Promotional possibilities in LINE application for foreign tourism sector companies in South-Korea

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Abstract

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The main purpose of the thesis is to find solutions for foreign tourism sector companies to be able to promote efficiently with LINE instant messaging applications inside the South-Korean market.

The application has been hard to use for promotional purposes especially for foreign companies. It is very hard in Asia for foreign company to do B2C business alone without a local partner. This thesis will present possible solutions on how to do the marketing efficiently and profitably using the application in South-Korea. The research and guidelines will also help other companies in other countries with their marketing strategy in the application because the operating model of LINE in other countries is very similar to South-Korea.

Content for theoretical framework is acquired from recent publications of internet articles, blogs, and academic articles. Books that handle social media are also used as references.

The outcome is examples of marketing activities and applying them to practice as well as recognizing problems regarding promoting in LINE in South-Korea. A part of the thesis will concentrate on social media cultures of other countries and comparing the countries to South-Korean social media culture.

The main objective is to find efficient and easy solutions for foreign tourism sector companies to use LINE application as a part of social media strategy, and a tool for promoting in the South-Korean market.

Sub objectives of the thesis are researching how LINE is currently working and what kind of promotions and advertisements are reasonable to add inside the application.

The results will help the commissioning company toolboxtravel as well as other similar foreign tourism sector companies who operate in the Asian market, to reach their target customer easily through the application.

Keywords
social media, social media marketing, instant messaging

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1   Introduction

Social media and social media marketing are present in people's everyday lives and we follow media frequently. Social media has become an important channel for companies to reach their target market customers and keep in contact with their existing customer base.

South-Korea is one of the fastest-growing markets in Asia with lots of possibilities for foreign companies. South-Koreans are very innovative and they, like Chinese, are used to using mobile applications for everything; communications with people as well as buying for example travel packages are easily done by using mobile applications.

Even though South-Korea is a growing market, it is still a hard environment for a foreign company. As a foreign company you will need to go through many bureaucracy steps and a language barrier to operate in South-Korea.

The objective of this thesis is to find easy and simple marketing solutions for foreign companies to promote by LINE application, which is a popular instant messaging application in Asia. The purpose is to reach customers directly without any extra steps and local partnerships.

In the theoretical part of this thesis we will discuss social media, social media marketing, and instant messaging applications and define the terminology behind them. This section of the thesis will also discuss how social media is used in the Asian market concentrating especially on South-Korea and how will South-Korean cultural factors affect the behaviour in social media. Connectivity to the tourism industry is also considered in this part as well as what kind of application LINE is and how it works especially for business purposes.

The empirical part of this thesis will present product instructions which concentrate on LINE instant messaging application. It includes the instructions on how to use LINE and how to create a functional official business account that makes promotions possible in LINE. It will also give answers to which are the best ways of promoting in LINE and what kind of ideas can be used for promotions in South-Korea. LINE user experience from South-Korean point-of-view are also presented and analysed. After the empirical part, the findings and development ideas are discussed.

2   Social media

Social media means various platforms that are connecting people to each other in an interactive way, be it texts or multimedia. It maximises the outcomes of communication through technology. (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 1.) Social media offers many opportunities and possibilities for businesses to reach your target market to gain profits (Go 2019).

Social media involves different kind of platforms which are categorized in different sections. For example, Facebook and LINE are *social networks* because they are core platforms where people interact while YouTube and other video and photo websites are under *social streaming* sectioning. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 225-226.) *Tagging features* are common in social media. Tags allow people to share certain images, videos, or articles to other people who are interested in the same thing as them. Location-based tagging is very popular as people like to show others where they have been. But we must remember that in social media, people tend to post a 'better version' of themselves instead of showing who they truly are. Therefore, we need critical thinking when we are browsing through social media. (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 133-134.)

Consumers of different ages prefer different social media platforms and it might be due to how different generations are used to different platforms (Moriuchi 2015, 50).

Social media user profiles are important because companies should know what kind of people are included in their target market customers and how the customers use social media. "*According to Pew Research Center, more than 70% of online adults have used social media and 40% of them use multiple social media sites multiple times on any given day*". (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 91.) This means that companies have a wide range of people who they can reach just through social media. Because 70% is a high number of people and not all from the 70% are interested in everything, knowing the target audience is essential. Acknowledging the user profiles are important for a company to have a success in social media campaigns and promotions. If a company can specifically target an audience who are interested in that specific company's product, the success rate will be higher than if the company is offering their product generally for everybody. Treating your customer as an individual, different from masses is one of the key factors for a successful social media relationship with your customer. (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 95.)

2.1 Social media in tourism sector

For the travel sector, social media means better connectivity to customers. UNWTO has stated that the travel sector has shown steady growth in the last 60 years regardless of any crisis. Social networks and social media are one of the fastest-growing sectors and for example customers use social media as a channel to review and give feedback to companies. Because social media is everywhere and it is easy to access, it has become an important tool for companies to communicate with their customers and vice versa. (Ly & Ly 2020, 1-2.)

Online reviews have an important role in how people buy products and especially in the travel sector it is important to follow what feedback the customer gives because that way your company can manage the business better and find out what should be done to improve the services (Moriuchi 2015, 10). The existence of many social media platforms makes it possible that one product has reviews in many different places. Consumers have learned to become suspicious of reviews because sometimes all the reviews might be overly positive and consumers must make the decision of what to trust and filter a lot of reviews themselves. (Moriuchi 2015, 47.) Companies should recognize this behaviour and think about how they can reduce the risk of consumers not trusting the review.

Connected to how reviews are perceived is *source credibility theory* which means of how an individual uses information sources and it is linked to the credibility of media channels as well as the effectiveness of company advertisements (Moriuchi 2015, 57).

Companies in the tourism sector are highly visual, meaning that they can make use of social media in their business with for example beautiful travel photos that describe the destination and creates an image of it for the possible customers (Wordstream s.a.). The companies can help the destination as well as their own business by destination branding and destination marketing with social media. According to The Place Brand Observer editorial team, destination branding is about what kind of destination you are and destination marketing is about how you communicate about what and who you are. (The Place Brand Observer 2015.)

2.2   Social media in Asia

Asia, specifically East-Asia is the leader in social media worldwide and LINE and Facebook messenger are the most used instant messaging applications worldwide. The only countries that do not have Facebook monopoly are China and South-Korea because they have their social media platforms; WeChat in China and KakaoTalk in South-Korea. (Hopkins s.a.)

Asia is becoming more and more digitalized and companies try to keep up with the latest trends. Especially eastern Asia is reported to have the highest social penetration rate in the world, 70%. Because of the high user penetration, companies have a massive amount of data to use for their purposes for example, what is the best way to do social media marketing and what are the trends in social media. In Asia, the use of social media and social media platforms is completely different from the western world. Because Asia has its own unique social media platforms which are more popular than for example Facebook which is a western company. Messaging applications are not only applications in Asia, but they also serve a multipurpose for accessing other services such as Retail services. Because of the heavy digitalization in Asia, consumers in Asia expect the service quality to be high-level as they are more and more used to do everything with mobile applications. (Info Cubic a, s.a.)

One of the latest trends in Asia is for big companies and corporations to use celebrities and influencers in their social media channels and social media marketing. Because of scandals that have happened in the past in big corporations such as Facebook, users have started to distrust big companies. Therefore, big companies have started to use celebrities and influencers in their campaigns to create more trust between the company and the customer. Hiring influencers to do social media marketing for big companies in Asia has become a trend, influencers can be anyone from housewife to a university student and so, undeniably more trustworthy, and relatable for normal consumers. Companies are making use out of the loyal fan-bases of influencers because the followers easily trust and follow what the influencers are doing and saying. (Info Cubic a, s.a.)

3   South-Korean culture and social media behaviour

Before we can analyse South-Korean social media behaviour, we should understand how South-Korean society works and on what values it is built upon. South-Korea is a home for over 50M+ people, its capital Seoul is a metropolitan area that accommodates most of the population. South-Korea, officially the Republic of Korea, is in North-East Asia, neighbouring North-Korea, China, and Japan. (Korea tourism organization a, s.a.) It is a small and homogenous country and previous wars and colonization have shaped Korean culture as what it is today. The society is highly competitive, and Koreans have adapted both modern and traditional values while taking influences from western cultures. (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd s.a.) Koreans have their own writing system called hangul, which was made by King Sejong in the Joseon dynasty (Korea tourism organization b, s.a.). Manners and personal space are very important in South-Korea and family and elder people are respected. Koreans tend to listen to opinions from their family and especially parents' advice and recommendations are taken seriously. Koreans are quite superstitious and for example using number four is avoided because of its similar pronunciation to the word 'death'. (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd s.a.)

In South-Korean business culture it is important to understand that the values of the business world lie heavily on Korean traditions. Koreans do not like confrontations, and they avoid 'losing face'. Relationships are important and Koreans will treat their clients almost like as a friend, although they like to keep everything professional by keeping the titles in front of the names, for example 'Mr.' or 'Professor'. (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd s.a.) Foreign companies should keep this in mind as well when they operate in South-Korea.

South-Korea has been rapidly growing in the technical infrastructure sector. They currently have the world's fastest internet connection available (Hjorth & Arnold 2013, 25). and it covers over 95% of the country (Chan s.a.). It is no wonder that the usage of mobile applications are popular and subway trains are full of people looking at their phones. Also, mobile giants like Samsung and LG are South-Korean companies and Free wi-fi is broadly available especially in Seoul which might explain why South-Koreans have more registered mobile phones than people. (Hjorth & Arnold 2013, 25.) In 2019, South-Korea had the third-largest amount of social media users in the world and about 85% of Koreans use social media (Chan 2019). Around 82% of Koreans aged between 18 to 24 years use social media, which means that the young generation is easily reachable (Statista Research Department a, s.a.).

South-Korea has strict rules and political and corporate influences in media are common. While many people might think that normal manners and behaviour rules won't apply to social media, South-Korea has made it difficult to be completely free to express opinions anonymously because in most platforms the user has to register with national ID or with a phone number. (Hjorth & Arnold 2013, 27.)

South-Korea has developed its own digital media world. The major search engine platforms in South-Korea are Naver and Daum which most western people have probably never heard about. Naver has 25% of market share, Google has 66% and Daum 6.5%. Despite that Google has a lot more market share, Koreans are traditional, and they often rely on local providers instead of foreign ones. Highly popular social media platforms like KakaoTalk and LINE are under Daum and Naver respectively. (Chan s.a.) One other platform that has seen growth in the recent years is BAND by Naver which shares similar traits to KakaoTalk and LINE, it's an online community that allows people to create groups online and offline based on people's interests. It is especially popular with the older generation aged 40+. (Statista Research Department a, s.a.) Perhaps the older generation trusts more in South-Korean brands as both, BAND by Naver and KakaoTalk are popular among older people while youngsters favour Facebook and Instagram in South-Korea (Chan s.a.).

South-Korea does not have a 'newsletter' culture, meaning that in many brands or bloggers official websites people cannot subscribe to a newsletter which on the other hand is a common way in western countries to get the latest news about brands. Koreans rather follow social media channels to get the latest news and updates. Korean email culture is different from western email culture too, Koreans treat email as something necessary to have only for formal matters for example signing up for an account and they do not use it for personal purposes or building relationships. (Fallarme 2019.)

For companies and marketers one important cultural aspect to understand from South-Korea is the 'Hallyu Wave' or 'Korean wave' as the western world calls it. (Info Cubic a, s.a.) It is practically an economic success of Korean entertainment and traditional culture spreading into the world which made many Korean celebrities known outside of South-Korea (Korea.net. s.a.). If companies want to succeed in South-Korea, it would be wise to integrate Hallyu Wave into their social media marketing strategies for example taking a brand ambassador who is a Korean actor or actress.

South-Koreans are also extremely knowledgeable about trends and they will regard appearances important. Individuals tend to take care of themselves and treat their outer appearance kind of like a business; you must look professional all the time and present the best image of yourself every day. Besides individuals, Koreans expect trend knowledge and professionalism from brands; brands must be constantly aware of new trends and shape their services often, sometimes even in a few months' intervals. (Info cubic b, s.a.). Koreans are known for not being faithful to just one brand, they rely on the quality and are open for trying new brands if it serves a better purpose for them than the ones they have used before. Therefore, companies in South-Korea are often following new trends and creating new products to keep up the interest of their customers and keeping them as returning customers. (Santander s.a.)

Koreans purchase products based on their own status; they want to make a statement of themselves. Luxury brands are still somewhat highly valued even though consumer behaviour nowadays lean more towards sensible spending of money. (Santander s.a.)

4 Social media marketing

Social media marketing involves various kinds of networks to reach the customers and it is a crucial part of the company's digital marketing strategy (Marcee 2019). A company should set a strategy and goals for their marketing to make it successful; they should ask themselves "what is our target audience" and "what kind of message do we want to send." Social media marketing is existing to help companies reach their marketing objectives and goals while also protecting the brand and encouraging customers for positive engagement with the company. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 225.)

Social media marketing involves free of charge marketing as well as paid social media marketing, they are usually referred with separate terms. Social media marketing involves every kind of multimedia aspect to get the audience engaged. It can be text, photos, or videos. Successful social media marketing can increase a company's website and social media channel traffic, help with company branding and create a buzz around the company. (Wordstream s.a.) Paid social media (or social media advertising) is giving the company a chance to show consumers what are they currently offering now by showing for example a banner advertisement on a website (Marcee 2019).

4.1 Social media marketing trends and tools

It is important to understand social media mobilization. It can help companies to attract more people to be interested in the company and their product without the company doing any work themselves. Mobilization is a term that means that other people will attract other people to participate. Sometimes people rather trust other people than companies that feel distant, so it is important to get a group to spread the word about your company in social media. The more you will get people talking about you, the more you will get attention and followers on social media platforms and that way get more visibility to what your company is offering. (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 93.)

This leads us to consumer generated content. Consumer generated content, shortened CGC, is a way of consumers to express themselves by posting texts, photos, videos, and audios to social media. They are non-professionals who are using social media tools to create content. (Moriuchi 2015, 1-2.) Companies can utilize the non-professionals by hiring these individuals to do marketing campaigns. For example, hiring a well-known YouTuber or blogger to do a social media campaign can get your company more potential

customers (Zilles 2019). As mentioned before, people often trust other people, and if the person who tells you about a new product is someone who you follow and trust on social media, you will likely become interested in the product. When a social media influencer tells about a product, it can even create a snowball effect; the influencer's followers can recommend the product for their friends and their friends tell about it forward and so on. What started as small, becomes big in a fast, effective way. (Cambridge Dictionary s.a.)

Nowadays because the internet is basically everywhere; news, photos, and videos can spread fast worldwide easily although, this can be a positive as well as a negative thing (Moriuchi 2015, 60). It means that whatever is published on the internet, it does not matter if it is a positive or negative thing, it has the power to spread fast all over the world. Companies can use this as their backing for promotions. Also, involving consumers in marketing can bring fresh, new ideas and it can even change the whole company's brand image to more positive. (Moriuchi 2015, 65.)

It is important to know that social media users can be the company's aid in promoting the product. *Viral marketing* is important for every company that uses social media platforms because it inspires people to share content in a short amount of time with as many recipients as possible (Kagan 2019). People who are stressed or bored often browse different videos or websites (Moriuchi 2015, 37-38). and if a consumer finds an interesting product, word-of-mouth starts spreading; a friend tells a friend who tells a friend and so on. It gives free promotions for companies.

Virtual communities are a big thing in social media. In these communities' people who have the same interests gather to share their thoughts and experiences (Moriuchi 2015, 39-40). Companies can learn about these communities and even establish their own ones in a social platform of their choosing. In the platform, people can discuss about a certain company or something related to the company. For example, a travel company can create a forum for discussion for people to share their experiences or dreams of travelling into a specific country. The company's representative can actively take part in these conversations. People like engaging so it is essential to remember that people want to feel like they are individuals and respected, if a company puts a messaging robot into these kinds of conversations it can create a more negative than positive impact. (Newberry 2019.)

4.2 Marketing types connected to social media marketing

Closely related to social media marketing is *content marketing* which means attracting target audiences with important information and images while also keeping the already existing customer base. Content can be anything with any platform; it can be videos, photos, and texts. The main thing is to communicate with your company's target audience. (Moriuchi 2015, 9.) Content marketing and social media marketing are closely linked, and companies should take both into accord in their social media strategies.

Storytelling is a part of content marketing, it means that consumers share their stories and experiences of a certain brand, connecting with the target audience. This has proven to be working for most companies as a marketing strategy. (Moriuchi 2015, 66.) To create a successful storytelling strategy, companies need to carefully plan how they engage the audience and target specific consumer groups, creating a niche category (Moriuchi 2015, 68). Storytelling can be a useful tool especially in social media platforms, because the campaigns can get a lot of visibility as well as spread fast. Niche group means a specific marketing group with particular requirements (Collins dictionary s.a).

Social selling can be related to social media marketing, but it is a term of its own. It means using social media to discover your target groups, connect with them, and predict what they are ready to buy. It is not about advertising and spamming your potential customer with your company brand or product, all companies should be careful and avoid spamming customers with unnecessary messages and plan their social selling strategy thoroughly. The opposite of social selling is *social buying*, it means that the consumers can also use tactics of social listening for their own benefit, as they can follow the trends and do online research of companies suitable for their needs. Using social media to understand and listen what is happening in the industry, what are the trends and what are the competitors doing is important, this is referred as *social listening* and it helps your company to reach the target group at the right moment with the right way like for example new essential information about your company's product. (Newberry 2019.)

Social media marketing is linked to *social marketing*. In social marketing companies try to sell an image and lifestyle rather than just a product and that way, affect consumer buying behaviour. Combined with social media, companies have limitless options of communicating with their target market, shape their image, state their values, and sell their products. (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 14.)

4.3   Social media marketing in the tourism industry

For the tourism industry, social media and social media marketing are helpful tools to promote a destination. Nowadays people like to document their experiences and either post a photo with tags on social media or send their holiday photos instantly to their friends and family. Because of the rapid growth of social media, companies can plan their marketing strategies based on social media and reach their possible target audience by doing social media marketing. (Ly & Ly 2020, 4.) Social media marketing makes it possible for companies to reach a wide range of people in their target market. For example, nowadays people are more conscious of environmental issues, social media marketing is an excellent tool for travel companies to present their values and for example show how sustainability is carried out in the destination (CPG, FMCG & Retail 2018).

Lately the trend has been that people want to choose a destination that is still unknown and still has the local characteristics instead of being a hub for tourism. People will use more time to research destinations and people would rather believe a tourism operator than big companies and travel magazines. Images, branding, and marketing will affect a lot in whether you will get the customer's attention. Social media marketing is affecting a lot in the tourism industry, and a thoroughly planned social media marketing strategy can bring more profit and bring your company more brand value as well as potential customers. As more and more people tend to document their whole trips with photos and they want the photos to be taken beautifully, your company's social media marketing is the key in making the potential customer convinced that your company can offer the experience as well as a unique and picturesque destination for them to travel to. According to Gingles, a survey mentioned that over 40% of consumers under 30 years old would choose the destination according to how well the destination is presentable in photos and The Booking survey stated that 17% would choose the destination based on if a celebrity has visited in there. (Gingles 2019.)

4.4   Social media marketing in South-Korea

South-Korea, culturally speaking, is a very different market compared to for example western countries when we are talking about marketing and especially social media marketing. Foreign companies should know that Google is not as dominant in South-Korea as in other countries. Instead, South-Korea has its own platform called Naver which is more than just a search engine. (Fallarme 2019.)

LINE instant messaging platform is a subsidiary company of Naver corporation (Dolan 2013). It can be said that Naver has a strong hold in the Korean markets because it is directed towards Koreans in the Korean language. Because Naver is South-Korean based and the majority of Koreans use Naver instead of Google, it affects what Koreans see on social media (Fallarme 2019). South-Korea has also a second Korean based search engine platform called Daum, and it is a very similar platform to Naver. Daum is merged with KakaoTalk, the most popular instant messaging application in South-Korea (Punch Digital Marketing s.a.). Cultural aspects are more enhanced and foreign companies might encounter difficulties since information inside Naver and Daum are in the Korean language. It also might take time to understand Korean social media behaviour and how do these Korean search engine platforms work. This affects companies that want to do social media marketing in South-Korea because they will need a thorough research on the behaviour of Koreans in social media as well as how to do social media marketing in South-Korea. Also, Koreans very often do not speak English so as a foreign company, you must be aware of the fact and plan every marketing material in Korean to be able to reach the customers. (Info Cubic b, s.a.)

Despite South-Korea still being a somewhat unknown market for foreign companies, it has huge potential and attractive markets especially for those companies who are doing online business. As mentioned before, Koreans are well connected as they have the world's fastest internet speed combined with high penetration in social media usage. This makes it possible for companies to reach their potential target groups easily. Koreans are very used to mobile applications and using technical devices, if a company has a great social media marketing strategy, it can succeed in Korean markets because Koreans add high value on companies who are good with social media. (Dubickas 2019.) About 84% of Koreans favour mobile devices when they use SNS and that is why more and more companies invest in mobile advertisements (Punch Digital Marketing a, s.a.). South-Koreans are also one of the top credit card users online and they use a lot of time to research and find quality products which means that they are well-informed online shoppers and willing to dedicate their time doing online research in social media. Koreans also tend to trust a lot in social media influencers and they very eagerly research about products that influencers recommend. They are very keen on finding discounts and getting points, coupons, or being a VIP customer of a brand or a social media platform or website offering e-commerce services. (Info cubic b, s.a.)

South-Korean brands do not tend to favour social media advertisements, instead, they invest a lot of money for traditional marketing ways. This can be a huge opportunity for foreign companies who are used to digital and social media advertisements. (Dubickas 2019.)

In the tourism sector South-Korea relies heavily on using influencers in social media marketing. South-Korea tourism organization has had a project where they invited social media influencers from different platforms like YouTube and Instagram, to South-Korea. The tourism organization aim has been to introduce Korean culture to these high-profile influencers and in exchange gain posts, videos, and articles from influencers. This way, information about South-Korea spreads in the countries where the influencers are from. (Kang 2019.)

Especially independent travellers have become a growing trend in the tourism business in South-Korea and South-Korea tries to market more and more services towards independent travellers. According to Korea tourism organization, Europe and North-America takes 97.8% of all the independent travellers in South-Korea and 71.8% of those travellers used internet social media platforms and global portals as their main resource of travelling tips and research concerning South-Korea. (Kang 2019.)

According to Punch Digital Marketing, 76,8% of South-Koreans use Naver and Daum platforms to search for information related to travelling. 32,5% use SNS when they search for information for their trips. South-Koreans enjoy one-day trips as well as package holidays and they usually like to travel during their holiday seasons. Because the holidays are often short, South-Koreans use a lot of time beforehand to research information for their trips. Most of Koreans make their travel-related purchased two to three months before, tourism sector companies should consider this and plan their social media marketing strategy according to the purchase behaviour of South-Koreans. (Punch Digital Marketing b, s.a.)

In Finland's case, South-Koreans are taking interest in Finland's nature and sustainability. Koreans are becoming more aware of organic, healthy food and travelling to a destination that relaxes your mind and body. Finland has been branding itself as a sustainable country with beautiful landscapes which fits to the trend when we are talking about outbound tourism in South-Korea. Social media is creating a lot of possibilities for tourism in Finland regarding promotions and especially promoting with food culture and landscape photos. As mentioned before, many South-Koreans use social media daily, and they use it also often for search purposes regarding travel information. For foreign tourism companies, in this case especially Finnish companies, who do their social media marketing correctly and

efficiently in South-Korea, this means that they can reach target markets and gain customers through social media posts. (Song 2018.)

5   Planning social media marketing strategy

Companies can build a successful social media marketing strategy after understanding four important points.

- People: Who uses and what media platforms are they using.
- Objectives: How to engage target groups and how to keep them as returning customers.
- Strategy: How does your company achieve the goals; plan everything carefully from the starting point to the ending point.
- Technology: The best social media platform for your company to succeed.

These are the four categories that companies should think about in their social media marketing strategies. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 230-231.)

The starting point of the social media marketing strategy for companies is simply to start following what the potential target market is doing in social media, what the competitors are doing in social media, and how the current trends are affecting the behaviour in social media in every sector. Companies should think about how these affect the sales in the long-run. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 232.)

The '5S' will become a useful tool when defining company goals for marketing and especially social media marketing. The '5S' means Sell, Serve, Speak, Save, and Sizzle. Set your company's sell goals by how your social media activity will affect your sales. Using RACE – Reach, Act, Convert, Engage – is a good framework option and it enables your company to plan how to reach and engage your customer thoroughly. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 232.)

Planning the goals of what you are trying to achieve with social media marketing helps to see the possible outcomes and how to get there. Communicating your company values with your customers, keeping up the discussion about new product updates, managing your brand image, setting online customer service quality goals, setting budgeting goals, and thinking of objectives of how the customer gets value from your company through social media are important parts of the strategy. (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 233.) Without those, a successful social media image and marketing through social media cannot succeed. Every company should think about ROI – Return on Investment – what do you get back from your contribution to your customers through social media. Costs of using social media services and platforms should be defined and leads and sales through social media should be calculated (Chaffey & Smith 2017, 234.)

It is important to get your customer thinking about your brand and associating positive emotion to it. *Brand experience* includes the feelings and behaviours of what your brand is evoking in your customers. Brand experience includes four dimensions; sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioural experiences. Sensory experiences are difficult to achieve through social media platforms because it includes stimuli like hearing and touching, and real-life schema in association with your brand to consumers. Affective experiences mean that your customer will emotionally associate themselves with your brand. To achieve this, brands need to make themselves relatable in consumer's everyday life. Intellectual experiences are that your brand needs to evoke the audience and your customers thinking about the messages and values behind your brand and through that, your brand itself. Behavioural experiences mean that you as a brand, try to accomplish your customer to change their real-life action. All these dimensions are maximized with social media's help and companies can use them as a model to create a full brand experience for your customers. (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 189-190.)

For mobile users it is essentially important to concentrate on optimizing the page load performance and optimizing your services for mobile users (Info Cubic a, s.a.). Also, if a company is choosing to use chatbots for the benefit that the customer will get an instant answer, the company must think about the most commonly asked questions coming from customers. Conducting a survey is an easy way to find out what your customers think. Companies must think about the option of customers who are not satisfied with the instant reply, are they then directed to a personalized customer service or are they receiving customer service in some other way. (Sochurkova 2018.)

Instant messaging application can be a good platform to give new information for the customer, but companies must be careful not to spam or otherwise do harmful messaging actions while engaging the customer into conversation. Therefore, companies should always ask customers permission for using instant messaging for sending additional messages for example marketing messages through the platform. Customers must have the possibility to decline all the additional messages if they wish to do so. (Sochurkova 2018.)

According to Sochurkova, the average user of instant messaging platform spends 23 hours per day writing messages on the platform and 56% of the users would rather write a message than call a company. Companies should notice and follow these kinds of statistics as they will show that companies should take their social media marketing strategy seriously. If the only option for a customer is to call the company, there is a big chance

that the company will lose the customer, if the customer does not prefer to call. The customer is likely to choose some other company who is dealing well with instant messaging applications in this digitalized age. (Sochurkova 2018.)

Instant messaging application customer service saves time, as the customer might not want to wait for their call to go through but instead with messages they can leave a question or comment and continue doing their work or spend their free time while waiting for the answer. (Sochurkova 2018.) Also, if customers receive great service and positive interaction with your company, previous research shows that they are three times more likely to recommend your company to others. The customers use word-of-mouth marketing as well as social media to direct their friends and family to use your services. (Patel s.a.)

After starting to use your social media marketing strategy, it is very important to keep monitoring the results and responses you are receiving from your target market. Because in case something does not work, you can react to it immediately and change the strategy. If you do not react fast enough, you are going to lose customers. (Patel s.a.)

6　E-Commerce

Electronic commerce is a web-based electronic platform that delivers transactions either between companies or between companies and customers. Many people nowadays use the internet to buy products or services or search for information. In most of the industries, like in the tourism industry, online reviews matter a lot before the customer makes the buying decision. E-commerce makes all this communication and transaction possible. (Moriuchi 2016, 10-11.)

In the past couple of years because of fast technology growth, e-commerce plays a big role in more and more companies. Combined with social media platforms, customer target markets are easily accessible and generate a lot more profit than if companies were to do traditional marketing and sales. E-commerce makes it possible to convert a social media platform into a place of selling. Adding just a fast click buy button, a social media user can become a customer to companies. Social media users can easily buy products for example through embedded links in images in social media platforms. (Gingles 2019.) If it is somehow not possible to add a fast click buy button into the social media account, companies will have another option to add a link to their posts which guides the social media user to their website for purchase process and generate sales that way (Patel s.a.). Social media platforms bring huge possibilities for companies because a lot of platforms can be converted into serving e-commerce business (Gingles 2019). Customers can be given an option to set their credit card details into the system for easier transactions in the applications (Patel s.a.).

20-40% of customers spend more time with companies that they have social media engagement with. This means that if you are doing well in your social media marketing strategy and you have a successful e-commerce integrated into your social media platform, you can get more potential customers and more profit through those improved services. For customers to find your social media platforms you can link them on your website to get more traffic and sales in your desired platform. (Patel s.a.)

In the tourism sector, e-commerce business is growing fast especially in mobile services offered to customers. In the past couple of years, it has become essential especially in customer service since research shows that for example in hotels it influenced the hotel performance if the platform supported customer service. E-commerce is extremely valuable in the tourism sector since it helps increasing companies' performances positively as well as handling data effectively. Social media is an important factor in the tourism sector

as it is connected to destination image and promoting, and it helps e-commerce platforms perform better in sales. Nowadays it is important to keep the platforms easy, safe, and fast to use to keep customer's trust and loyalty. This is extremely important in the tourism industry where you have many kinds of destinations as well as many kinds of companies offering tourism services to choose from. To be able to compete, your services must be the best in quality and service, and the platform user experience must be pleasant for customers. (Hua 2016, 7-9.) Lately, the trend in the tourism industry has been to convert the platforms into places of selling instead of just the phase of discovering services. It is important that when customers discover something interesting, they are given the possibility to buy the service or product immediately. (Gingles 2019.)

Asia-Pacific area is currently the leader in e-commerce and many new trends hail from the area and eventually become global trends. The sales through platforms in Southeast-Asia are expected to grow more than US$53 billion by the year 2023. One of the main reasons is that young consumers much prefer to shop online rather than in an actual store. Mobile shopping is garnering popularity as it is seen as an effective way of buying, researching, and reviewing products. (TradeGecko s.a.) In 2020 the estimation is that third of the whole world's population who uses the internet comes from Asia, and combined with high social media usage, Asia is an excellent market opportunity for any business who wants to invest into e-commerce industry (moni s.a.). The whole industry development in Asia is led by China, where the biggest social media and online platform WeChat is influencing all trends and technical developments (TradeGecko s.a.). Many big social media platform companies have taken inspiration and followed the example of WeChat in developing social media platforms and additional services (Hopkins s.a.). The next big trends are predicted to be customer experiences involving personalisation with AI technology and social commerce using social media as a platform to sell goods and experiences as one (moni s.a.).

Many of the Asian countries have still big areas where the people cannot be reached by internet services. Especially in China, there are big rural areas where it is difficult to reach all the people since those areas usually either do not have internet connections or the connection is weak. Chinese company Alibaba has invested to develop those rural areas so that everyone can access the platforms. It is expected that other Asian countries with same kind of problems in reachability are following China's examples of developing rural ecosystems and infrastructure. (TradeGecko s.a.)

In South-Korea platforms for purchasing are growing fast because of the popularity of mobile applications and online buying. In 2016 South-Korea had the highest e-commerce penetration in the Asia-Pacific region and more and more sales are generated via mobile devices (Statista Research Department b, s.a.) and in 2019 South-Korea ranked third in online retail sales worldwide (businesswire s.a.). One of the most popular online shopping categories for Koreans is online travel arrangements and reservation services. The whole industry sector in South-Korea is expected to grow over US$32 billion by the year 2021. (Statista Research Department b, s.a.)

7   Instant messaging

Instant messaging can be used for B2B and B2C business and it offers an effective way to communicate between a company and a customer. Different instant messaging platforms offer different kinds of solutions, for example, personalized chat plugins or automatic replies for customers. More and more people do not want to wait to get the answers they want and that is why instant messaging platforms are useful for companies because the interaction happens in real-time. (Sochurkova 2018.) Companies can have artificial intelligence and chatbots to help increase the immediate engagement with customers on their social media platforms. This kind of automatization of replies and basic conversation is necessary especially if you are a bigger company. Because according to research, over 60% of customers who complain to social media platforms expect an answer inside an hour, and 88% of people are less likely to buy your products if you do not respond to them. (Patel s.a.)

Instant messaging is making our life and communication easier with people who are far away. Instant messaging connects customers directly to brands, and it is a personal way of communication and brings customers closer to the brand, customer can almost feel like they are talking to a friend (Cahill 2016).

There are two types of instant messaging applications; one type is for companies to help employees to communicate better, for example, Microsoft teams(Klint 2017), and the other type is the applications that are open for everyone, for example, WhatsApp (Cahill 2016). Both have certainly their pros and cons, but it is a bigger plus if the instant messaging application is offering business and leisure profiles so that companies do not have to use many types of messaging applications. This can be timesaving since employees will not have to shuffle between different programs and log-in multiple times a day with different applications. Many companies create for example WhatsApp for business and separate leisure profile for their employees to chat.

Instant messaging applications can be used in B2C as well as in B2B business and companies must find the best solution for themselves. They must decide which of the different social media instant messaging platforms serves the company's purposes the most. Thinking about the target group is important when choosing the platform; are the ones discussing with the company older or younger generation. Because this kind of aspect will also determine what kind of instant messaging platform the company should use. (Sochurkova 2018.)

Instant messaging applications have over one billion users in the Asia-Pacific area. The top four messaging applications are WeChat, LINE, WhatsApp, and Facebook messenger. Foreign companies who want to do social media marketing in instant messaging applications in Asia, should especially concentrate on those four platforms. China and South-Korea are special cases as WeChat dominates in China and KakaoTalk dominates in South-Korea. These two instant messaging platforms do not enjoy as much popularity elsewhere as in the two respective countries. (Hopkins s.a.)

8   LINE mobile application

LINE is a mobile instant messaging application where you can text and send multimedia messages. Its company structure is complicated; LINE is operated by Line Corporation, previously NHN Japan (Ostaszewski & Kwan 2017), led by the CEO Takeshi Idezawa (Rothenberg 2016) and it is a subsidiary company to South-Korean Internet company Naver Corporation. (Statista Research Department c, 2019). Under LINE is Line Plus Corporation which is a South-Korean subsidiary company for LINE Corporation, and it was established to support the corporation in global development. (LINE a, s.a.). LINE was created in response to the 2011 Tsunami catastrophe that hit Japan, people could not reach their friends and family because most telecommunication systems were down. The application makes it easier to contact your loved ones even in times of crisis without needing those telecommunication systems. (Ostaszewski & Kwan 2017.)

Below you can see the overview of the LINE application account. All the screen captures are taken by the thesis author from her personal account and business account and the photos inside the screen captures are royalty-free photos taken from Pixabay. On the left-hand side is the theme info and how the basic theme looks like. You can edit the theme and add different layouts into your account. In the middle is how the chat box normally looks like by default, but users can edit for example the background. On the right-hand side is the profile overview and in the bottom row are the different features of the application; users can search for friends, chat, call, and so on.
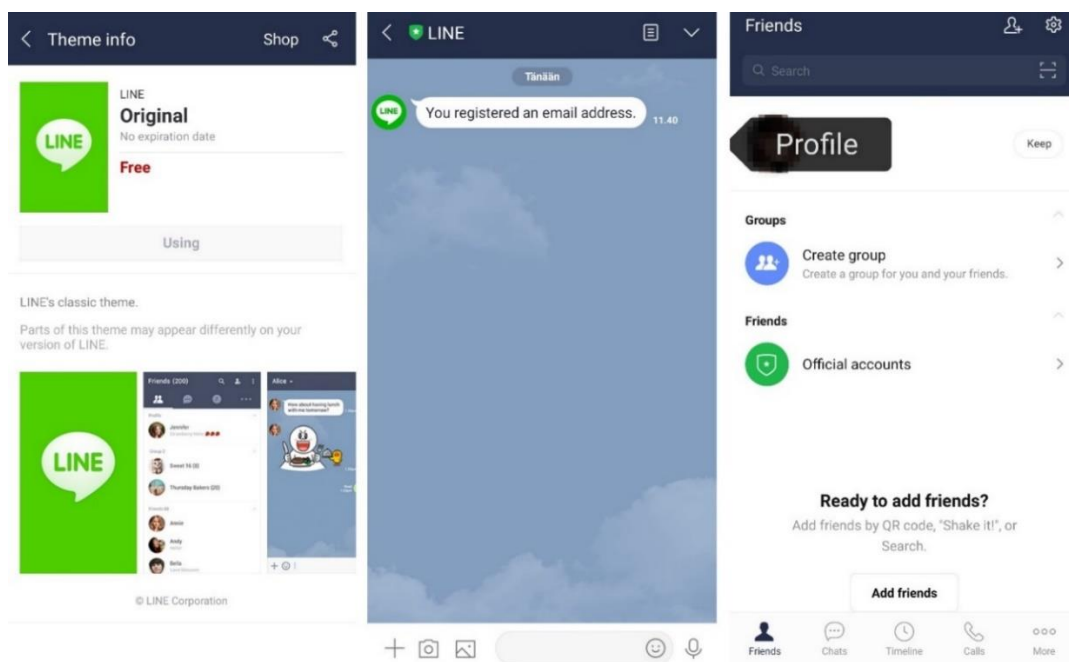

Image 1. LINE account overview

LINE has over 600M+ registered users and 200M+ monthly active users around the world (Kudritskiy 2019) and total revenue of US$1.9 billion in 2018 (Iqbal 2019) which makes it a big player in the global markets. Although LINE is popular especially all-around Asia, one downside of the corporation is that they are too dependent on their main markets – Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, and Indonesia (Millward 2016). This might lead to the marketing concentrating too heavily on those countries while other countries such as South-Korea and China will get less promotion which leads to less users.

Under the LINE trademark, there are several other applications and brands. For example, applications include such as LINE TV where you can watch video clips and LINE camera which enables you to edit your photos in multiple different ways. (LINE b, s.a.) LINE Friends is a brand that is part of the application brand and it is concentrated on retail and entertainment. It is known from its cute characters that originated from the instant messaging application sticker characters. The original characters that inspired LINE Friends are 'Brown', 'Choco', 'Cony', and 'Sally'. After the initial launch of the brand, it has done partnerships with other companies, brands, and even artists, for example, LINE Friends BT21 characters are designed in collaboration with k-pop superstars BTS. (LINE Friends s.a.). Because of the success of the brand, unique theme cafes centering the brand have appeared in many Asian countries (Hopkins s.a.). For example, in South-Korea LINE has combined LINE stores with theme cafes to create a unique experience for visitors; you can shop first and after it enjoy character specialized coffee in the café section (visitseoul.net 2019).

LINE has also joined e-commerce and e-payment business as it collaborates with different companies in many countries to make sales. For example, customers can order a taxi or buy an airline ticket through LINE service apps. (Ostaszewski & Kwan. 2017.) In the second quarter of 2019, the corporation reported that it has 78.8% year-on-year growth in shopping transactions and travel-related transactions volume grew over 85% quarter-on-quarter (Iqbal 2019). The corporation has its own LINE Pay application which enables you to pay at stores through the credit you have in your LINE Pay by scanning a QR code, currently, it is only in use in Japan but perhaps in the future we can see LINE applying this service for other Asian countries too. This service makes it easier for the consumer to shop, for example if a customer does not have enough cash at a store or if a customer's credit card does not go through in the specific store's payment system. Since the latter half of 2019, LINE Pay has made it possible for WeChat Pay and Naver Pay users to integrate with the LINE Pay system and the users can pay with WeChat Pay or Naver Pay by using LINE Pay QR codes. (Cordon 2019.) This opens possibilities for more wider consumer base and the partner businesses will benefit from this solution.

According to Millward, most of LINE's income comes from advertisements and users buying emojis and games which are connected to LINE. Additionally, the corporation receives some income from applications connected to LINE which are mainly in use in their main market countries. (Millward 2016.) In different countries, the brand concentrates on different services by following which are the popular trends and through that, they can get more income rather than applying the same service concentrations in every country. LINE is not afraid of trying new services and admitting their faults and shutting down the service concepts that were not working well. (Rothenberg 2016.) That might be one key to LINE's success; they are not afraid to launch new products and test what works and what does not.

One of the biggest strengths for LINE is that it uses localization, meaning that it forms partnerships with local companies to attract more users. Users might feel more connected to the brand through a local, familiar partnership company. (Ostaszewski & Kwan 2017.) As mentioned already before, one other significant and unique strength of LINE is its accounts for brands which a lot more than 'just' an account by giving brands additional tools to create more value to the users (Hopkins s.a.).

8.1 LINE for businesses

Many companies use social media as their channel to connect with their customers. Therefore, most of the social media applications have started to offer separate accounts for businesses with benefits that differ from regular free accounts. LINE is no exception as they have created 'LINE for business', and it, for example, offers customized chatbots that offers 24/7 service for customers and targeted messaging based on demographic info from surveys. (LINE for business a, s.a.) Their unique selling point for businesses is their LINE Account Connection, LINE Chat API which is 24-hour AI-based support (LINE for business b, s.a.). It is a service that combines marketing with customer support without transferring the customer from one department to another (Morlan 2019).

The corporation has made it very effortless to get a business account in its application; personal accounts can be changed into official business accounts with few clicks and an option to create an official business account by using your email is also offered (Kudritskiy 2019). LINE has a system to verify the accounts and this will create trust between the company and the customer as the customer can see if the account is official and validated. It will also lessen the cases of customers becoming victims of a fraud in the name of companies if the company has a 'verified' icon in their account. The verified accounts

are called 'Premium ID' and the annual fee is US$12. They have three types of subscription plans which companies can update their accounts to. They have 'free', 'light', and 'standard' which differentiate on how companies want their messaging services to be like. If businesses choose 'light' account verification, the monthly fee is US$50 and it allows up to 15,000 free messages. With 'standard' account verification, the monthly fee is US$150 and it allows up to 45,000 messages. (LINE for business c, s.a.)

LINE has created a LINE@ application for businesses which is for companies to use for promotions to connect with their customers and target markets. There are two types of accounts in LINE@ application, one which is identified as 'Official account' and one which is called 'LINE Ads'. The official account allows businesses to keep in contact with their customers in the customers' everyday lives. With LINE Ads you can create advertisements to reach as many potential customers as possible. LINE@ service is currently only used in Japan but maybe in the future we can see the service spreading to other countries. (LINE for business d, s.a.)

Businesses can use paid advertisements in LINE which is a very common way to reach target markets, especially in social media. The application has a management platform for advertisements called 'LINE Ads Platform'. With it, you can target a specific market with your advertisements, gain visibility, create lookalike audiences based on the company's existing customer base, and monitor the results. The advertisements appear in various locations in the application. (LINE for business e, s.a.).

8.2   LINE in South-Korea

There are approximately 14 million LINE users in South-Korea (Smith 2020). The biggest instant messaging competitors for the brand in whole Asia are WeChat, Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, and KakaoTalk. In South-Korea the main competitor for LINE is KakaoTalk which was created in 2010 and has over 48 million users worldwide. (Lee & Kageyama 2016). According to Statista Research Department, in 2019 LINE was the third most used mobile messaging application in South-Korea (Statista Research Department d, s.a.).
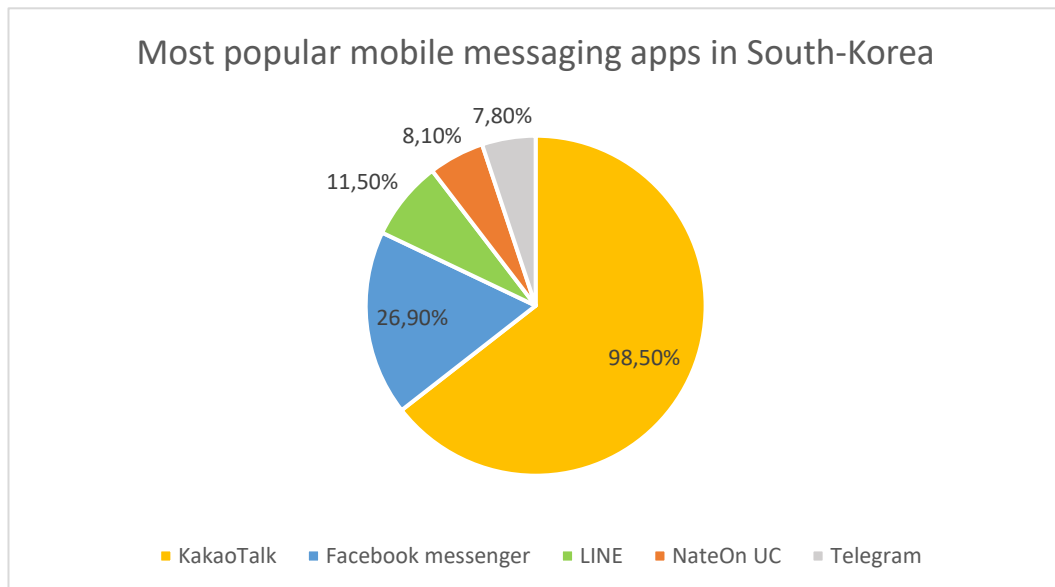
Figure 1. Most popular mobile messaging apps in South-Korea in 2019 (Source: Statista Research Department d)

LINE is behind KakaoTalk and Facebook messenger in South-Korean markets, but it is growing in popularity (Lee & Kageyama 2016). Part of the reason might be that the brand has a similar business model to KakaoTalk; for example, LINE application lets you create your own chat groups and it uses character stickers which you can add in for the conversations. And most importantly, brands can create groups and accounts to keep in contact with their customers. What makes LINE unique and different from KakaoTalk is that they allow brands to create personalized stickers for their customers to use. (Hopkins s.a.) KakaoTalk is probably popular in South-Korea because it is under the Daum platform which is a South-Korean search engine corporation. It offers many unique features like LINE, but what makes it different from LINE is that you are able to create a 'secret chat room' which stores the history only for three days and then erases the data. KakaoTalk also has a unique feature called 'In-Chat' which enables the users to research information from the internet without leaving the application. (Ding 2017.) The basic ideas for LINE and KakaoTalk are the same; you can create chat rooms and use character stickers to communicate. Both applications have their own unique benefits and it is the consumer's preferences that decides which one they choose to use.

9 Promotional possibilities for foreign tourism companies in LINE

The subject of this thesis came from commissioning company Toolboxtravel, who wants to know the most effective ways using LINE as a tool to reach the customers and the right target market groups in South-Korea. Promoting ideas that are discussed in the next part, are helping not only Toolboxtravel, but every foreign company who wants to promote in South-Korea using LINE. These ideas can be applied to other Asian countries too where LINE is used and is popular. The objective is to have a simple but effective social media marketing plan which does not take a lot of manpower to manage but can get the customers interested in the company. The goal is to establish a long-lasting relationship with the LINE users and eventually get them as customers using communications through LINE official business account. The business LINE account should be managed daily and updated regularly to keep the users interested. Users and customers can be measured by how many have added the business account as a connection to their friends' list. To achieve workable promotions, it needs dedication especially at the starting point of the business account and it needs constant content and interaction with the users. Following trends is important as well as monitoring replies and comments from the users. There should be at least one employee from the company that is responsible for LINE social media marketing and knows exactly how LINE works. The employee should brief the company of the results achieved with promotions at least at the end of the first and second quarter of the year.

9.1 Creating an account in LINE and getting started

You will first need to know how LINE works and in the following is introduced how you can create a LINE account, what features does it have and how you can change it into a business account. Businesses can create an official business account in LINE as mentioned before. LINE offers different kind of plans depending on how big the company is. You have to start the process by signing up. You can either sign-up with using your personal LINE account or sign-up with your email. Connecting LINE for a business account with your personal LINE account is easy. You will need to download the LINE application from your App Store and then follow through the guidelines LINE is presenting for you to create an account.
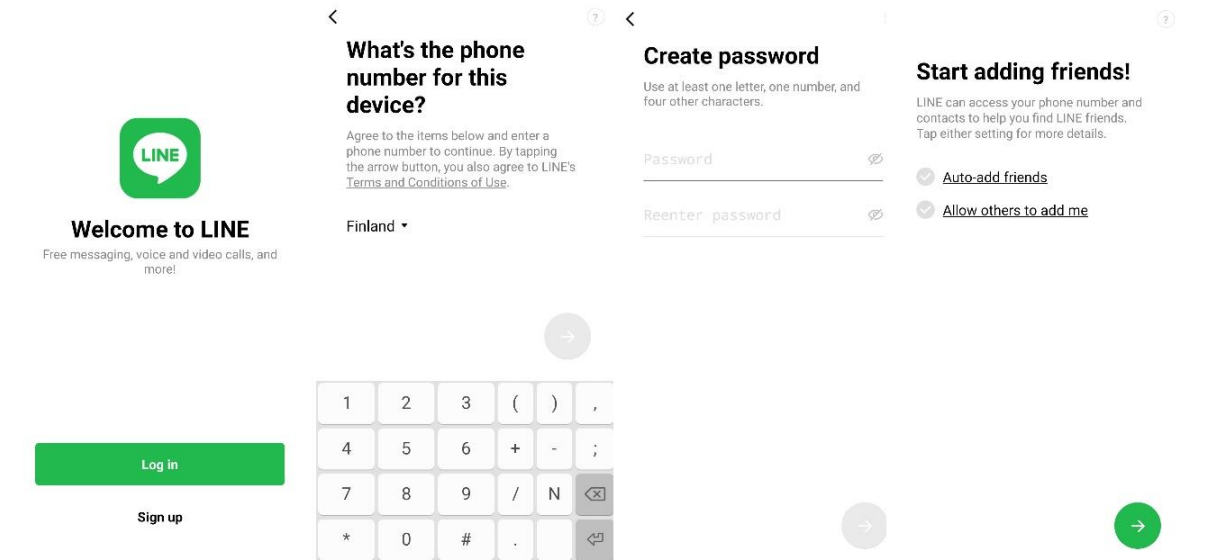
Image 2. Creating a LINE account

To sign-up successfully, you will need to add your phone number into the application, in-sert your name and create a password. After these steps, you have an account. You can choose in the application whether you would like the application to auto-add you friends and whether you are visible to other users. Features in the application are easy to find and settings are easily adjustable as to your liking.
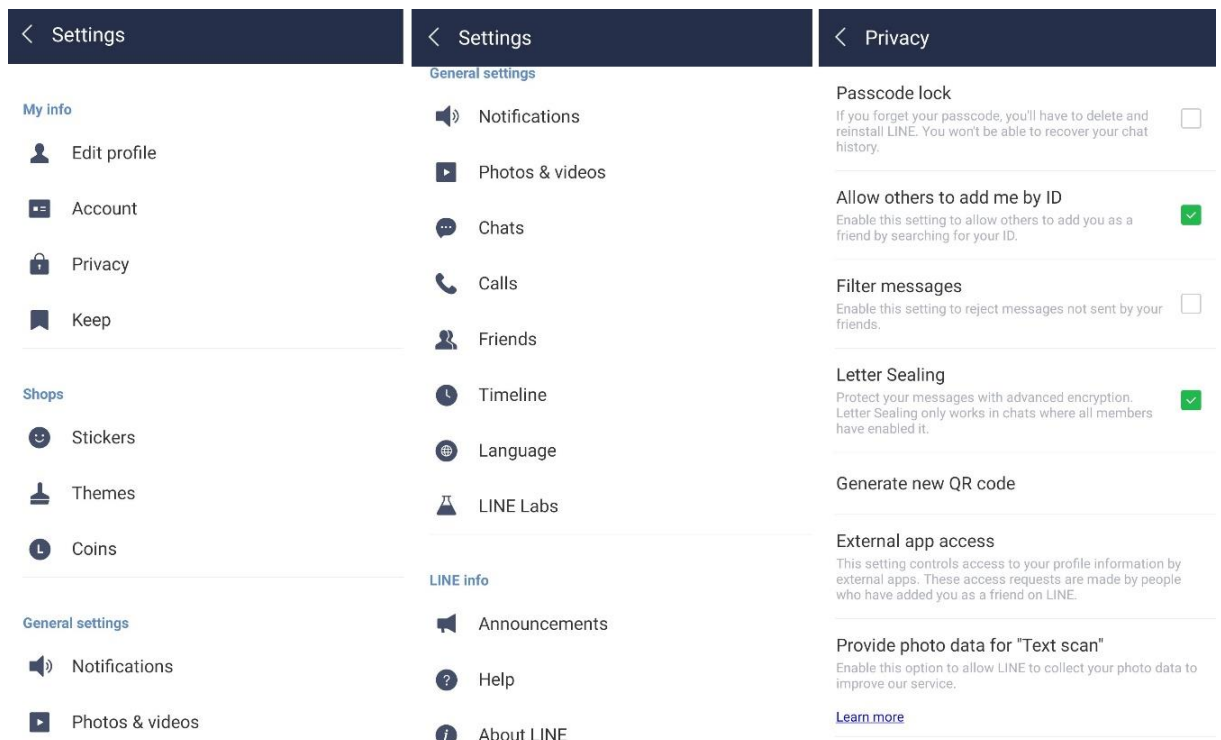

Image 3. LINE Settings overview

LINE also gives you the options to choose what kind of stickers and emojis you want to download for the application. Companies can create their own stickers as mentioned before and you can find the stickers from the application as shown below.

The difference between stickers and emojis are that stickers are usually big pictures, often animated while emojis are showing only the facial expressions or small item.
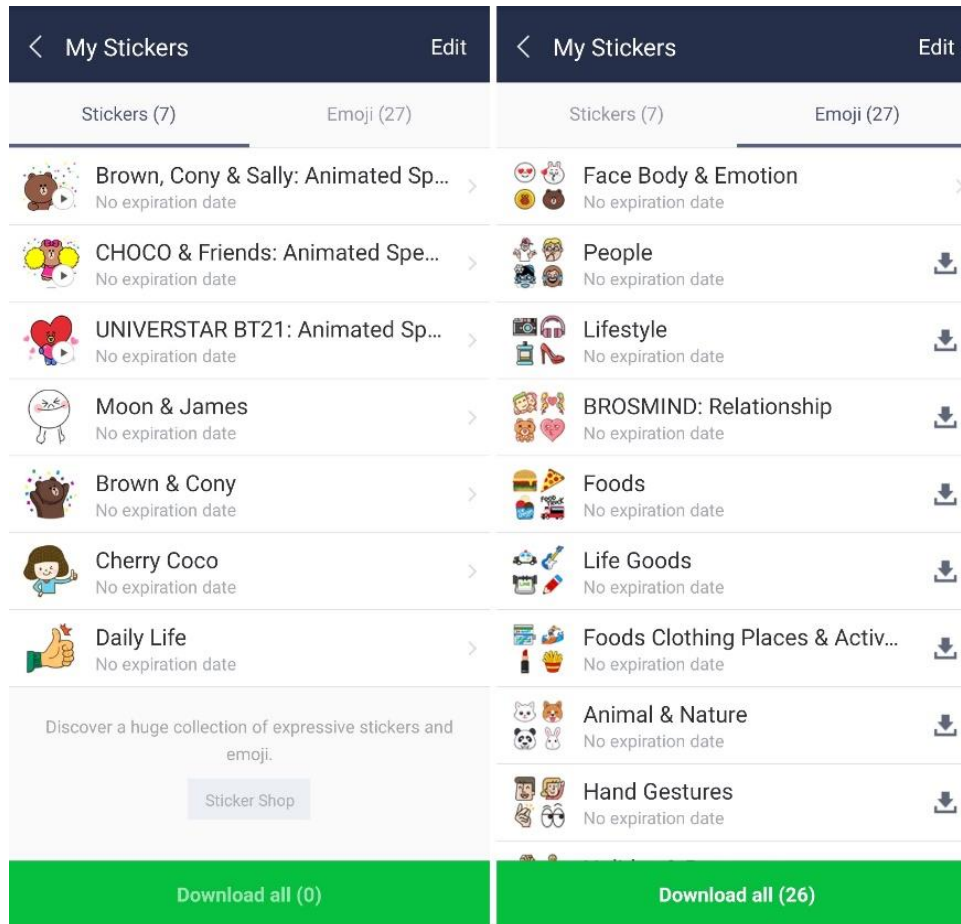
Image 4. LINE stickers and emojis

LINE has separate search options for adding personal friends and adding brand accounts. Adding friends is working by knowing the ID or the phone number of a person. For adding brand accounts you will only need to know the brand name and the search option finds the official account for you. But official account search option works only if the company has verified their account.
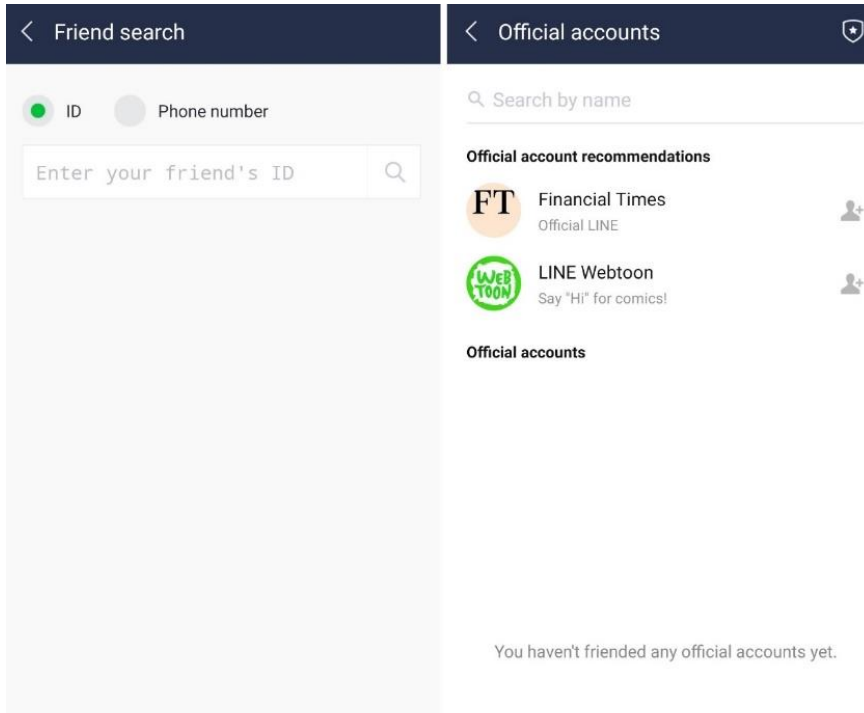
Image 5. Adding friends and official accounts in LINE

LINE also can suggest official accounts for you to follow and you can easily add them just by clicking the right-hand button next to the account. You can also first click the account open and you can see the official account page overview and see their posts before you are adding them into your followed accounts.
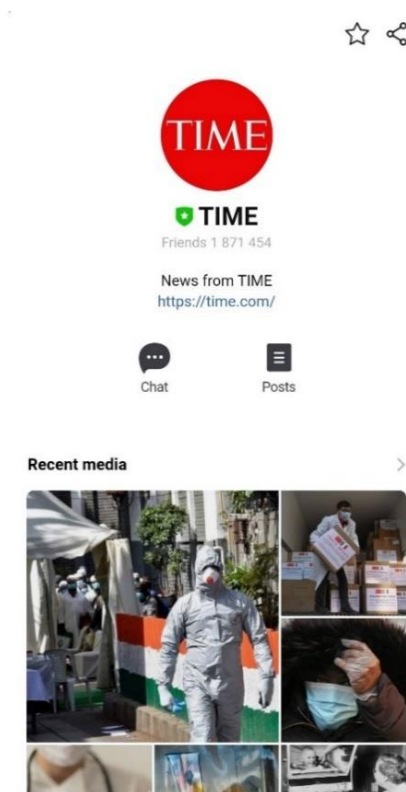

Image 6. LINE official account overview

LINE official accounts look like as above. The example case in here is Time magazine. You can chat with them directly or see their posts as well as recent media they have posted into their account.

9.2 Changing account into official business account
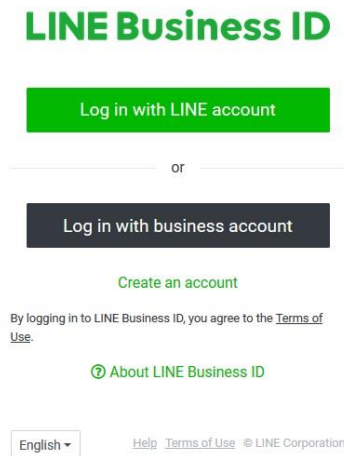
Image 7. LINE Business ID Login webpage

LINE has a website for creating and managing the LINE business account. As mentioned before, LINE offers options for business account sign-up. You can either use your personal LINE account you have created before or then use your email to sign-up. In the email sign-up, the website asks you to register an email and then a sign-up link will be sent to your email. This creates you an ID to LINE which you can change into business LINE ID.
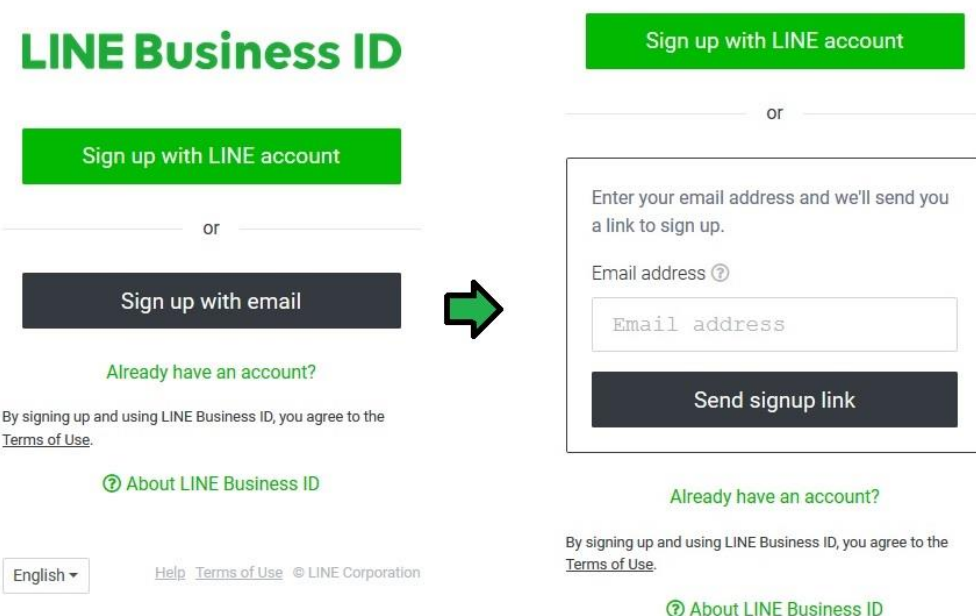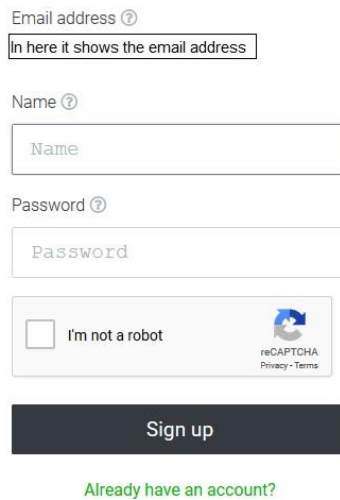

Image 8. LINE business ID email sign-up

After receiving the sign-up email, you are asked to click a link and then you are directed to a page where you can officially register your email address, username, and password to receive LINE ID. The process is complete after that and you are directed to the LINE official account manager.
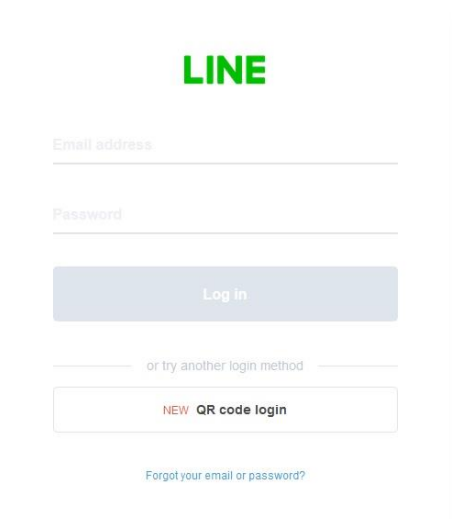

Image 9. Creating a business account

If you want to sign-up for a business account using existing personal LINE ID, that is offered as the other possibility besides email sign-up. In the sign-up page, there's an option called 'Sign up with LINE account' and when you click it, the website opens a new page where you are asked to write your email address and password connected to your LINE ID account. You can also use your personal QR code to make the sign-up process fast when you change your personal LINE ID into a business account.

Image 10. Sign-up with personal LINE ID

This process has created you and ID which gains you access to the LINE official account manager. Next, you are asked to create an official ID for your LINE business account.
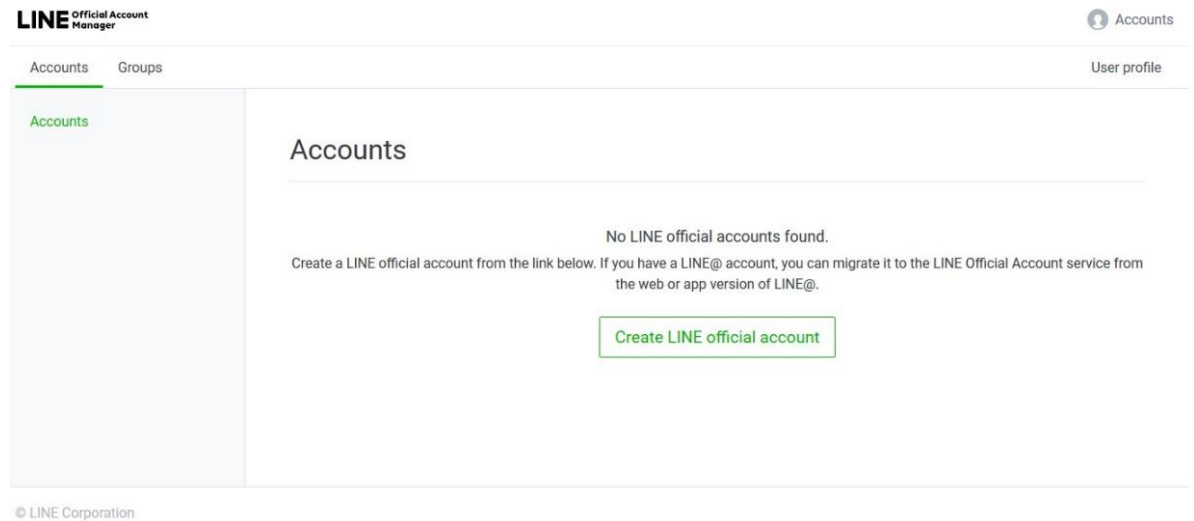

Image 11. Creating Official business account ID

When you click the link 'Create LINE official account' it directs you to a page where you have clear instructions and a three-step process to complete the business account ID.
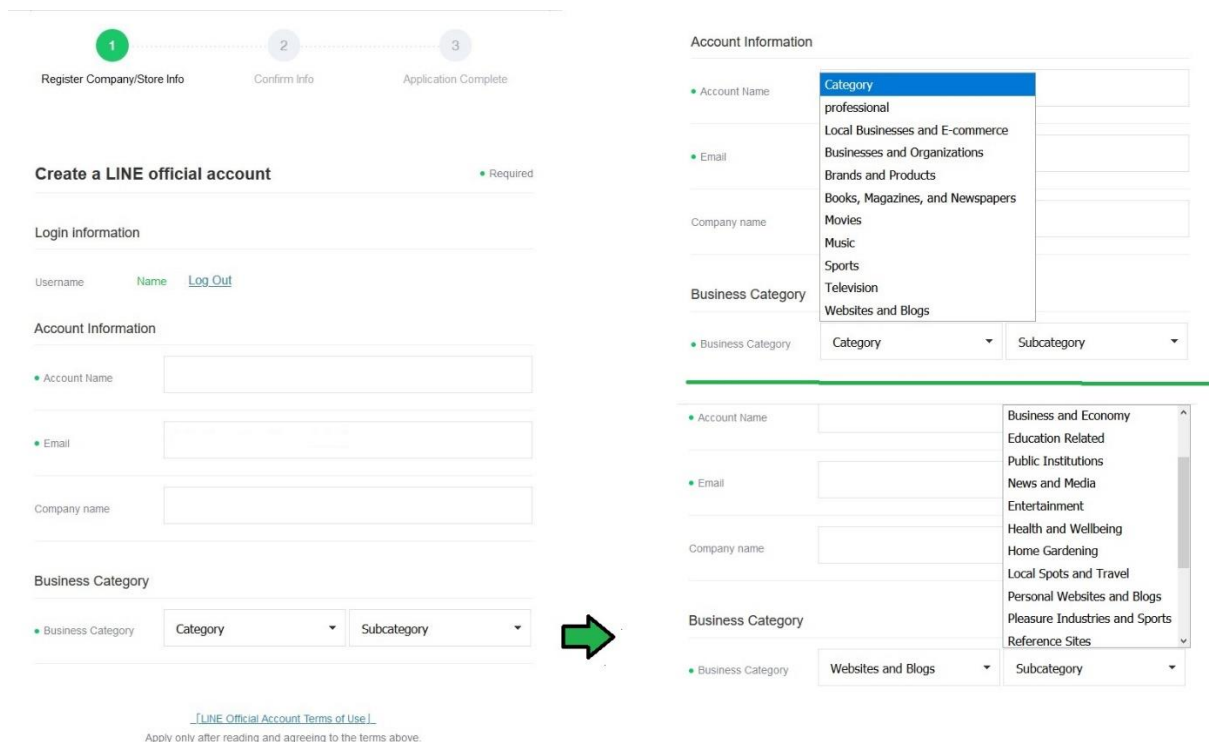

Image 12. Sign-up process for official business ID

In the first step you are asked to create an account name, connect your email to it, and choose a business category fitting for your company. After you choose a category, you are asked to choose a subcategory. When you have completed all sections, you move to step 2 where you are asked to confirm everything. After confirming the information is right, you have completed the sign-up process and now you have an official LINE business account and you will receive an ID for the account.

Image 13. Completed process of LINE Business account

After the process, you have access to the LINE business account manager where you can adjust your settings. You can start creating content after you have updated your settings. It is important to know that as long as your account is unverified, users can only find you if they know your business LINE ID. This is why it is important to have your account verified or pay for a premium account which not only enables the users to find you easier but gives you special features to use in your promotions inside LINE. You can gain users as followers also by using your specialised QR code which you can add either to your advertisements or to your webpages.
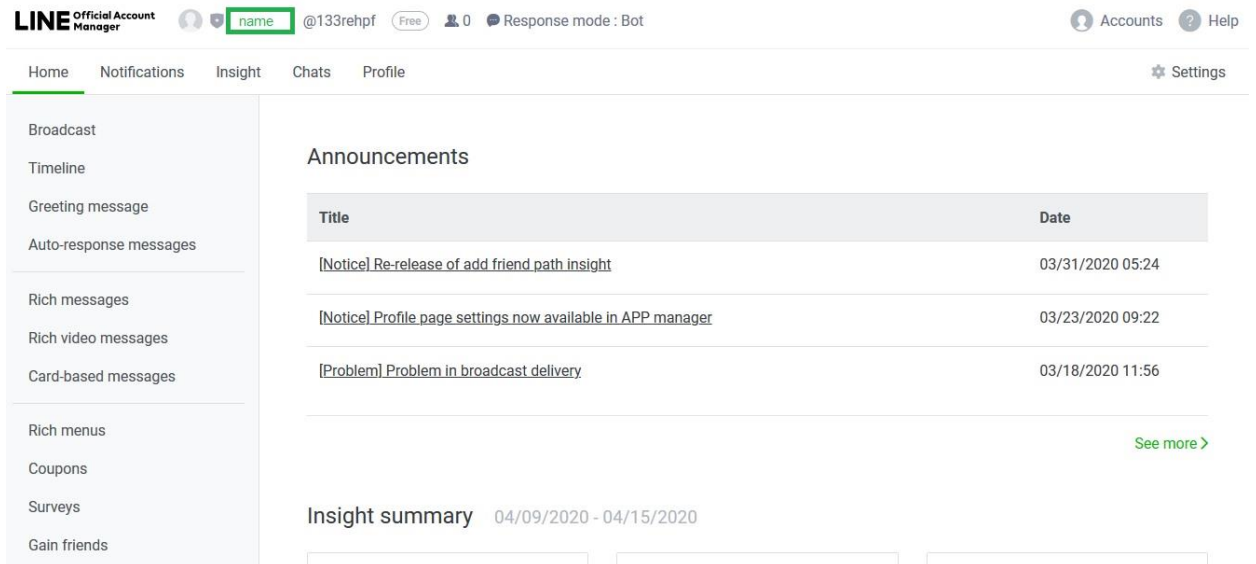
Image 14. LINE official account manager overview

In LINE official account manager you can adjust everything to your liking. In the home page menu to the left you can adjust how you would like to contact your customers. In the notifications page you can check important information regarding your LINE business account. In the Insight page you can see statistics of your account, you can for example to see if your broadcasting messages are effective and if you need to adjust them to get better results with your customers. In the chats page you are able to chat with your customers and the page saves chat history automatically. In the profile page you can adjust your profile as to what kind of an account your customer sees and set info and plug-ins.

In the account settings you can choose yourself a profile photo as well as a cover photo for your LINE profile. These should be carefully planned as they represent what you are and what kind of message and values you stand behind. Customers will get a first impression of your company by these photos before they will concentrate on what have you posted into your account. Making LINE users as your followers is the first step and you don't want to drive the users away by choosing the wrong kind of photos. Making a great first impression with your social media profile is an important part of social media marketing as it can either attract followers to your profile or make users skip following your company.

Colors and visuals play an important role, the more visual the profile is, the probability of it attracting more users will get higher. In the account settings you are also able to add a status message, display your location, choose chat wallpapers for your chat with users, allow your account to join groups, and add your official account goal. By adding the goal, it is telling the account manager on what your account is concentrating on; for example obtain new customers or promote product or service.

36

9.3 Promotional ideas for foreign tourism sector companies to use in LINE
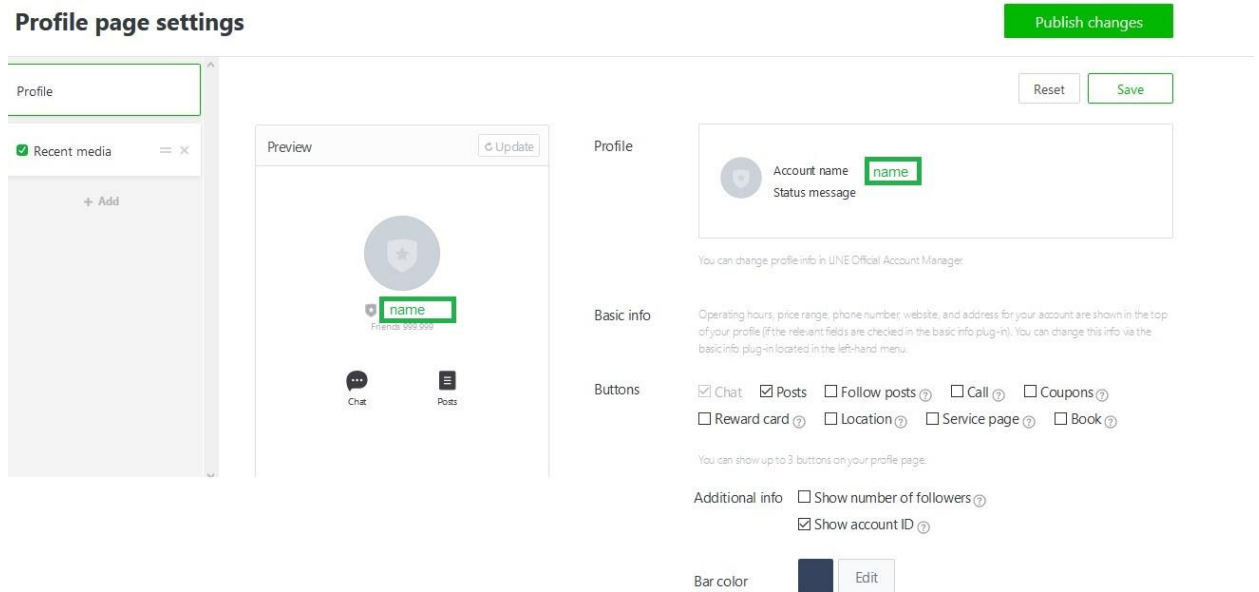
Image 15. LINE official account profile settings

First and foremost, companies should start by creating their own main page in LINE. Adding a link to your profile which directs to the company's website is always good and it generates more traffic for the company. Linking back to the LINE profile on the company's website is also very important since it is possible to reach more potential customers as followers through the website. Companies can use LINE QR code in their websites to link to LINE which generates leads. Companies should always remember to mobile-optimize their websites because more and more people browse the net with their phones. In the account profile settings you can edit how your official account looks; choose what to display, what kind of color is your bar color, and add photos for your account's main page.

Image 16. Uploading images to LINE account main page

After editing your profile and saving the changes, the final step is to push the button 'Publish changes' on the right-hand corner. Now you have the basic visuals of the account ready and you can start concentrating on acquiring followers and potential 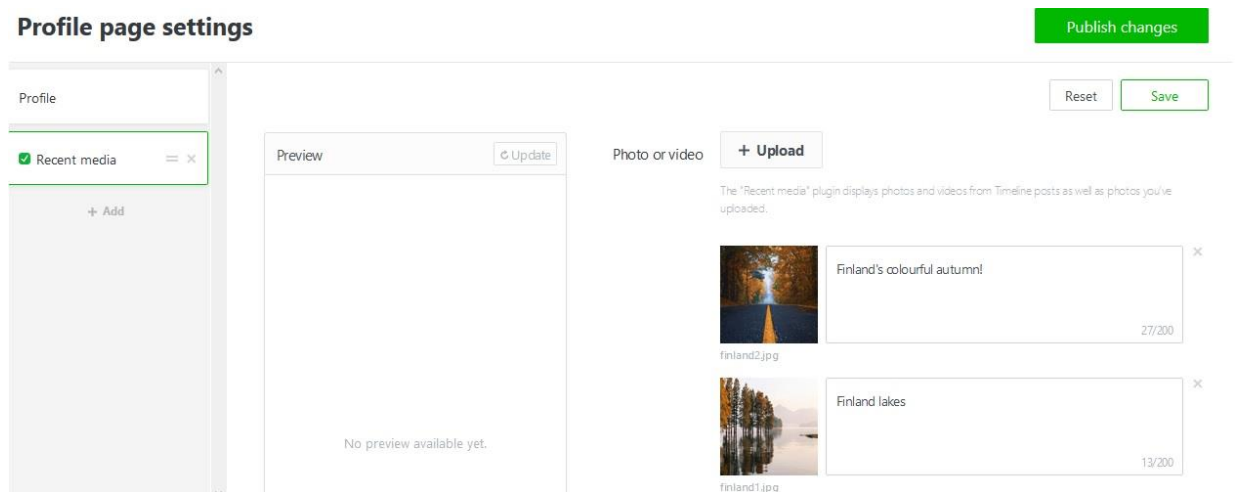customers. LINE has made it very easy for you, as they have added an automated welcome message when a LINE user is adding your account as a friend but you can always edit the messages as you like.
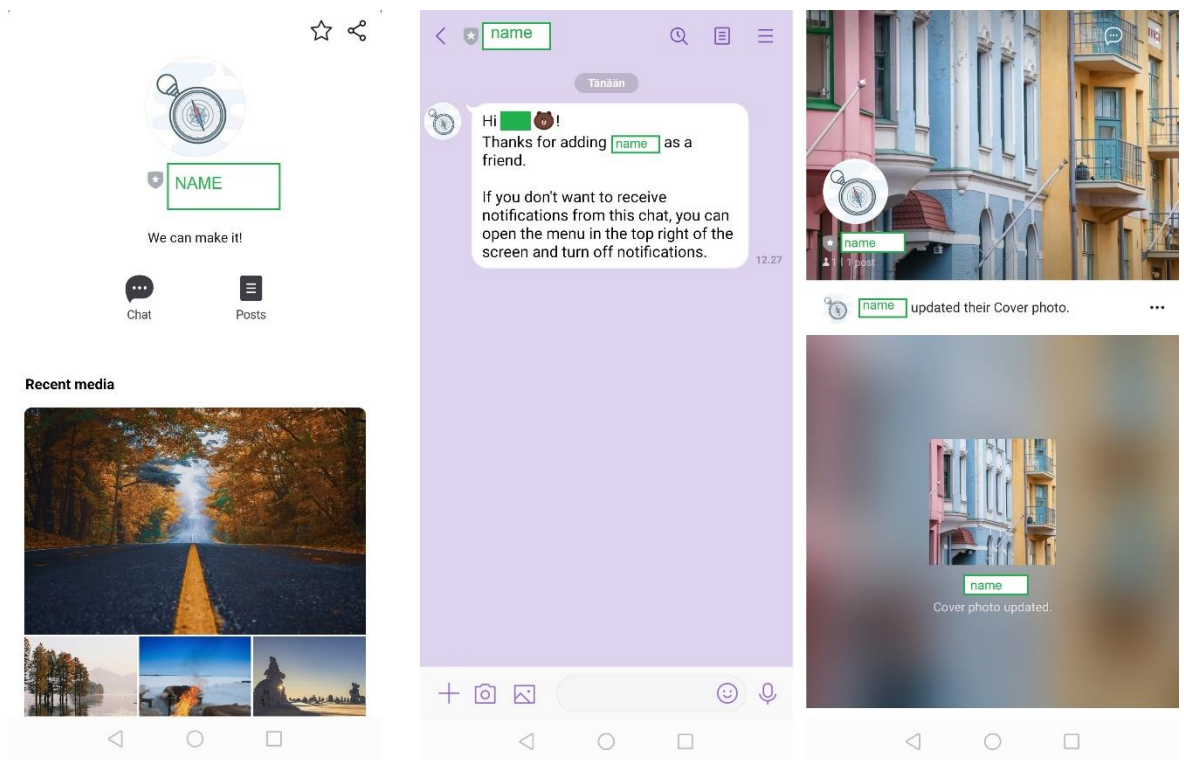
Image 17. Official account overview after editing

In the image above you can see the main page on the left and how it looks after editing and posting photos or articles to it. In the middle is the edited view of the chatting box. On the right is the view of how the posts will look like if you click a photo shown in the left-hand side view of the screen capture.

9.3.1   Finding target markets and correct promoting tools for South-Korea

Companies have to know what kind of customers are in their target market and making examples of ideal customers is one of the key points to have an idea of what kind of content is going to be posted in LINE. The company should think customer's age range, hobbies, motivation to buy, problems to be solved, and keywords connected to customers. When thinking of LINE users in South-Korea, they tend to be on the younger side because as mentioned before, Kakaotalk is more known and widely popular in South-Korea, and

most of the people who are 40+ in age are used to Kakaotalk more than any other instant messaging application. Based on that, if you want to operate in LINE in South-Korea, the target market age should not go over 40+.

Ideal customer examples:

Age: 25

Hobbies: Photographing, travelling and watching tv series.

Motivation to buy: To experience new cultures and seeing beautiful landscapes

Problem to be solved: How to travel sustainable, budget-friendly way but experience a lot at the same time.

Keywords: travelling, experiencing, low-cost, sustainability

Age: 30

Hobbies: Travelling and cooking

Motivation to buy: Trying new food and sightseeing

Problem to be solved: Where to find a destination that is known for food but also for famous sights and monuments.

Keywords: travelling, food, culinary tourism, sightseeing

After the company has few ideal customer profiles they can start planning the content. An excellent way to start creating content is to go and see what your competitors are doing and based on that take notes on what your competitor is doing excellently and adapt those tactics into your social media marketing plan. For tourism sector companies it is good to see what your main competitors are promoting and how they are promoting their travel products.

As mentioned before, users nowadays are expecting quick answers and by using the LINE feature of automatic messaging, you can answer that demand. Be sure to research correct keywords first before you will start adding automated replies for customers. General automated message is good for example, when the official account has gained a new follower. Sending a welcome message instantly gets the user's attention. The message can be anything along the lines 'Welcome, we are happy to have you here' and adding a couple emojis to the message. It brings the individuality value to the user as they have been personally greeted. When you have gained many users as followers and have a good background work done with posts and articles, you can start slowly sending promotional messages to your followers. It is important that even though the promotional message is going to be sent to all of your followers, you will have it in a form that sounds like you are sending it individually to the follower.

An example message:

We are happy to have you here! *emoji* Have you already heard about our awesome travel package deal? We offer you -10% from the first purchase you make on our website. Head over to *link to website* to get your coupon. Start making your dreams come true today!

The first post in the company's official account page is always important. One good suggestion is to post an introduction article of the company by briefly telling the users of the company values and story behind. To attract more followers, companies can arrange prize draws so for example after starting the official account page, companies can use mobilization as their advantage and arrange a prize draw. Users who attract more followers to come and follow get more tickets to the prize draw. This way, a new account can gain more followers in a short time while creating a buzz between individuals. In LINE you can inform users about any changes you make to your account, for example if you change your cover photo, post a new article or add coupons. This is important to keep your followers updated on what is happening and that they won't be left out from any activity your company is arranging in LINE.

It is important to open a virtual community where the followers of the brand account can discuss together. A good example of a chat room for the tourism sector company is where the subject can be for example 'future dream destination' or 'places to recommend for travelling'. This way the companies can see through the discussion where their followers would like to travel and start posting content based on the answers. For example if there is a heated discussion about Finland as a travel destination, the company can then post the latest travel news about Finland to their account or post few landscape photos about Finland to their main page or the discussion group. This kind of tactic can sometimes cause that the subject will go viral. It is essential that the company is monitoring the discussions because only then you can know, what kind of content is interesting to your followers and possible future customers. Also, in these virtual communities companies can use storytelling and social selling to their advantage as people are often keen to mention to other people if they have used the company's services and whether they liked it. People trust other people's opinions more than if the company itself would come into the discussion and start promoting themselves. This doesn't mean that the company should be absent from the discussion, they can ask questions like 'what was your favorite experience in the destination', 'what services would you recommend to others' etc. to direct the discussion and use the answers in their future social media marketing plans and product planning.

9.3.2 Influencer marketing in South-Korea, ideas for LINE

When you have many followers, you can start adding influencer marketing to your social media marketing plan. Especially in South-Korea, people are interested what celebrities and other influencers think about products. If you make a social media marketing plan with an influencer, it can affect your image positively and bring you more possible customers. The influencers should be carefully thought, for tourism sector companies for example YouTubers who make videos about travelling would be a good option. A know travel vlogger (video blogger), bring trust value to your marketing campaign. From South-Korea, few good examples are YouTubers called cari cakes, Joanday, Gabiekook and Bambigirl. Cari cakes is American who has lived several years in South-Korea and makes content about Korean culture, lifestyle, and travelling in English. Joanday is Korean-American YouTuber who makes videos about lifestyle, cosmetics, and travelling, her main language is English but she occasionally makes videos in Korean.

Gabiekook and Bambigirl are Korean YouTubers, Gabiekook makes mostly food-related videos, and Bambigirl is centering her content around fashion and travelling. These are especially good examples for Finnish tourism sector companies because you can find someone of the mentioned YouTubers to promote travelling to Finland or sustainable food in Finland.

I sent an email to cari cakes and asked her if I can use screen captures of her materials because she does regular lifestyle and travel vlogs and they could serve as an excellent example in this thesis of how influencers create content, especially those who are South-Korean based influencers. Cari cakes permitted me to use her material from her YouTube and Instagram channels.

Image 18. cari cakes YouTube channel header (cari cakes s.a.)

The YouTube channel header is a good example of how you can attract people. As mentioned before, colourful photos and photos where there is a lot of movement, can catch the eye the most. These kinds of photo tips apply to any kind of social media channel, LINE as well. In the same way as in cari cakes cover photo, companies can use their official brand account to communicate their values by choosing a photo that will represent their brand the best.

Below you can see a screen capture of cari cakes YouTube content. She keeps the schedule of uploads regular and changes the style of her video thumbnails to keep it interesting. In LINE it is possible to upload videos with posts. Tourism sector companies can utilize influencers like cari cakes to make small travel videos. For example tourism sector companies could integrate a small promotional video series into their social media marketing strategy according to 5S's told in the theoretical part. All the 5S's can be achieved with video promotions. Video views and reactions are easy to follow and analyze, and companies will already get results soon after posting videos. They will see if it will cause the wanted reaction and if they will have to change their marketing strategy based on reactions.

Companies can also sell through the video series by promoting the destination in the posts where the videos are linked. The videos could be done by an influencer, who travels for example to Finland and introduces few cities in short videos. The tourism company can start promoting the destination by posting an interesting travel article with a video every week onto their LINE brand account. It is important to get the attention to the destination and make the video series viral.
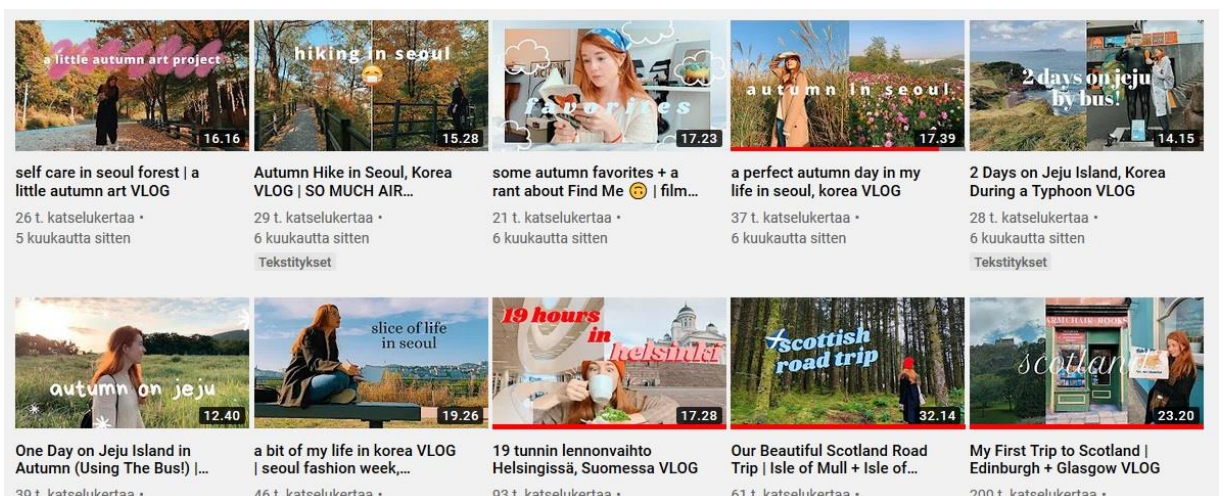

Image 20. Overview of cari cakes video content (cari cakes s.a.)

In the next screen capture image you can see photo content from cari cakes Instagram account. LINE brand account main page appearance is similar to Instagram feed and therefore companies who have experience from Instagram can use that into their advantage. Tourism sector companies can use a similar type of travel and lifestyle photos as cari cakes has been posting to her Instagram. Companies create amazing collages for their application brand account which will attract more followers and they can eventually be converted as customers. It is important to keep the content high in quality and as regular as possible. Planning a theme is important because you do not want to confuse your followers in what kind of company you are. In the tourism sector companies case the most suitable photo themes would be landscapes, cultural events, and ethnic food. Hiring a professional photographer or experienced influencer for the content photos when you are starting your account posts would bring more value into the account.
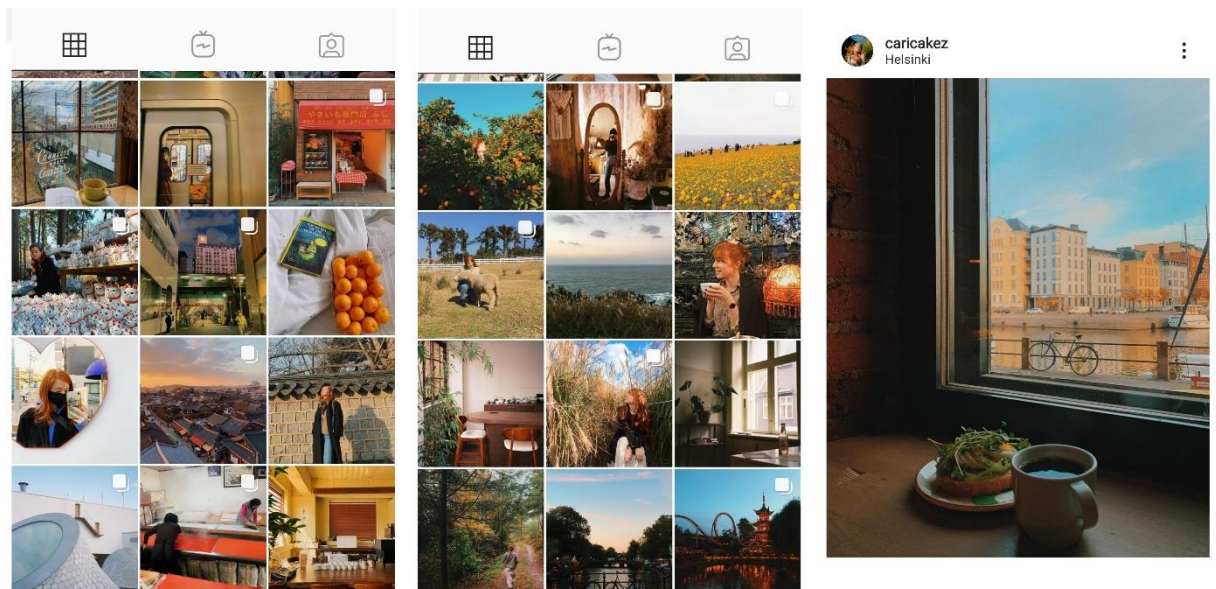
Image 21. Overview of cari cakes Instagram channel (cari cakes s.a.)

When companies are promoting in South-Korea they should acknowledge that LINE has a strong competitor, Kakaotalk, and if companies want to use LINE as a promotion tool the marketing should be planned thoroughly and carefully in order to compete against Kakaotalk. It can be difficult to attract followers in LINE in South-Korea but as mentioned before, Koreans are curious and always looking something new. If you have visibility and a good campaign, you can attract followers and possible customers with your LINE account.

When you have gained a strong follower base, you can plan and customize your own LINE sticker to give your followers a chance to show that they are a fan and customer of your company. Because they can use those stickers anytime in any conversation, it is also

a free promotion for your company if they will post the sticker that your company created to their conversations.

Based on the theoretical part that the Finnish lifestyle with sustainability and organic food are gaining more attention in South-Korea, one example of marketing strategy in LINE would be to incorporate peaceful landscapes and organic food photos into the posts and articles. Those South-Koreans who are interested in Finland but are wavering in their decision making of choosing the travel destination, could get the last push into buying a trip to Finland. Below you can see an example post and how it looks like in the account main page.
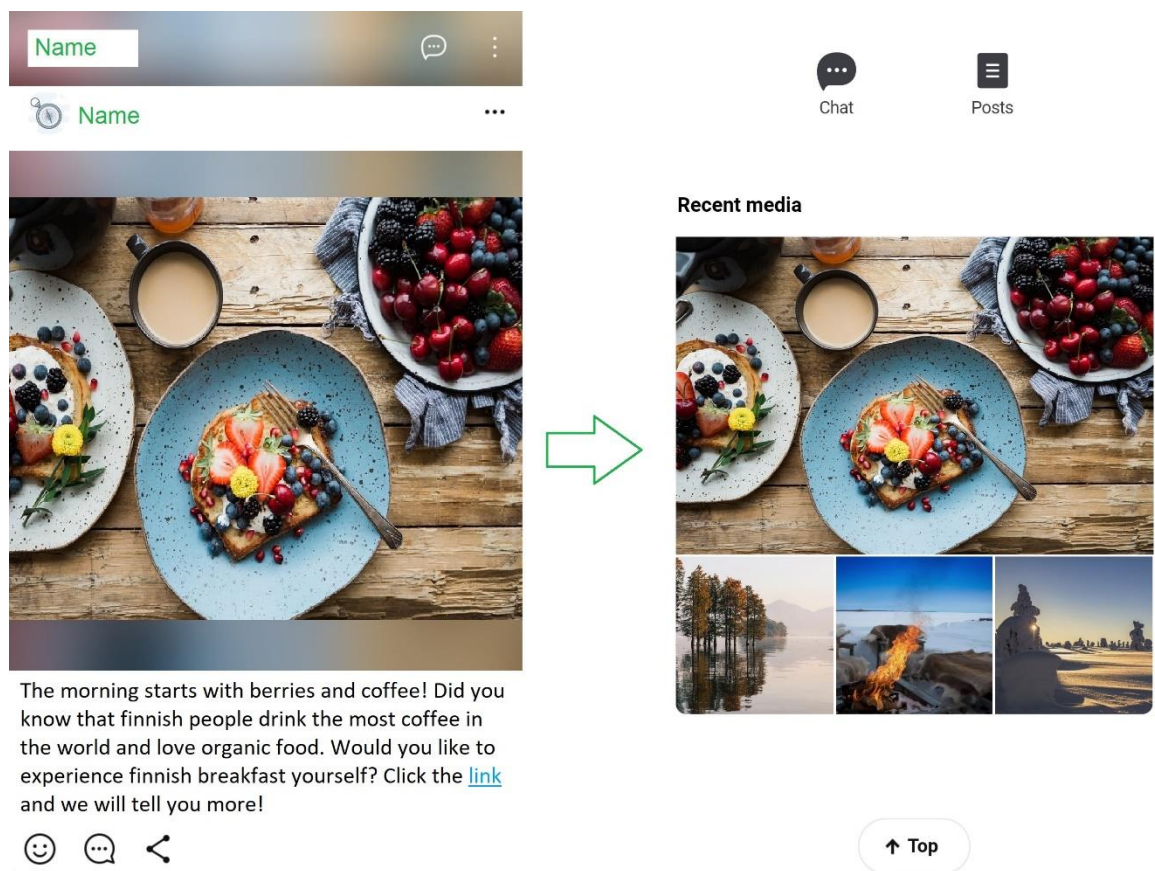
Image 22. Example post of photo content

The posts have to be well planned and scheduled, the colour scheme of the main page matter so the order of the posts and which photos would fit next to each other has to be carefully planned. Companies have to remember to either add links or emojis to the post text because it attracts more attention than just plain text. Always remember to monitor the results of likes, comments, and clicks. If something is not working, it is good to have a plan B which you can take into action if the original plan does not achieve the wanted results.

9.3.3   Paid advertisement for LINE

Nowadays the competition for the best visibility in social media is tough, companies try in every possible way to be noticed by their target groups. Paid advertisement gives companies higher chances for their target groups to notice them and an advantage compared to their competitors who are not using paid advertisements. As referred to in the theoretical part of this thesis, LINE enables paid advertisement in the application and it is a great way of promoting. Designing small banners that will appear in various locations inside the application will gain the company more visibility than by just promoting inside the company's official account.

In this case, our concentration is in South-Korea, and in tourism sector companies, the banners should be in the Korean language and include travel-related photos as a background. Below is an example of what kind of banner type a tourism sector company can use in their LINE paid advertisement marketing. The banner text is in Korean and it says "Refreshing feeling.. Finland. Let's go travelling!". The photo is colourful but calming at the same time and it is very fitting for South-Korean promotions because it emphasizes the image branding of Finland as a nature destination. As mentioned in the theoretical text, nature and a healthy lifestyle is a growing trend in South-Korean outbound tourism and these kinds of promotion photos can easily attract the correct target groups.

Image 23. Paid advertisement example

9.4   LINE in South-Korea: user experience analysis

I interviewed two South-Korean women aged 24 and 26 to receive more information about general user experience in LINE. The criteria for interviews was that the person had to be under 30 years old and has used the application regularly at least a year, so that the person has more than general knowledge of how to use the application. I also wanted to know how is the person's attitude towards tourism-related products in LINE because this thesis is especially concentrating on tourism sector companies. Both of the interviews were done via instant messaging phone calls. It was difficult to find South-Korean LINE users who use the application regularly because as previously mentioned, Kakaotalk dominates South-Korean markets. Because it was hard to find South-Korean LINE users to interview, two persons were minimum for sufficient comparison in the application user experience. I will call the interviewees as 'Person A' and 'Person B'.

Both of these persons said that LINE is not the primary instant messaging application they use. What they use the most is Kakaotalk and when asked the reason why, they said that Kakaotalk is easier to connect with other applications in South-Korea. Many businesses in South-Korea offer for example QR codes which you can use in Kakaotalk to get services. LINE is not well-known in South-Korea and it is not compatible with many other applications other than it's own Family applications. Both of the interviewees said that they use LINE at their work (for example with foreign colleagues) or with their foreign friends. In their opinion, the application is easy to use and they never had any problems with it or technical difficulties. Both of them said they don't follow any official accounts. The reason is that in South-Korea there are not many official accounts available to follow and those which are in the selection are not interesting to them. But they both said that they are interested in travel-related content and if there is an official account for that purpose, they would follow it.

Person A commented about the visual appearance of the accounts that they follow Naver (developing company) visuals and she thinks it fits the image of LINE. When asked about the application features which enable you to edit the accounts visually as you like, she said it is good that companies are able to show their uniqueness and individuality. According to her, it would be boring if every brand page looks the same. Person B did not comment a lot about visual appearance, she said she has not thought about it.

Both of the interviewees have not bought anything through the application because they prefer to use Kakaotalk when they buy something through instant messaging applications. But person B said that if there is an interesting product that she sees in the official brand account, she would buy it through the application. She thinks it is an interesting option for companies to present their products in LINE. Person A said she would buy a product using the application only if there are benefits she can use; for example acquiring a coupon after purchasing a travel product and she could then use the coupon during travelling in the destination she purchases the product to. Person B said she has bought LINE related products only, not from the application itself. Person B has visited their theme cafe and she said it is a cute place to spend time. And that it is well noticeable in the street because they have huge bear character greeting people at the entrance and you can take photos with the bear character.

For this matter, companies could collaborate with LINE itself and for example offer coupons to theme cafes when users purchase a product through the company's brand account. Of course, the coupon deals are only sensible in cities where they have the theme cafes.

When we were talking about travel-related content, person A said she likes to travel with public transportation and she is often looking for information about transfers and connections from applications. She would want content about traffic tickets, traffic situations (relevant to her travels), and information about locally famous attractions and restaurants. Because she favors relaxing time with family or friends when she travels, she does not want to worry about researching information in the destination. Person B said that she also uses applications for information about public transport, researches discount coupons for public transport tickets and attractions, and information about good local restaurants. She also liked to know if the destination has Korean restaurants. For travel companies this kind of distributing of customised information can be challenging but the companies can try promoting an individual planning service. For example, users can chat with the company and plan their trip and ask advice for a travel itinerary. This creates trust and individuality value. And companies can opt to offer discount coupons for their products to push the user to become a customer and make their final decision of buying a travel package through them.

When I asked about brand accounts, both persons expressed that if they would follow an official brand account which is managed by the tourism sector company, they would want a discussion room to be in it. They explained that in the discussion room they can ex-

change information with other users and that they generally trust information that is coming from other users with the same goal as they have, in this case, travelling. According to this wish, it would be good for the company for example arrange a chat party in LINE where everyone could share their opinions and the company could join the discussion. The company could give discount coupons for their services or send free stickers in the chat party to boost the community and connections between the users and the company. The chat party can be kind of an event inside LINE which promotes the company.

Both interviewees said they would share the information gained from the brand account to their family and friends if it is relevant for their trip or if it is fun or interesting information. Based on this, companies can encourage sharing by for example adding "share now with your friends" request to article text or add cute emojis encouraging to share the company's posts.

Figure 2. LINE South-Korean user experience SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Easy to use - Branding - Visually pleasing - Unique accounts (visual editing possible) - Companies operating in different Asian countries can use the same LINE account in all of the countries - Theme stores and cafes	- Not easy to connect with other applications in South-Korea - Many social media users choose Kakaotalk over LINE in South-Korea - Not many official brand accounts in South-Korea
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Big LINE family: many compatible LINE applications - Brand accounts (if companies create more official account to LINE) - More marketing and visibility = more users in South-Korea - Features what Kakaotalk is not offering (for example better chat rooms and compatibility with other applications) - More travel-related content in official accounts - Converting account into e-commerce platform	- Kakaotalk's growing market = less users in LINE - Less marketing than Kakaotalk = losing visibility - South-Korea is not LINE's main market = closing additional services like theme cafes which can make users forget LINE as a brand - Economical crisis = LINE has to pull out from countries which are not their main markets

10 Discussion

The theoretical part was done by meticulous research with different kinds of articles, news, blogs, and books. When I was researching about social media, social media marketing, and e-commerce in the theoretical part, there were sufficient amount of general information available. I knew about South-Korea a lot beforehand because I have lived in South-Korea and travelled inside the country, so researching information about Korean culture was easy. I knew where to look at the information from and I knew if the information was valid or not. One issue that proved to be hard while researching was finding information about instant messaging as well as user data and information about instant messaging in South-Korea. I used a lot of time to find correct information for theory to then use the facts and information in the instructions and guidelines of LINE. I was able to find most of what I needed except for updated statistics from South-Korean user data in LINE. The theoretical chapters support my empirical part well. My goal for the whole thesis was to present general information in the theoretical part so that the reader will have enough information and knowledge from social media and LINE when moving onto reading the empirical part which is the product instructions, guidelines, and ideas for promotions.

For the presentation of the thesis I decided to use PowerPoint presentation as it is easy to use and you can show the main points of the thesis. I also did a PowerPoint from the main points of LINE guidelines. In the future it can be used when people want to know simplified instructions and summary for using LINE for promotion purposes in South-Korea and Asia.

For the thesis my objective was to research information that helps especially tourism sector companies who are not advanced in social media marketing and who don't know a lot of information about Asia and South-Korea. My goal was that in the future, companies who want to promote in many Asian countries and especially in South-Korea using LINE, can use this thesis as guidelines. As I have gathered information from various sources, companies do not have to do time-consuming research. From this thesis they can find information on how they can create LINE account and how they can get started with social media marketing promotions in LINE instant messaging application. The goal for the instructions, guidelines, and promotional ideas was met and I was able to gather basic knowledge and information for foreign businesses of how to use LINE.

In my opinion, development is needed considering official business accounts in South-Korea. There are not many businesses that have created official accounts and those who have created official accounts do not use the accounts for promotional purposes to gain ROI for their business. There are not any tourism sector companies promoting with LINE official accounts in South-Korea or in the global English version of LINE.

In South-Korea, LINE's competitor Kakaotalk has more advanced services, and to compete, LINE needs to promote their official accounts more, for the customers to be able to find the businesses. LINE also needs to promote the official business account service towards businesses, as it is a huge opportunity to reach customers and it has many great features for promoting products and services.

When evaluating my own learning, I did manage to keep in my schedule to complete the thesis process. The topic was interesting for me since I have liked studying social media and LINE was something I was not familiar with. I enjoyed learning new information and research about LINE. I kept the language of the thesis professional and formal English and followed thesis template guidelines. The guidelines for LINE promotions are simple but clear and user experience is included to support the promotional ideas for official business accounts in LINE. I used a lot of different kinds of references to make sure the theory part of this thesis was not biased and based on only a few point-of-views and facts. The only thing I failed to find information about is the recent user statistics of LINE in South-Korea. I even sent an email to LINE corporation but they answered that they do not disclose information statistics from South-Korea since South-Korea is not their main market.

The whole thesis process has been challenging but a great experience in terms of gathering data from a subject that has not been researched a lot. Although it was challenging to find information for some parts of the theory, I enjoyed the research process and the results that I got from the research. The goal for the whole topic was met and companies who want to promote in LINE in Asia, can use the guidelines and ideas for their benefit. This thesis gathers most of the important information available regarding LINE in South-Korea what is needed for social media marketing.

For future research, it is good to acknowledge that when a social media platform brand is not targeting certain countries, there may not be enough information available for research. It is difficult to acquire statistics about LINE in South-Korea, but easy to research statistics from LINE's main target markets. There is a huge amount of information available from Japan for example.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. How long have you used LINE, is it your primary instant messaging application, and approximately how many times in a week do you use it?

2. If Line is not your primary instant messaging application, what application do you use more and what features does it have that Line doesn't have?

3. Do you find Line easy to use or are there some complicated features? Please describe any problems you have had using Line.

4. Have you started following any brand accounts (official company accounts)? If so, why did you started following the brand account and how often do you visit the account's main page?

5. What do you think about the visual appearance of brand accounts? What improvements could you think for Line brand account visuals?

6. Have you bought any products through Line instant messaging application? If yes, how did you think of the purchasing process? Do you think it's safe and easy or complicated?

7. In the future (exclude COVID-19 period), would you be interested in buying tourism-related products through Line brand accounts for example trip packages or event tickets. If yes, what would be the key factor to attract you into buying a product? If no, why wouldn't you buy tourism-related products through Line?

8. What kind of tourism-related content would you be interested in following in Line?

9. If you find a brand account with interesting content, would you share it with your friends & family?

10. What kind of content would you hope from brands? For example news, discussion rooms, articles, etc.

Appendix 2. LINE Guidelines summary

Guidelines for LINE for foreign tourism companies in South-Korea

- Create official LINE business account either by using personal LINE ID or with email.
- Check profile setting: change profile photo, cover photo and description.
- Edit profile: change color scheme to match your brand image.
- Edit automatic messages: Write a welcome message to your new followers which represents your company.
- Validate your account: LINE users can search your official brand account by name without knowing your official business account ID. You will also appear in suggested brand accounts.

Promoting in LINE

- Start planning the posting schedule for articles, photos and videos. Take examples of your competitors.
  - Use emojis in text and links to articles and videos
- Create a discussion room.
- Plan chat parties, create special discount coupons.
- Contact influencers to cooperate who create similar content with photos and videos.
- Make Plan B in case something in your social media marketing plan does not work.

Monitor

- Check data daily from LINE business account manager
- If some photos are not achieving likes and comments, remove similar photos from posting plans and take strategy from Plan B.
- Monitor discussion and join the discussion whenever possible -> show your followers that you are a company who values its customers.
- Give your followers the possibility to give feedback to you in discussion rooms and possibility to the followers to give travel tips to each other.
  - Take notes which kind of tips you could use in your future products and social media marketing plan.