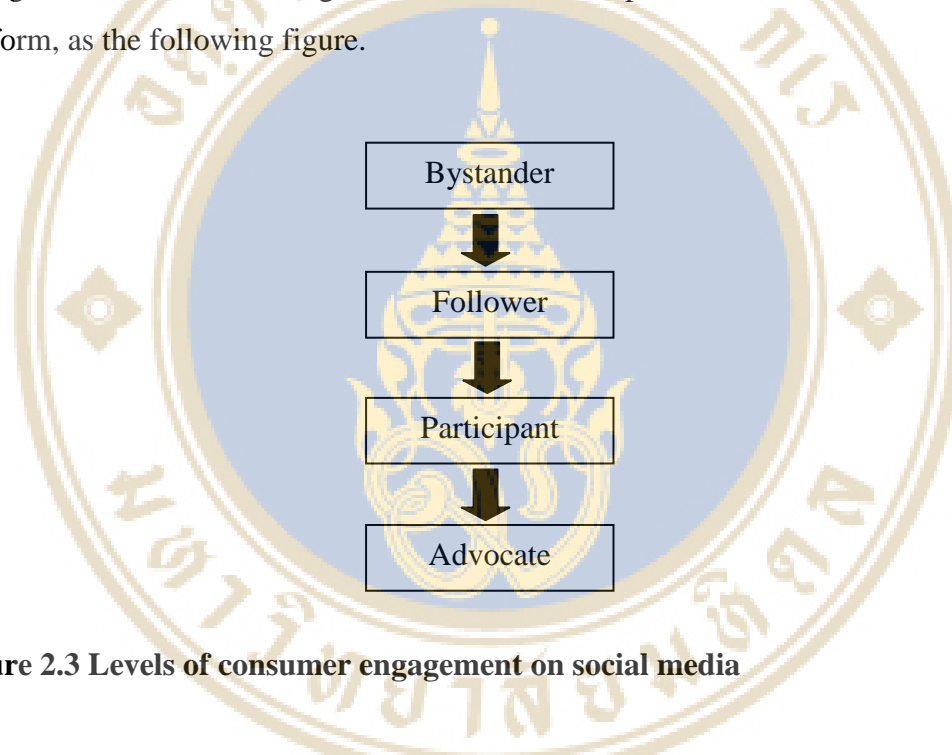


Figure 2.3 Levels of consumer engagement on social media

The limitation of the study is that they focus variety of social media except Line application. It is great to know that how consumers or users of LINE application response to advertising and official account mostly in which stages. The research showed that consumers initially start as a *bystander*. Bystander may see mentions of a brand in social media, but they do not actively seek out posts by the brand nor do they interact with the brand. Applying with LINE, consumers add an official account due to stickers but they might ignore those messages or advertisings sending from the brands. Moreover, when the messages are sent more frequent, users might consider as a spam and usually delete those messages instead.

In the second stage, the consumer adopted the role of *follower*. As followers, consumers seek out the brand's message by opting in to receive the brand communications on social media. Similarly to LINE, users might follow and click reading the message sending from the brand but still stay passive.

In third stage, consumers become a participant, interacting with the brand and the brand's message on social media. As LINE application allow the brand to do promotional mix while consumers can interact with the brand by return a free of charge message, many consumers involve with the brand by getting promotion, playing games and sweepstakes.

In the final stage, the consumer adopted the role of brand advocate, creating and uploading content that actively promote the brand. Some users of LINE might forward messages from the brand in order to share some events, promotions and news to other connected users via timeline or chatting. However, the function of LINE application is not public and cannot see widely by people as Facebook; therefore, the results might contain different level of effectiveness.

According to the above three issues, we can more deeply study along with our objectives. Main purposes of implementing official account by brands are to increase brand equity and encourage customers to involve with a brand. The SMS marketing test in the research reflects the positive effect to the brand equity after a brand receiving a permission from customers to send advertising messages. However, official account in LINE application is different from SMS via mobile marketing in which it is the combination of both social media and SMS marketing including with special feature like sticker and official home. Therefore, the result of the marketing strategies effect to brand equity may be different according to the consumer behavior responsiveness to the official account. Moreover, LINE official account is considered as a pull marketing strategy that can magnetize customer purchase by delivering advertising messages implemented directly to end users. Different pull marketing strategy can effect to customer purchase differently. More or less effective in the strategy reflect from how a brand communicate and bring customer interaction through LINE official account that has to be considered in this research. Lastly, levels of consumer engagement represent level of customer involvement with a social media especially Facebook. Anyhow, the research has not mentioned about LINE official

account in which it contains almost the same typical function. Therefore, LINE official account can be studied further how customers mostly response or engage with the media.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Refers to the purposes for this research, both secondary data and primary data would be used to conduct and analyze the situation of advertising benefits and effectiveness via Line application. Secondary data relevant to this research derived from academic books and electronic journals in which had studied about the marketing strategy, effectiveness of social network advertising and how users response to the communication to reflect the Line application advertising method. However, the secondary data sources are not customized directly to this paper and the information is inadequate in order to use to analyze the topic. Therefore, primary data can help collecting specifically for the purpose of this research and bring qualify answer from target participants to analyze.

3.1 Research Design

Qualitative collection method for primary data is the selected approach toward this study. Pope and Mays (1995) stated that the goal of qualitative research is the development of concepts which help us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants. The significant approach toward the qualitative data collection method is an interview in which interviewees are given the floor to talk about their experiences, views and so on relative to the Line application advertising perception and responsive ness (Hox and Boeijie, 2005). Advantages of qualitative methods in exploratory research are that use of open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, as quantitative methods do and they allow the researcher to have flexibility to probe initial participant responses (Mack *et al.*, 2005).

3.2 Population and Sampling

Regarding to the step of interview process, select the right target population could bring effective answers to this research. The target population toward this research was defined as all LINE application users in Thailand. Less structure in-depth interview would be implemented with 15 interviewees who normally use the application in daily routine and involve with a brand's official account. Moreover, the respondents were selected by nonprobability method based on convenience sampling which is also known as opportunity, accidental sampling and easy to reach. The approach seems to be the most widely used sampling method especially in the context of qualitative research. The research also selects subjects who have experience or knowledge of Line application instant messaging according to the purpose of this research (Oppong, 2012).

3.3 Data Collection

Interviews remain the most common methods of data collection in qualitative research particularly to access areas not amendable in quantitative methods where depth, insight and understanding of particular phenomena are required (Gill et al., 2008). To be able to understand the attitude and behavior of target population toward the advertising in LINE application, the research will conduct *semi-structured interview* according to this issue in order to get effectiveness of answer to analyze. The open-ended questions and free-flow of conversation will be used during the interview in order to gain respondents' attitude, values and opinions as much as they want to discuss. An informal atmosphere can encourage the respondent to be open and honest, and interviewer can adjust questions to be suitable for each situation (University of Portsmouth, 2010).

List of open-ended questions to be used during an interview are as followings;

1. *How often do you access the LINE application?*
2. *What are the purposes of access the application?*
3. *Which function do you use when you access the application (such as group chatting, timeline, sticker download)?*
4. *Do you add an official account into your friend list? What brands?*
5. *Please give an example of the brand promotion or advertising message*
6. *What are purposes of adding an official account?*
7. *How important of the “sticker” function toward the motivation of adding an official account?*
8. *Given the rating from 1-10, please give me the importance of “sticker” according to your perception.*
9. *When a notification appears, do you access the information immediately or ignore it (for both chatting and advertising message)? Why?*
10. *Does an advertising message motivate you involve with a brand?*
11. *Have you ever joined any activity or promotion with a brand?*
12. *What do you think about the activity and promotion?*
13. *Could you please share your expectation toward a brand promotion?*
14. *Have you ever deleted or blocked an official account from your friend list? If yes, please inform the reason.*

Each interview took around 20-30 minutes. Furthermore, other opinions and comments from a respondent are free to add during the interview to help obtaining new ideas to analyze the answer.

3.4 Data Analysis

As per the informal conversation approach of interview with open-ended questions, the data for a qualitative study most often are notes jotted down in the field or during an interview. The original comments, observations, and feelings have to be reconstructed and then highlighting a significant message relevant to the research topic

(Seidel,1998). After selecting the significant message, the analysis section of this research includes an interpretation in a meaningful way in which drawing connections between different ideas that were mentioned in the interactive interview.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout this section, the data gathering is focused on LINE application daily-routine users that also have an experience about an official account in order to research the effectiveness of communicating through an official account. The interview includes 15 respondents in Bangkok area with freely discussion method.

4.1 Demographic Profile

Generally, participants were selected randomly according to the interviewer's convenient. However, diversity and demographic characteristics throughout this paper gathering from in-depth interview were 15 people of LINE application users in Bangkok. The interviewees consist of 12 females and 3 males calculated as 80 percent and 20 percent accordingly. Around three-fourth of interviewees graduated from bachelor degree, counted as 73.33 percent, or else are studying master degree. Refer to other variables, participants' age was around 25-34 years old and they all implied occupation as employee.

Gender

As can be seen from the figure 4.1 below, main targeted interviewees are female, 12 people, counted as 80 percent. Others are male, 3 people, counted as 20 percent, all has been used LINE application and have seen official account function.

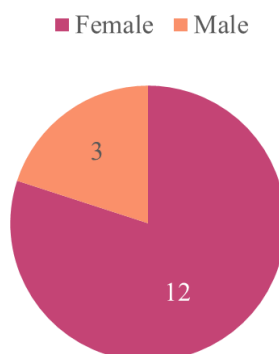


Figure 4.1 Respondent's Profile Classified by Gender

Age

Refer to a research of Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA), the data mentioned that the highest number of LINE application user in Thailand is in the age range of 25-39 years old. Therefore, young adult would be selected as the targeted interviewee population.

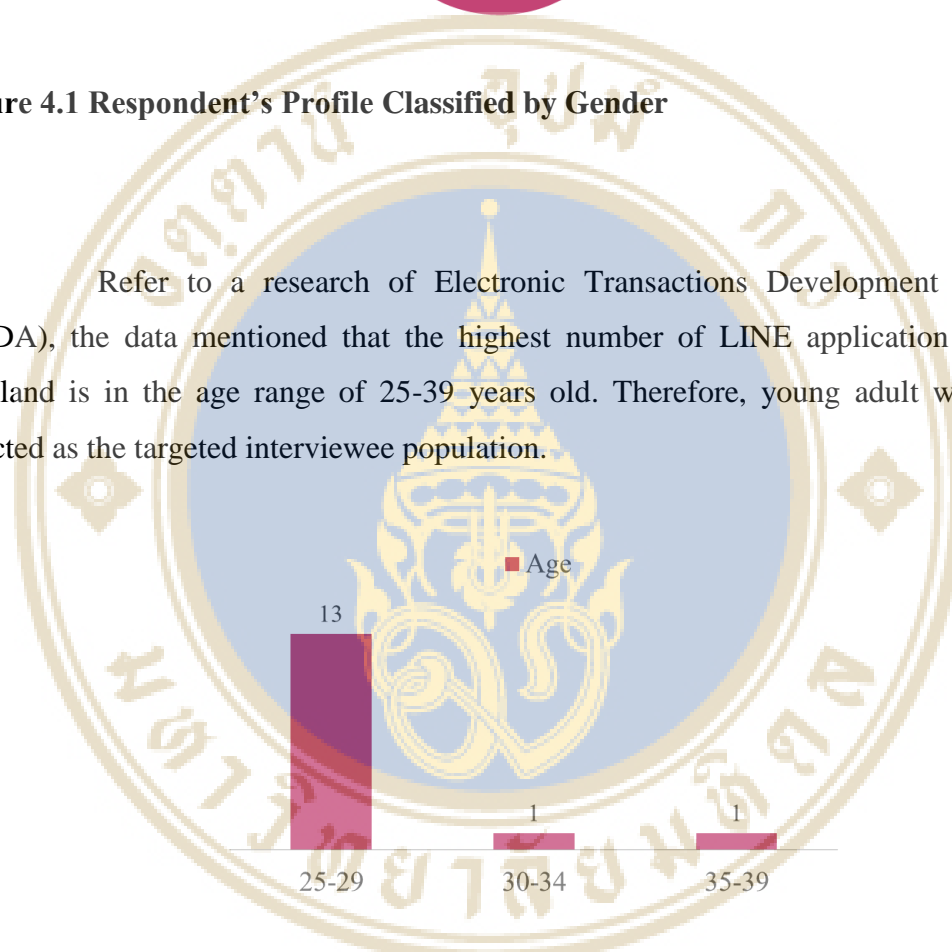


Figure 4.2 Respondent's Profile Classified by Age

The above figure identifies the specific number of respondents toward this research paper classified by age range. There are 13 respondents who attended the interview process with the age range of 25-29, accounted for 86.6 percent of total population, and 1 respondent each for both 30-34 and 35-39 age range, accounted for 6.7 percent individually.

Educational Background

Two major interviewee's educational backgrounds are Bachelor's and Master's degree. Respondents who graduated from bachelor degree contain 11 people and 4 people graduated from Master's degree, accounted for 73.33 percent and 26.67 percent accordingly.

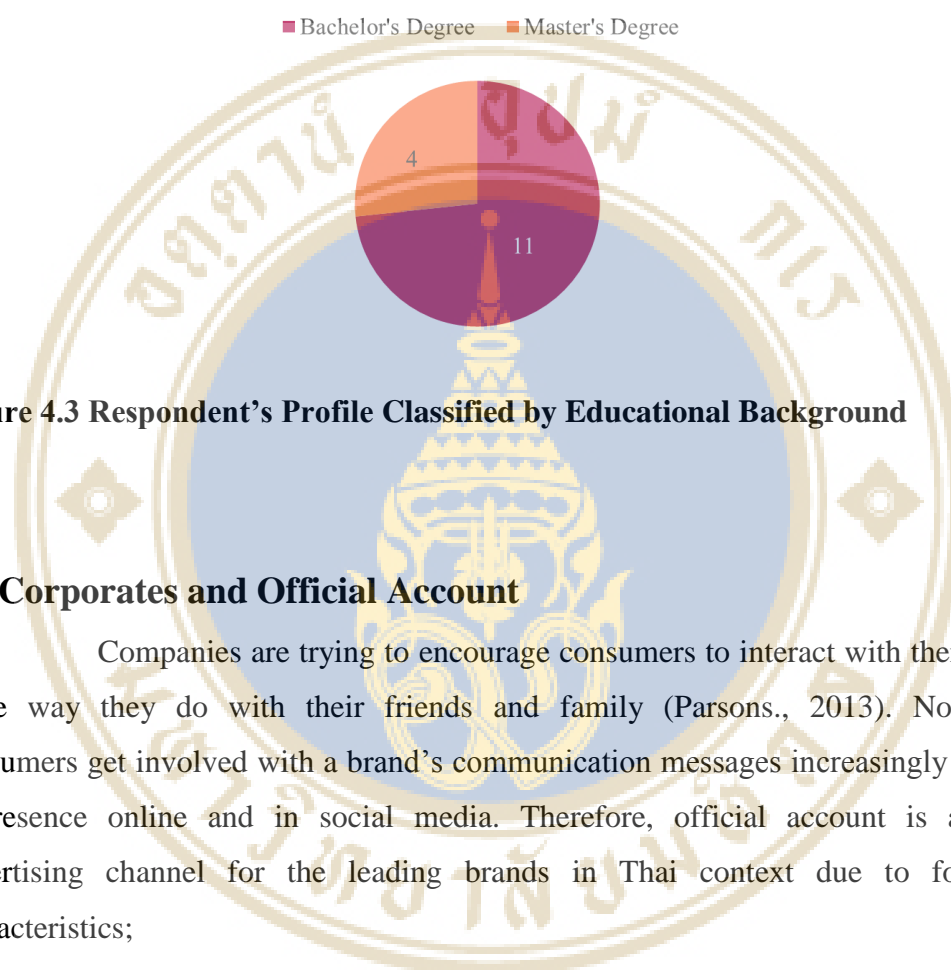


Figure 4.3 Respondent's Profile Classified by Educational Background

4.2 Corporates and Official Account

Companies are trying to encourage consumers to interact with them in the same way they do with their friends and family (Parsons., 2013). Nowadays, consumers get involved with a brand's communication messages increasingly through a presence online and in social media. Therefore, official account is a major advertising channel for the leading brands in Thai context due to following characteristics;

Reach People with Messages, Picture, and Video

LINE official account is a combination of mobile marketing and social media. An official account appears in a user's LINE application by individual customization. In order to receive information from a brand, each user has to select to involve with by click adding the official account. Then, the brand would send advertising messages online to individual chat room which those messages can reach large number of customers who are really their target audience. Moreover, the

messages would be kept in the chat room for customers to recall and come back to read again anytime.

Beside the above characteristic, an official account can imply more than SMS communication channel in mobile device as longer messages can be sent. Furthermore, picture and video of an advertisement can be used to attract an individual customer visually.

Branded Content Exposure Occurs in Timeline

Except the advertising sending to consumers' chat room, the brands' promotional messages also appears in LINE application's Timeline as similar as Facebook's Newsfeed function. Despite an increasing willingness to identify as fans of a brand, it is important to understand that the core user experience of engaging with content in the Timeline extends to branded content (Lipsman, Mudd *et al.* 2012). After searching advertising messages from brands in Timeline for 15 days (March 18- April 4), AIS, a leading network provider brand, delivered 14 promotional messages which could get "LIKE" from audiences approximately 4,576 likes on average per message. Toyota Buzz delivered 21 promotional messages during the period and got 8,377 likes on average per message. PTT delivered 13 promotional messages and got 3,106 likes on average per message. Lastly, Major Cineplex delivered 6 promotional messages in the 15 days and got 6,390 likes on average per message. The example of LIKE receiving of brands reflects amount of customers are really in participate stage of level of engagement to the messages. However, the past statistic revealed that a post from KBank official home used to get 82,000 like the most while having 4 million followers after 3 days launch which can be considered as a potential tool to reach end users (LINE, 2013).

<p>Average Like Received = Amount of customers press like button for a brand's messages (in 15 days) / Total amount of messages to be delivered</p>
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Connecting with Facebook or Website by Using Event Page

Generally, leading brands imply communication channel to both online and offline media. For online media, customers can receive information of the brands through a variety of approaches, such as company's website, Facebook, Youtube, which contain more contents than LINE official account. Therefore, LINE also offers an official account to create an event page to insert pictures, promotion and event details, hyperlink to link with website and Facebook fanpage. When customers want to follow a brand, they do not need to spend time to find URL to link with the brands' social media communication channel due to the prompt detail providing in this page which can arouse customers to get adequate information more easily and have positive attitude toward the brands. Moreover, the brands can build relationship with customers and expand database.

LINE Sponsored Sticker

LINE Sticker is a significant tool to obtain more target audience to aware a brand's official account due to its attraction. To create a sticker set with LINE, it can be words, cartoon, and presenter of the brand which design by LINE Company using LINE's cartoon character, Brown, Cony, Moon, to adjust for each brand, or else using the brand's mascot to represent its brand's characteristic. Limitation of sponsored sticker is the expiry date of the sticker set counted as 90 days after users download it within 1 month release.

However, according to the statistic of sticker download, Muang Thai Life's official account by Muang Thai Insurance which has follow members more than 7.3 million people in Thailand got 1.5 million download within the first day. "Nong Rak Yim", Muang Thai Life's mascot sticker had been use 5.7 million times on average per day due to the character's lifestyle that suit with people's daily used word phrase (Prachachat., 2013). Therefore, Sticker is an effective feature to present brand characteristic and attract customers to follow the brand.

In conclusion, LINE official account has many benefits for brands since the price and time is very reasonable for implying. Even though, the price of opening an official account in 12 months including 1 sponsored sticker is around 4-5 million baht (Marketing Oops, 2012), brands can get followers around 2 million people within

a short period, according to Thai Airways and CP statistic. The brands might have to spend around 1-3 years on Facebook to get that amount of followers, with the cost of managing Fan page at 40,000-80,000 baht per month (Marketing Oops, 2012). Moreover, it would affect the customer database expansion for a company. Within certain of time, companies can increase the amount of target audience and reach million customers due to the LINE customers' database in Thailand, 20 million people. Current official accounts still have opportunity to expand database continuously. However, the marketing strategy is suitable for a leading brand that have more source of fund to spend because it require high cost than other social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube.

4.3 Behavioral Analysis towards Official Account

Throughout the interviews, respondents were able to talk and discuss freely toward the official account function in LINE application individually. After gathering information from all interviewees, it found that every respondent answered in the same direction of how they involved and react to these official accounts.

Moderating effects of permission

Even though LINE application is considered as a social network marketing channel, advertising message of an official account via LINE is counted as a mobile marketing due to the promotional message function as same as SMS. Permission is important for mobile marketing because it reduces customer irritation. Without permission, messages are perceived as spam (Phumisak *et al.*, 2012). The impact of mobile spam can negatively influence customer attitudes and lower response rates toward the messages (Schart *et al.*, 2005) and lower brand perception (Barwise and Strong, 2002). According to the in-depth interviews, all interviewees added more than one official account into their friend list, which means that they all gave permission to the brands to push information and promotional message into their chat function. This finding suggests that the marketing tool can create brand awareness and positive attitude toward the brands. Some respondents pointed out that a brand official

account made them have more knowledge about the brand and know the brand more by receiving that information, especially for lower reputation brands.

Message ignorance

All respondents agreed that they did not read advertising or promotion message sending from official accounts. They tend to ignore the promotional messages and leave it. Or else, they would come to click those messages in the purpose of making the notification sign to disappear without reading any message and some click reading by mistake. However, some respondents mentioned that they might read the advertising message only when those official accounts provided interesting information associated with their wants and promotion for them to redeem such as now showing movie, and discount campaign for a meal. The rest of official accounts are often deleted from the list.

Almost all respondents have not joined any activity and brand's promotion through LINE official account

Although, there are activities and promotions along with each official account such as win a prize event and product's price discount campaign, most of people ignored the messages and did not redeem the promotion. The rate of attention is low because they do not really interested in the brands' communication messages and they did not have a chance to purchase due to non-daily consumption product such as banking service, mobile phone, airline, etc. However, food product's promotion messages or campaigns, such as price discount and free coupon, can attract customer attention the most.

Consumers hate too often messaging

Messaging too frequently would be considered as spam in Thai context and it also runs the risk of being over-bearing to customers who could choose to opt-out in higher volumes. Bombarding people with messages is a significant way to make LINE users unsatisfied. Almost all respondents agreed that they tended to annoy any brand who send message too often because they do not want to read and perceive the information, especially for any brand that they are not interesting in. Moreover, in

LINE application, the more of many brands messages were pushed to customers, the more of customers' chat room with their friend would fall behind. Therefore, customers give precedence to chat rather than get an advertising message and they would have negative attitude toward the brand. Due to the spam messages, users tended to opt-out or delete those official accounts from their friend list. Furthermore, if the sticker set from the brand already expired, it would become a great motivation for them to decide to delete the official account more easily.

“Sticker” is the most required function to motivate a person to add an official account

Normally, a brand official account is built in order to get customer awareness with the up-to-dated information of the brand and promotion providing for users, and some would come up with a sticker set. Almost all respondents informed that they would like to add an official account only when those official accounts provide sticker for them to download because sticker set is a motivation variable of the brand to encourage them to involve with the and receive a promotional message immediately. As can be seen from the information during interviews, respondents were asked to rank the importance of sticker toward motivation of adding an official account according to their preference. The result revealed that no one ranked the variable below 8 out of 10. However, the sticker set has to be free of charge. Some respondents even mentioned that they have not concerned any brand reputation to involve with an official account, but they would not add a brand's official account if the brand has not provided them any sticker set. Furthermore, many respondents also mentioned that they only add an official account that contains only a pretty sticker in their perception.

Special promotion makes people stick with a brand's official account

During the interviews, almost all respondents answered in the same direction that messages that motivate them intend to read is only a special promotion from any brand that associated to their interest, such as shopping, dining, network provider promotion, movie, etc. After the special promotion messages come in, users would follow and involve with the brand by redeem the promotion rather than other

official account that contain non-daily consumption product, such as banking, car and insurance. Therefore, daily consumption product would benefit from this marketing channel.

Low level of Word-of-Mouth communication

From the information of the in-depth interviews, almost all interviewees have not suggested or discussed about a brand's official account with their friends, relatives and others. The reason is that they thought everyone also add the same official account. Therefore, the information receiving are not different to everyone. One respondent mentioned that she did not suggest a brand's official account to others because she has not seen any account that attractive enough.

It is important to have a communication strategy for each social media tool used, to develop a style, to find a balance between selling and talking, to update content, and to discriminate between what information should appear on the website and what information should appear in social media (Ramsay, 2010). Official account feature contain advantages for corporate and provide a huge opportunity to reach millions of end users within a short period of time. An official account can provide information by visual picture, video, and word messages which are stronger than standard mobile marketing and attract end users with the brand's sticker. Moreover, an official account links customer to a company' website and Facebook to receive more information and build more relationship with them. However, the findings of the current study revealed that most of respondents tended to be in the middle stage between "Bystander" and "Follower". While those users usually add official account into their friend list because of the attractive stickers and their interest toward a brand, they tend to ignore and do not interact with the brand's messages, some even deleted messages without reading. Additionally, the messages that end users would like to read is about promotion and information from daily-used product, such as beverage, movie, and travel. All respondents also mentioned that; even though they usually ignore the messages of an official account, they still have brand awareness toward the brand by getting to know more brand knowledge and product offerings. Therefore, LINE official account has a benefit for brand equity.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Practical Implications

LINE Official Account is suitable for a leading band or corporation that would like to build brand awareness and gain a huge customer's database to follow their activities, events and promotion. At present, as can be seen from brands' official home to push information to users, the total LIKE of each brand just accounted the most at 82,000 likes, even though there are millions of followers. Therefore, there are an opportunities for brands to attract more customers. The recommendations toward this marketing tool are as followings;

Carefully control the frequency of messages

As LINE users concern the privacy, they are easy to ignore the advertising messages and get annoyed when any brand sends promotional message too frequent. More frequent of messages can make their chat room list is too crowded with promotion message which are not their need of using LINE application and be considered as interruption. This can run the risk of be over-bearing to users and turn participant users into by stander stage, or else avoid involvement with the brand. This may result in decreasing relationship level and negative effect toward brand equity.

No Incentive equals no value

In order to attract customers' attention in reading a message, an official account should consider pushing messages efficiently and providing value for users. The messages should not be repeated from TV, print ad and the website, copying them exactly on the official account. The messages should be creative and play with words, emoticons that can really communicate with customer as a friend. Moreover, those messages should be able to play call-to-action (CTAs) strategy. The primary purpose of a CTA is to get your target consumer to do something – to purchase an item, sign

up for a service, or request more information. CTAs are too often neglected in marketing messages. Without CTAs, consumers may become uninterested in messages (Petersen, 2013). Therefore, a brand should provide messages that motivate people to involve with and shoot many promotion messages for them to redeem, such as get free item, sign up for membership program, and discount campaign by showing LINE message. In addition, the messages should include information that can link with website, Facebook, Video advertising to gather their interest. This will enhance brand awareness and level of engagement to the brand.

Corporate should consider spending on Sticker

Sticker is ranked as the most significant factor for user to add an official account. Normally, users rarely search or look for an official account to get a promotional message. With the sticker set pop-up in the application, it arouses end users to make decision very easily to involve with a brand. Sticker also represents the brand personality such as color of the brand, and mascot characteristic. At present, there are high volumes of sticker set offering in the application; therefore, people tend to choose to keep some sets. However, the sticker mascot should be attractive and lovely enough for users to decide to download; otherwise, they tend to ignore the official account. Since LINE's cartoon characters, such as Brown, Cony, Moon, are popular among LINE users, corporation might hire LINE mascot to apply with the brand in order to gain awareness more quickly. KBank's sticker set should be considered as one of the best examples. As can be seen from the picture below, KBank can further imply marketing strategy toward LINE's character which bring a word-of-mouth communication among customers and attract them to involve with the company.

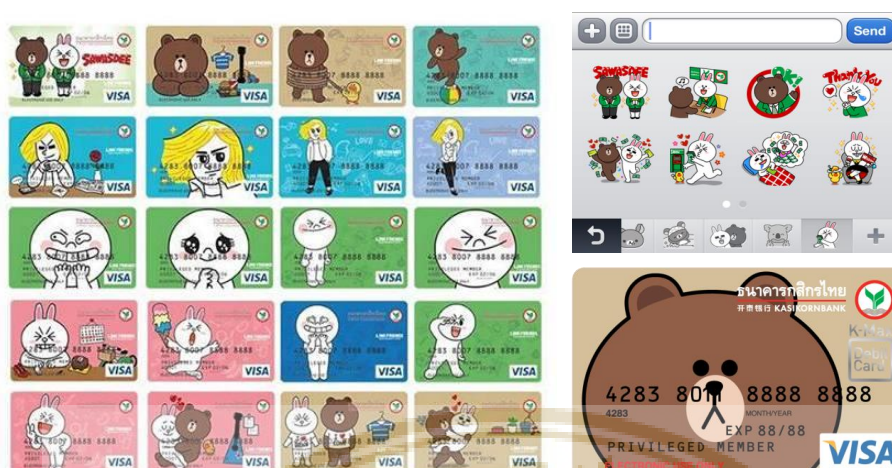


Figure 5.1 Samples of Kbank applying LINE cartoon character with its product

Provide a convenient approach for user to join activity

LINE official account is considered as a “real connection” that can communicate with customers 24 hours. To let customers redeem promotion and join any event, a brand should provide a convenient approach for them, such as hyperlink for sign up, join activity via the official account chat room, and be able to use promotion messages in the LINE’s official account at the brand retail store. The strategy can encourage users to be interested in the brand’s message and lower the rate of ignorance.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Within the research and interview process discussed in chapter 3 and 4 may bring along a number of possible limitations. It is important to consider these limitations before generalizing the results beyond the further study. First limitation should be concerned is about sampling population. The scope of interview population is limited only in Bangkok area and contain small amount of interviewees in which different opinions and important variable towards LINE official account marketing strategy can be missed. For a further study, it has to be more widely with number that applies both qualitative, interview, and quantitative research, questionnaire, which can make the study become more obvious.

Second, this research information was obtained from end users' experience with the LINE official account only in which applied the qualitative research or interview process. Other information about a brand's official account was obtained from secondary research, such as library database and the brand's website. Lacking of the information through interview process with corporates who implementing the marketing strategy can cause the results were incompletely fulfilled with the actual benefit and efficiency of the marketing strategy. The further study may investigate and interview directly with corporate in order to get more complete information about the marketing efficiency.

Third, as the new marketing strategy, LINE official account, is implemented popularly throughout many countries, such as Japan, Korea, China, and Vietnam. The information for this research was scoped at Thailand only which means that the result of the survey might different with dissimilar country. Population in various countries might contain vary of consumer behavior that response to the marketing strategy. Therefore, more worldwide population interview toward the study can be the benefit to the next move of the marketing development and concerned.

In addition, LINE official account is a combination of mobile marketing strategy and social media. The present theories that were used in this research is the separated theory from both mobile and social media marketing, which do not specifically direct to the marketing strategy.

5.3 Conclusion

An encouraging number of companies had implemented a LINE official account at the time this study was conducted. Brands are using LINE official account for a variety purposes but the major purpose seems to be more on trying to develop relationships with consumers and communicate the brands' messages. LINE official account marketing is a combination of both mobile marketing and social media which contain the different function from Facebook and other social media form. An official account can deliver a message to end users after receiving permission from them which improve brand equity and relationship between brands and customers. Also,

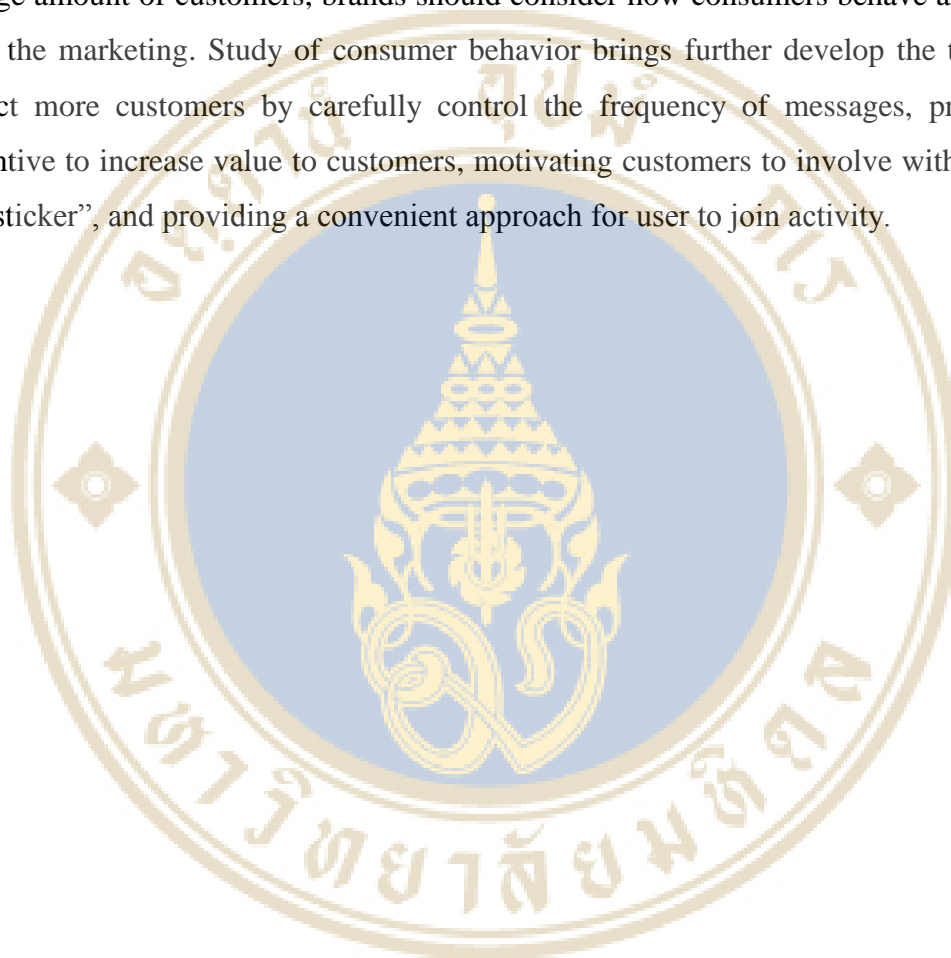
brands can communicate their message through official home which is able to deliver message and get response by community.

This study concentrates on the factors that influence the leading brand to choose LINE official account as one of the main marketing campaign and study of consumer behavior toward the communication of the marketing channel. The target group is the population who use LINE application as the daily-routine communication channel with the age range of 25-39 years old, which is noticeable as the highest number of LINE application user in Thailand. After the study through secondary data, four main dimensions of functions that encourage corporate to implement official account are reaching people with messages, picture, and video, branded context exposure occur in timeline, connecting with Facebook or website by using event page, and LINE sponsored sticker. The dimensions can be considered as a potential tool to reach user by longer message can be sent than mobile marketing, broadcast advertising for community, sponsored sticker to attract customers to involve with brands and response to the message. The benefits of this pull strategy are obviously appeared as an increasing in brand awareness, perceived in brand association and lead consumers to follow the brands' advertising messages.

However, the results after interview process revealed about consumer behavior toward the marketing strategy that it was very important for brands to perceive permission before sending the messages to customers, otherwise it would be considered as a spam and lead to a negative effect along with the brand equity. Anyhow, consumers expressed some opposite opinion toward the advantage of the marketing. Customers tended to ignore promotional messages, they were interested in some information associated with their wants and promotion for them to redeem only. Most of interviewees have not joined any activity and brand's promotion through LINE official account because they did not have a chance to purchase due to non-daily consumption product. Moreover, customers felt annoying with any brands that send too frequently messaging and make them to choose to opt-out from involving with the brands. Then, sticker function was an important function of using the application; therefore, sticker was the most required function to motivate a person to add an official account. Any brands that provided a sticker set for end users to download, they would have higher percentage of being added customers. Information that got from

interviewees was that special promotion from daily-consumption product made people stick with a brand's official account more than others which encourage them to read and redeem those promotion, reflecting the more participant stage. Lastly, customers rarely had word-of-mouth communication with their friend about an official account because of inadequate attractive information to arouse the WOM.

To conclude, even though LINE official account is a potential tool to reach a large amount of customers, brands should consider how consumers behave and react with the marketing. Study of consumer behavior brings further develop the tactic to attract more customers by carefully control the frequency of messages, providing incentive to increase value to customers, motivating customers to involve with brands by “sticker”, and providing a convenient approach for user to join activity.



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