

Examining LINE Users' Behavior, Motivation, Attitudes and Factors Influencing Use and Adoption of LINE Official Accounts in Thailand

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Abstract

LINE, the successful Japanese instant messaging (IM) application, was developed by NHN (Next Human Network) Japan Corporation. In June 2012, NHN provided 'LINE Official Accounts' (LINE OAs) aimed for firms to send messages directly to LINE users, who have added their accounts as friends. The objective of this research is to understand LINE users' behavior for improving of firms to use LINE OAs as mobile marketing communication efficiently. The online questionnaire survey were asked 306 LINE users in Thailand, the second ranked of LINE user. The results of this study show that most Thais use LINE because LINE is easy and prevalent. LINE users are daily use when they have free time or LINE alerts. The main objective of using LINE is to keep in touch with friends and family. Besides entertainment is the major motivation of LINE use. Most of LINE users have good attitude towards LINE. In this study, free stickers, 'Block' function and messages were investigated that influence on adoption and use of LINE OAs. The results indicate that most of LINE users add LINE OAs because of free stickers which corroborate the ideas of NHN, who develop the users' attraction by 'Business Stickers'. Furthermore LINE users feel firms aren't intrusive of LINE users' privacies and have positive attitude with firms by 'Block' function. Moreover LINE users could know, recognize some brands and follow firms' update news by receiving LINE OAs' messages. Finally, Operation development of LINE OAs are discussed.

Key words: LINE, Thailand, Motivation and Attitude

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Motivation

During the past few year, many applications were developed for smart-phone especially instant messaging (IM) applications (app). In this smart-phone era, many marketers use IM app as a tool of mobile marketing communications. LINE is a one of IM app becoming the mobile communication channel and an alternative for advertisers to communicate with consumers through LINE OAs feature. LINE is an IM app developed by employees of NHN (Next Human Network) Japan, a subsidiary of South Korean internet company Naver, and released for public use in June 2011 (LINE Corporation Global News, 2013). LINE began after telecommunication infrastructure nationwide was damaged because of Japan's devastating Tōhoku earthquake in March 2011 (Saito, 2012). LINE was originally developed for Android and iOS smartphones. But now the service has since expanded to many phone such as Windows Phone (LINE Official Blog, 2012b), BlackBerry (LINE Official Blog, 2012c) and Nokia Asha (LINE Official Blog, 2013) etc. The application also exists in versions for laptop and desktop computers (LINE Official Blog, 2012a) using the Microsoft Windows and Mac OS platforms. LINE is free to download, install and provides many features for user includes text messaging, video calling, picture/video sending, location sharing and etc.

LINE is a successful Japanese IM app, reached 100 million users within eighteen months and 200 million users only six months later. This trend has continued and just 4 months after the last milestone of 300 million users, the amount of LINE users worldwide surpassed 400 million on April 1, 2014. (Shown in Fig. 1) (Corporation LINE, 2014) .

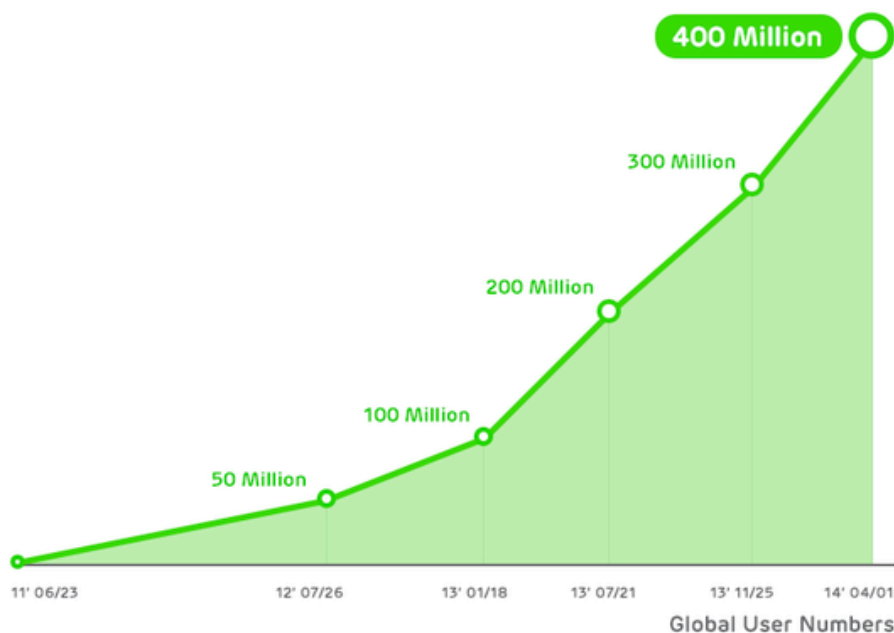


Fig. 1. Number of Global LINE user
Source:(Corporation LINE, 2014)

In October 2014 Line announced that it had attracted 560 million users worldwide with 170 million active user accounts (Statista, 2015a). Line also released an updated count of its registered users region by region. Of those, 54 million registered users are in Japan, 33 million in Thailand, 30 million in Indonesia, 18 million in Spain, and 17 million in Taiwan etc. (shown in Fig. 2) (Statista, 2015b). The overwhelming success of Line has made it the most popular social messaging network in Thailand. Thailand marks the fourth location of Line's official offices after setting up shop in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Moreover Thailand has the second most Line users globally (FERNQUEST, 2014). So Thailand was chosen as a country that used to do this study.

In June 2012, NHN Japan Corporation introduced LINE Official Accounts (LINE OAs) which is a feature allows firms to send messages directly to LINE users who have added their account as a 'friend'. 'Business Stickers' or free sticker in this study is the one feature that LINE OAs offer to develop the users' attraction and sense of closeness towards their business image. (NHN Japan Corporation, 2012).

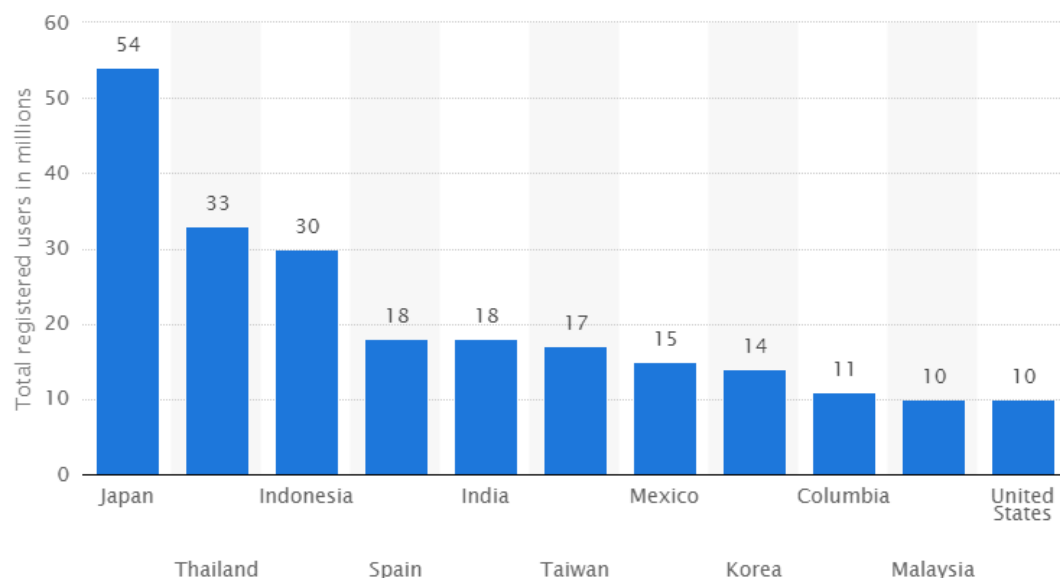


Fig. 2. Number of registered LINE app users in selected countries as of October 2014
Source: (Statista, 2015b)

However, users also can block the accounts after they add them as friends and download free stickers. So the main purpose of LINE OAs creating may not be achieve. To achieve LINE OAs' objectives, firms should understand LINE users' behavior. The behavior of LINE users can be explained as well as consumer behavior. Understanding consumer behavior is of utmost importance because the marketing of products/ services are largely dependent on these factors. Studying consumer behavior helps in many aspects such as helps firms to design the optimal products/ services, improve firm's performance, build a loyal customer and forecast future consumers' needs. Thus, consumer behavior serves as a successful tool for marketers in meeting their sales objectives. The more consumers' behavior is learnt the more the needs and wants of the consumers are fulfilled.

Regarding motivation, as Nevid (2013: 288) mentions 'motivation as factors that activate, direct, and sustain goal-directed behavior. ... Motives are the "whys" of behavior - the needs or wants that drive behavior and explain what we do. We don't actually observe a motive; rather, we infer that one exists based on the behavior we observe.' (Nevid, 2013). Therefore more than behavior, firm should know LINE usage motivation to improve their service to meet LINE users' need.

Although LINE users can block the accounts as mentioned above, but blocking function may prevent users' negative attitudes toward firms. Another one of key in succeed of business is Customers' attitude. Either positive or negative attitude, in this era, word of mouth (WOM) is very easy and rapid spread via social media. Therefore, Firms should be cautious in attitude of consumers. If a consumer be satisfied and has a great attitude, they might share their experience to their friends which can be benefits to firms. But on the other hand, if consumers have negative attitude, they won't only stop using the product/ service, they might tell to others. This is substantially impact on firms such as loss customers, loss of sales and loss of reputation. Therefore, companies should pay more attention on consumer attitudes.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are

1. To examine LINE users' behavior, motivation and attitudes.
2. To understand the factors influencing use and adoption of LINE OAs.
3. To suggest firms to develop operation of LINE OAs.

The finding could contribute firms can achieve the objectives of creating LINE OAs such as increase users' willingness to receive and read their messages, join in accounts' activities and share some information to users' friends, minimize intrusive of user privacy which can also minimize users' negative attitude on firms. Moreover new customers or loyal customers of firms could be increase by following LINE OAs.

2. Literature Review

Since smart phone become a part of daily life, mobile application is the channel that firms adopt in their marketing operations to promote their products/ services, advertise or interact with customers. This is in accordance with Leeflang et al.' s (2014) finding that showed company home pages, e-mail, and social media are most commonly used in 2014 and over the next 2 – 4 years social media and mobile applications represent the biggest growth areas of digital marketing tools (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2014). In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature regarding customer's behavior, motivation or attitude toward mobile applications such as QR codes (Watson, McCarthy, & Rowley, 2013), WeChat (Lien & Cao, 2014).

To better understand customers' attitude on instant messaging application of smart phone, Lien & Cao (2014) survey WeChat's user in China, because WeChat is the one channel that marketers could use to directly communicate with their customers. Their results support for the hypothesis that entertainment, sociality, information, and trust positively influence WeChat users' attitudes. Moreover entertainment, sociality, and information were important motivation in adopting WeChat of Chinese users.

(Lien & Cao, 2014). In this study the questions about motivation, therefore, adapted questions of WeChat's study.

Chang & Zhu's comparative study (2011) found that entertainment motivation has a significant effect on pre-adopters of social network site (SNS) but no significant on post-adopters. In contrast, connecting with old friends has significant effect on post-adopters while has none on pre-adopters in China (Chang & Zhu, 2011). However Kim et al. (2011) suggested that SNS users in different countries have different motivations because of cultural differences. A comparison of the United states and Korea reveals that convenience have a significant effect on US SNS user attitudes, and the motivations of seeking social support and convenience have a significant effect on Korean SNS user attitudes. However, seeking information has no significant effect on SNS user attitudes in both countries (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). Thereby this study will examine Thais' motivation toward LINE usage.

Regarding the consumers' negative attitudes towards mobile marketing communications, the finding of previous study suggest that permission marketing, trust-building, creating a sense of being in control, and useful and entertaining website content can enhanced the acceptance of mobile marketing communication. Because perceptions mobile device of consumers are personal communication and preference on control interaction with organizations (Watson et al., 2013). 'Block' function, which LINE users can control interaction with organization, was considered to investigate as a factor that minimize intrusive of user privacy and minimize users' negative attitude on firms and also was enquired being one of factors influencing on adding LINE OAs in this study.

3. Research Framework and Methodology

3.1 Research Framework

The research framework (shown in Fig. 3) consists 2 parts. The first part is to examine behavior, motivation and attitude toward LINE usage of LINE users in Thailand. The second part is to investigate factors influencing use and adoption of LINE OAs which include free stickers, 'Block' function and messages. And because of LINE's feature and WeChat has similar, in term of motivation, Lien & Cao proposes that entertainment, sociality, and information are important motivations of Chinese users in adopting WeChat (Lien & Cao, 2014). This study, therefore, the motivation and attitude questionnaire's part were adapted from WeChat's study which they use Likert scale, but in this research use 'YES' or 'NO' question.

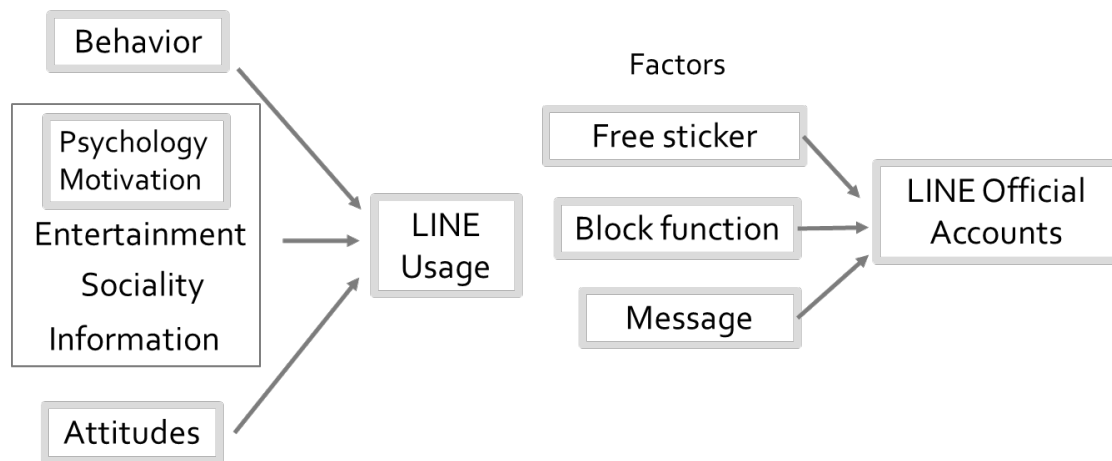


Fig. 3. Research framework

3.2 Research Sample

Our samples are Thai people who use LINE. The sample were collected during January 30 to February 22, 2015. A total of 352 respondents replied. After deleting sample with unreasonable responds, the numbers of valid observations were 306.

3.3 Measures

The survey questionnaire was developed with five sections. The first section is respondents' demographic (gender, age, occupation, education and income). The second section is LINE usage behavior. The third section is motivation (entertainment, sociality and information) and attitude toward the use of LINE. The forth section are the factors influencing adoption of official accounts which include free sticker, block function and official accounts' messages. The last section is operation development of LINE official accounts.

4. Research Result & Data Analysis

Data was analysed by SPSS software and was explained by Descriptive statistics and Inference statistic. In the form of Descriptive statistics, percentages was used for overview understand LINE users. Most of questions in questionnaire are multiple choice which means respondents can answer more than one answer. So the percentage not only show in each answer, but also show in comparative with other answers too. Moreover Inference statistics was used for more understand specific in each group of LINE users.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Demographic Data

Among 306 useable respondents, 71.6% of them were females. The majority of ages range is 25 to 35 with 37.9%. 31.4% of them were students, 25.6% were office worker/ employee and 19.2% were business owner/freelance. Most of them got Bachelor's Degree/ Undergraduate with 52.3%. And 35.0% of the respondents'

incomes were more than 30,000 baht. Table 1 shows the summary of demographic statistics.

Table 1. Summary of demographic statistics (N = 306)

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1.1 Gender	male	87	28.4
	female	219	71.6
1.2 Age	15-24	81	26.5
	25-35	116	37.9
	36-45	31	10.1
	46-60	78	25.5
1.3 Occupation	student	96	31.4
	Bureaucrat/ state enterprise officer	47	15.4
	office worker/ employee	79	25.8
	business owner/freelance	59	19.3
	others	25	8.2
1.4 education	lower than Bachelor's Degree	48	15.7
	Bachelor's Degree/ Undergraduate	160	52.3
	Master's degree/ Doctor's degree	98	32.0
1.5 Income	less than 15,000	103	33.7
	15,000 - 30,000	96	31.4
	more than 30,000	107	35.0

4.1.2 LINE User Behavior

Table 2 summaries the behavior of LINE user behavior. It shows reasons why LINE users use LINE which includes easy (81.7%), prevalent (68.3%), free (55.6%), LINE sticker (45.8%), private (36.3%) and various functions (31.0%). The frequency of LINE usage is 95.4% daily use, 64.1% of them use LINE when they have free time and 52.1% use when it alert. The main objective of LINE user is 99.3% to keep in touch with friends and family. Most of LINE users (26.8%) have 50 – 100 friends on LINE.

4.1.3 Motivation and Attitude toward the Use of LINE

To examine motivation and attitude toward LINE usage, the results were summarize in table 3. In response to question of motivation part, LINE users indicated that motivation of LINE usage is entertainment 90%, sociality 74% and information 72%. Furthermore 94% of LINE users have good attitude toward LINE which is the most important for any firms and good attitude could effect to positive word of mouth. That is why LINE's so prevalent in Thailand.

Table 2. LINE user behavior (N = 306)

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%*</i>	<i>%**</i>
2.1 Why do you use LINE App?	free	170	55.6	17
	easy	250	81.7	25
	private	111	36.3	11
	sticker	140	45.8	14
	various functions	95	31.0	10
	prevalent	209	68.3	21
2.2 How often do you use Line app?	other	22	7.2	2
	daily	292	-	95
	1-6/week	12	-	4
2.3 Duration of LINE usage	1-3/month	2	-	1
	morning	97	31.7	15
	alert	159	52.0	25
	free time	196	64.1	30
	working/studying	78	25.5	12
2.4 What are the objectives do you use LINE?	at night	115	37.6	18
	family	304	99.3	45
	new friends	6	2.0	1
	business	138	45.1	20
	games	36	11.8	5
	update news	89	29.1	13
	Timeline	102	33.3	15
2.5 How many friends do you have on LINE?	Other	3	1.0	1
	< 50	45	-	15
	50 – 100	82	-	27
	101 – 150	62	-	20
	151 – 200	42	-	14
	> 200	75	-	24

*** Percentage is in each answer. (Multiple choice), ** Percentage is all answer in one question.**

4.1.4 Factors influencing use and adoption of LINE Official Accounts

First question of the forth part questionnaire separated respondents that have LINE OAs and didn't have LINE OAs. The finding is 80.1% of respondents (245) have LINE OAs and 19.9% (61) didn't have, so 19.9% of them can skip the forth part questionnaire to fifth part.

Table 3. Motivation and Attitude toward the use of LINE. (N = 306)

<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%*</i>	<i>%**</i>
Entertainment	LINE is fun to use.	Yes	287	93.8	90
	LINE is entertaining.	Yes	268	87.6	
	Using LINE is pleasing.	Yes	276	90.2	
Sociality	I can meet new friends through LINE.	Yes	111	36.3	74
	I can find old friends through LINE.	Yes	262	85.6	
	I can keep in touch with my friends through LINE.	Yes	305	99.7	
Information	LINE is a convenient source of information.	Yes	257	84.0	72
	LINE is a good source of information.	Yes	172	56.2	
	LINE provides timely information.	Yes	235	76.8	
<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	
	I feel comfortable in using LINE.	Yes	273	89.2	94
	I like using LINE to communicate with my friends.	Yes	291	95.1	
	I have positive attitude toward LINE.	Yes	301	98.4	

*** Percentage is in each questions, ** Percentage is each type of motivation and attitude.**

The forth part were design to analyse the percentage of each factors on adopting LINE OAs. 84.9% of respondents add LINE OAs because the accounts offer free stickers and 45.3% of them add because their friends send them those free stickers and they want too. Free stickers are not only influence on adopting LINE OAs, but also influent on LINE users include making users know some brands 62.4% and recognize some brands 53.9%. But only 24.5% be new customers and 23.7% be loyal customers.

After add LINE OAs as friends, the survey found that 85.7% of LINE users have blocked LINE OAs (24.3% of them block all accounts and 65% of them block some accounts). 74.3% of LINE users feel its bother because accounts sent them too many messages and 44.1% of them just want free stickers. However a minority of LINE users indicated the reasons that they didn't block some accounts because they are interested in Brand 43.7%, they are the accounts customers 40.4% and they didn't bother the accounts 29.4%. When the LINE users were asked whether LINE didn't provide 'Block' function, would you download their free sticker?, the majority answer are not sure (50.2%), 27.8% of LINE users answer they still download but 22.0% of them don't download.

Although 'Block' function make accounts cannot send LINE users their messages, but 90.6% of LINE users feel firms aren't intrusive of LINE users privacies and 78.4% of them feel free and have positive attitude with brands.

Although messages are the main point of creating LINE OAs, but there are only 51% of LINE users add LINE OAs as friends even they didn't offer free stickers which mean LINE users are willing to receive the information from accounts. From the finding, there are 91% of LINE users have some official account to receive messages and 89.7 % of them have read some messages. Not many of LINE user join in companies' activities, delete messages and share to friends with 19.3%, 18.4% and 8.5% respectively. By the way, if compare the effect of free stickers and messages on LINE users, the finding shows that messages make more LINE users know some brands, recognize some brands, be new customers and be loyal customers than free stickers with 77.1%, 69.5%, 30.0% and 29.1% respectively. Moreover LINE users can follow companies' update news by receiving their messages by 66.4%.

4.1.5 Operation development of LINE Official Accounts

In the final part of the survey, respondents were asked their preference about LINE OAs. Since free stickers were created to attract LINE users, the top three of most preference stickers are clear emotion/ animation stickers 84.6%, up-to-date and sticker with text which had same percentage 51.3% and stickers for special festival 50.3% respectively. For the content of messages that LINE users prefer to receive are promotion 66% and tips 54.2%. Most of them prefer to receive short messages 78.1% and picture messages 54.2%. 55 % of LINE users think the number of messages that it is enough per account per day is only one message. Moreover the period time that LINE users have a chance to read accounts' messages is at night 50.7%. All result was shown in Table 5.

4.2 Inference Statistics - Chi-Square (P-Value)

4.2.1 Gender, Age and Duration of LINE Usage

As Table 6 shows, there is a significant difference between gender and duration of LINE usage which consider significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. 75.90% of male use LINE when they have free time ($p = 0.007$). While another duration, gender is no significant difference.

Moreover there is a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the age and duration of LINE usage. 61.7% of age 15 – 16 use LINE when it's alert. ($p = 0.001$) and 82.1% of age 45 -60 use LINE when they have free time ($p = 0.002$). From this finding, firms can know duration of their customer duration LINE usage. If most of their customers are age between 15 – 24 years old, they should be careful sending too many messages in anytime otherwise their customers will be annoy and finally block LINE OAs although LINE provide 'Turn off alert' function already.

Table 4. Factors influencing use and adoption of LINE Official Accounts (N = 306)

<i>Official account</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
	I Have LINE official accounts as friends	Yes	245	80.1
		No	61	19.9
Factors (N = 245)				
<i>1. Free stickers</i>	<i>Answer</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1.1 Influence on adding friends	Official accounts offer free stickers.		208	84.9
	Official account didn't offer free sticker.		125	51.0
	Friends send me stickers and I want to have too.		111	45.3
1.2 Influence on LINE users	I know some Brand because of their free stickers.		153	62.4
	I recognize some Brand because of their free stickers.		132	53.9
	I become a new customer of some Brand because of their free stickers.		60	24.5
	I become a loyal customer of some Brand because of their free stickers.		58	23.7
2. Block function				
2.1 After you add Official Accounts as friends because of their free stickers, have you ever block them?	block		210	85.7
	- block some		- 159	- 75.7
	- block all		- 51	- 24.3
	never block		35	14.3
2.2 The reasons of why did you block them?	just want sticker		108	44.1
	too many message		182	74.3
2.3 The reasons of why did you block them?	I'm their customer.		99	40.4
	I'm interested in Brands.		107	43.7
	I didn't bother them.		72	29.4
2.4 Influence on add friends If LINE didn't provide 'block' function, would you download their free sticker?	download		68	27.8
	no download		54	22.0
	not sure		123	50.2
2.3 Influence on LINE users Block' function makes me feel free and have positive attitude with brands.			192	78.4

'Block' function make me feel firms aren't intrusive of my privacy.	222	90.6
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3. Messages	Answer	Frequency	%
3.1 I have Official accounts to receive messages.	Yes	223	91.0
(Including case it's bother and then block all)	No	22	9.0
(N =223)			
3.2 LINE users' response to message	I read some message	200	89.7
	I delete message	41	18.4
	I join their activities	43	19.3
	I share to friends	19	8.5
3.2 Influence on LINE users			
- I know some Brand because receive their messages.		172	77.1
- I recognize some Brand because receive their messages.		155	69.5
- I become a new customer of some Brand because receive their messages.		67	30.0
- I become a loyal customer of some Brand because receive their messages.		65	29.1
- I can follow update news of some Brand because receive their messages.		148	66.4

Table 5. Operation development of LINE Official Account (N = 306)

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%*</i>	<i>%**</i>
4.1 Which sticker do you prefer?	celeb	55	18.0	6
	brand character	61	19.9	6
	famous cartoon	148	48.4	15
	normal/slang	157	51.3	16
	text			
	clear emotion, animation	259	84.6	26
	special festival	154	50.3	15
	up-to-date	157	51.3	16
4.2 Which kinds of information do you prefer?	theirs news	138	45.1	20
	theirs	202	66.0	30
	promotion			
	inspiration	106	34.6	16
	message			
	tips	166	54.2	24
4.3 Which kinds of message do you prefer?	on air activity	70	22.9	10
	short message	239	78.1	45
	long message	18	5.9	3
	video	27	8.8	5
	message			
	picture	166	54.2	31
4.4 How many messages do you think it is enough per account per day?	message			
	link message	84	27.5	16
	only one	169	-	55
	1 - 3	76	-	25
4.5 Which period time do you have a chance to read messages from accounts?	no limit	61	-	20
	morning	59	19.3	14
	break time	83	27.1	20
	evening	116	37.9	28
	night	155	50.7	38

*** Percentage is in each answer (Multiple choice), ** Percentage is all answer in one question.**

Table 6. Chi-square (P-value) of Gender, Age and Duration of LINE usage.

during time		Gender		P value	Age				P value
		male	female		15-24	25-35	36-45	45-60	
mornin g	coun t	28	69	0.90	20	42	9	26	0.37
	%*	32.20	31.50	9	24.7	36.2	29%	33.3	3
alert	coun t	42	117	0.41	50	69	13	27	0.00
	%*	48.30	53.40	6	61.7	59.5	41.9	34.6	1
free time	coun t	66	130	0.00	45	69	18	64	0.00
	%*	75.90	59.4%	7	55.6	59.5	58.1	82.1	2
working	coun t	26	52	0.26	17	34	9	18	0.53
	%*	29.90	23.7%	6	21%	29.3	29%	23.1	2
at night	coun t	37	78	0.26	25	41	10	39	0.06
	%*	42.50	35.6%	0.26	30.9	35.3	32.3	50	3
total		87	219		81	116	31	78	

* Percentage is in each answer (Multiple choice).

5. Conclusion

The objectives of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of LINE users' behavior and factors influencing use and adoption of LINE OAs which is the one of mobile marketing communication and thus suggest firms to achieve using LINE OAs as a mobile marketing approaches.

LINE is a platform that has as a main purpose to keep in touch with friends and family. Accordingly, most of LINE users have not more than 200 friends on LINE. The main reason using LINE is not because it's free download or their sticker, most of LINE users in Thailand use LINE because LINE is easy and prevalent. Moreover the frequency of LINE usage in Thailand is daily. And after LINE offered LINE OAs, many firms in Thailand join with LINE to create their accounts. They use LINE OAs as a mobile marketing communication by sending messages directly to LINE users. To attract LINE users add them as friends, Firms offer free stickers and the finding also shows that many LINE users add them because of free stickers. 'Block' function and message are not the important determinants of adding LINE OAs as friends. But 'Block' function is the main function that minimize intrusive of users' privacy and maximize LINE users have positive attitude with firms. The effect of receiving LINE OAs' messages, over half of LINE users know some brands, recognize some brands and can follow accounts' news. Nevertheless minority are the new customers and loyal customers of some brands from receiving LINE OAs messages.

So firms should understand their customers' LINE usage behavior to improve their LINE OAs' operation such as offer clear emotion/ animation stickers, send promotion of their products/service, discounts or special gift as content of messages in form of short message or picture message. Additionally, don't send too many messages to LINE users, because the main reason that LINE users block LINE OAs is LINE users feel annoyed, even LINE users can turn off alert. Over half of them prefer to receive only one message per account per day. Moreover at night is the suitable for send LINE users messages because most of them answered that they had a chance to read message at night beside they may not be annoy.

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