IDENTIFYING BEHAVIORAL DRIVERS AND MOTIVATIONS FOR CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT IN LINE APPLICATION - A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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Master's thesis

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JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

ABSTRACT

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Discipline	Type of work
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Abstract	
The purpose of this master thesis is to identify the behavior drivers and motivations in adopting and using LINE messaging application (hereinafter: LINE) by the Japanese Z-generation. Within the rich ambit of services offered by LINE, the focus of this thesis includes the LINE marketing messages/offers send to registered members of the application. Why Gen-Z prefers using LINE over other similar mobile applications were identified and included in the discussion. Indicators for positive and negative consumer attitudes in LINE marketing were also identified in this study. In this research, non-probability sampling technique is used. It means that the interviewees are decided based on the researcher's subjective judgement. In more detail, the sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling. The main reason to use this technique to focus on characteristics of a population, in this case, Japanese Generation Z. To develop important themes for this research, the researcher interviewed Finnish marketing experts in Japanese markets and Finnish companies operating in Japanese markets. From these findings the researcher found validation and relevancy for certain marketing topis for what the study can focus on. The aim is to propose implications for both academics and practitioners. Nine representatives of the Japanese target group were approached, and semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely using Zoom application. The researcher first recorded the interviews and then transcribed the answers for the analysis. Thematic analysis was used as the research method to identify findings from the interview transcribes, and the researcher used the NVivo application to find and create themes. The results showed important indicators of consumer behavior from a utilitarian as well as a hedonistic point of view. In particular, the benefits of LINE emphasized more functional values, and these also served as a motivation to use LINE more than other applications. In addition to these conclusions, preferences were also created about what kind of digital marketing the Japanese Z generation likes. Thus, the researcher was able to create positive and negative image indicators for digital marketing. The research questions were answered in satisfactory, and important practical findings were obtained, as well as opening more opportunities for future research.	
Keywords	
Digital marketing, consumer behavior, perceived value, consumer engagement	
Location Jyväskylä University Library	

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Työn nimi	
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Tiivistelmä

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tunnistaa Japanilaisen Z-sukupolven motivaatioita käyttää LINE applikaatiota yritystilien seuraamiseen ja interaktiivisuuteen niiden kanssa. Tämän lisäksi tutkittiin syitä miksi LINEä käytetään yritysten seurantaan enemmän kuin muita vastaavia alustoja. Lisäksi tutkittiin syitä LINE markkinoinnin positiiviseen sekä negatiiviseen vastaanottamiseen. Olemassa olevaa kirjallisuutta kuluttajakäyttäytymiseen liittyen käytettiin erilaisten hyväksyttyjen motivaatiomallien kehittämiseksi. Aikaisemmassa kirjallisuudessa tutkimusta kohdennetusta kontekstista, teknologiasta ja väestötaustasta kannustettiin. Tässä tutkimuksessa korostuu asiakasarvon käyttäminen ja tulosten analysoiminen hierarkkisessa muodossa. Lisäksi sekä syitä positiivisen, että negatiivisen kuvan luominen markkinoinnissa esitettiin. Tässä tutkimuksessa käytetään näytteenottotekniikkaa. Se tarkoittaa, että haastateltavat päätetään tutkijan arvostelun perusteella. Tarkemmin tässä tutkimuksessa käytetty näytteenottotekniikka on ositettu otanta. Tärkein syy käyttää tätä tekniikkaa keskittymään väestön ominaisuuksiin, tässä tapauksessa Japanin Z-sukupolveen. Tutkija haastatteli suomalaisia Japanin markkinoinnin asiantuntijoita ja suomalaisia yrityksiä, joilla on toimintaa Japanissa tärkeiden markkinointiteemojen löytämiseksi. Näiden haastattelujen perusteella tutkija pystyi saamaan relevanttiutta tutkimuksen aiheisiin. Yhdeksän japanilaista kohderyhmän edustajaa haastateltiin puolistrukturoiduissa haastatteluissa etänä Zoom ohjelmaa käyttäen. Tutkija ensin nauhoitti kaikki haastattelut ja tämän jälkeen kirjoitti kaiken puhtaaksi analysointia varten. Tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin temaattista analyysiä ja tutkija käytti NVivo ohjelmaa teemojen muodostamiseen. Tulokset osoittivat indikaattoreita kuluttajan käyttäytymiseen utilitaristiselta sekä hedonistiselta kannalta. Etenkin LINEn hyödyissä korostuivat enemmän funktionaaliset arvot, ja nämä toimivat myös motivaationa käyttää LINEä enemmän kuin muita applikaatioita. Näiden päätelmien lisäksi luotiin myös preferenssejä minkälaisesta digimarkkinoinnista Japanilainen Z-sukupolvi pitää ja täten pystytään luomaan positiivinen kuva yrityksestä. Tutkimus kysymyksiin onnistuttiin vastaamaan ja saatiin tärkeitä käytännön havaintoja sekä avattiin mahdollisuuksia uusille tutkimuksille.

Asiasanat

Digitaalinen markkinointi, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, asiakasarvo, asiakkaan sitouttaminen

Säilytyspaikka   Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjasto

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction to the topic

The development of the internet is one of the biggest steps in commerce past decades (Langan, Cowley & Nguyen, 2019). After it came social media and instant messaging tools, which changed traditional marketing and the communication ways between marketers and stakeholders (Ertemel & Ammoura, 2016). Because of these developments, human behavior has changed remarkably through the 2000s making the studies of consumer behavior more important than ever (Pokul, Voronina & Malkova, 2018). As explained by Kumar (2009), ''todays consumer is not just an individual affected by the company advertisement that proms to purchase some product''. Eventually this has led to decrease of push marketing practices and changing more towards to personalized marketing in both free and paid advertising using different social media platforms (Ertemel & Ammoura, 2016). In today's world, brands tend to achieve market success because of their presence and contribution to improved brand awareness in the online market (Bansal, 2015) and therefore they research consumer behavior to identify the unfamiliar market to find new opportunities (Agrawal & Kaur, 2015). Consumer engagement has been studied to provide a deeper connection between the company and the customer (Khan et al., 2016),

   Along with the development of mobile devices, instant messaging applications have become more popular than ever (Ming, 2015). Along with the growth in m-commerce, there was a huge increase in the users of mobile messenger apps (Eeuwen, 2017). Therefore, many companies have started to provide services through messenger applications. LINE is the most used instant messaging application in Japan, used mostly as a communication tool (Statista Research Department, 2020). LINE was only an instant messaging application when it started but it has developed into own platform with multiple functions resembling social media and other similar applications.

   Ström, Bredican & Vendel (2014) stated that even though literature has found evidence that, there is a need-to-know what kind of behavior consumers use depending on the device, context, channel, and demographic background. Therefore, making it relevant to study Japanese Generation Z in the context of LINE application. Also, the recent trade agreements between EU and Japan have increased the relevancy of consumer behavior research (Haghirian, 2021). Therefore, LINE is a place to go for foreign organizations and researchers when they are analyzing Japanese consumer behavior. That is why one of the key goals of this study is to identify drivers and motivations of Japanese consumers to interact with brands using LINE application. The researcher's objective is that the results from this study will provide implications for better consumer engagement.

1.2   Scope of the study

With the increasing number of smart device users and their usage in everyday life, there has been a huge focus on consumer behaviour research in this topic. More and more new mobile applications are adopted for daily use and there are suggestions for research concerning specific demographics, context and technology to understand consumer behavior with different variables. This research will focus on Japanese top mobile application, LINE instant messaging application. LINE is one of the most used mobile applications in Japan today. As the general purpose of this study the researcher will explore the consumer behaviour of Japanese Generation Z in the LINE mobile application. The focus will be in the consumer engagement with LINE company brand accounts and LINE digital marketing. The LINE application and its functions will be presented in this chapter. In more detail the researcher will study the reasons and motivations behind the consumer engagement with company accounts LINE. Additionally, the drivers for the positive and negative attitude towards LINE marketing are explored. This research is done to find conclusions for better consumer engagement with Japanese audience in LINE application.

Time: Data collection lasted 2 months.	**Scope of the study:** Consumer behavior study of Japanese Generation Z in the LINE mobile application.	**Theories:** Digital marketing Generation Z Perceived value Consumer engagement Attitude drivers toward mobile marketing.
Location: Remote interviews between Finland and Japan using Zoom software		
Population: Japanese Generation Z 16-25 age group In total 9 volunteer respondents.	**Limitations:** Small sample size All represent higher education students	**Purpose:** Findings for better consumer engagement with Japanese audience in LINE application.

FIGURE 1 Scope of this study
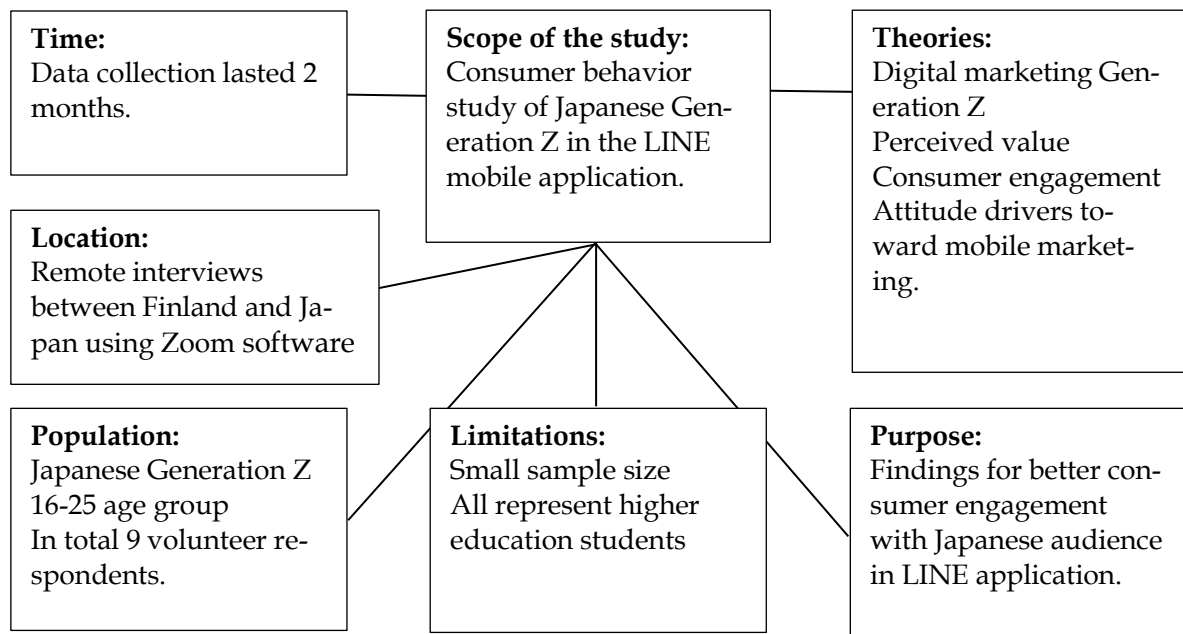
Different theories are discussed in this research. First the researcher opens the concepts of digital marketing, more detailed mobile marketing to give understanding about the discipline of this study. Then the researcher introduces the demographic context of the study, Generation Z and how can the group be defined. Additionally, it gives more demographic background of the respondents.

Also, more information about Japanese generation Z specifically is presented. Finally, the theories for the study are explained. In this research, perceived value, consumer engagement and attitude drivers toward mobile marketing theories are explained. These three mentioned theories will be used to find themes and analyse results on this study.

The study is done by interviewing Japanese volunteers from 16-25 age group which are recruited from Japanese universities. The interview transcribes from semi-structured interviews are analysed with thematic analysis. The recruitment and interviewing period lasted almost two months and in total 9 Japanese volunteer interviews are analysed. The interviews are done remotely by using Zoom software. All these interviewees are asked about their behaviour in LINE to find out motivations for consumer engagement in LINE.

1.3   Instant messaging

Along with the growth in m-commerce, there was a huge increase in the users of mobile messenger apps (Eeuwen, 2017). Instant messaging (IM) technology is a popular real-time communication tool which has overcome traditional ways of communication for example the usage of a phone or email (Ming, 2015). Instant messengers, like WhatsApp, Snapchat and LINE, have become the most used tool to communicate with other people on a daily basis (Masur & Scharkow, 2016). According to Ming (2015) the general model of instant messaging system technology is a sender and an inbox which are used for interaction. Instant messaging provides a possibility to exchange text, send voice messages, share pictures and files and so on, when the sender and a receiver are remote in time and space (Masur & Scharkow, 2016). These instant messengers also allow users to communicate with many different individuals at the same time and therefore be available for contacting in a constant state (Cui, 2016).

1.4   LINE messaging application

LINE is a freeware software developed in 2011 by Japanese NHN Japan (later Line Corporation) as a subsidiary of Korean internet search engine company Naver Corporation (Wang, 2019). Its main function is instant communication on electronic devices such as smartphones and tablet computers. By this it is meant that the users of the LINE can exchange texts, images, video, and audio. LINE is not an only traditional communication software but includes multiple features to use. LINE also has timeline features that lets users to post images, text and stickers to their own page (Wang, 2019). What makes LINE an interesting application also is that it has built-in applications inside the main software. Basically, this

means the user can download applications, such as games and news, from vast variety of collections inside the application. LINE also has its own features to use such as LINE Pay, LINE Taxi and LINE Manga (Wang, 2019).

Apart from being just a communication platform, LINE is also a multi-functional platform including possibilities for organizations to use the service as marketing and communication platform but it also for social networking site (Krajangwong, 2017). Currently LINE is the most-downloaded mobile application in Japan and has over 84 million monthly active users in Japan and over 164 million monthly active users worldwide (Statista Research Department, 2020).

1.5 Marketing in LINE messaging application

In this chapter the most used marketing tools in LINE are explained. The researcher will explain different marketing possibilities in the LINE application. These are important to acknowledge when analysing the findings from the interviews.

1.5.1 Official Accounts

One of the most used function of brands is official accounts, meaning user accounts managed by brands and companies (Krajangwong, 2017). These have been especially popular. This allows normal consumers to add a brand account as a friend and follow the account (Lin, 2014). Companies can use this function to give followers regular updates, published articles, or news updates from companies. This also allows companies to see what kind of consumers are following the company and thus can create a variety of marketing content that can then be sent directly to the people who follow the account. In LINE a company can use a service to send messages directly to the followers of a brand (Krajangwong, 2017). It can be for example a marketing campaign or a direct link to an ecommerce site. For example, a follower gets a flyer from the brand they follow, so this can be used in the company's physical shop or online store. This push message tool has been used to send messages such as coupons and promotions, notices, event notifications, and just-in information for the LINE users. Business accounts can also communicate with followers via messages, chat, and Timeline posts (Krajangwong, 2017).

1.5.2 LINE Stickers

Another effective way to approach customers is to use and create stickers (Wang, 2019). Sticker is an emoticon that has the advantage to express the emotion of the user (Gitari & Franzia, 2017). They can even be given to their customers for free or sold in LINE Sticker Shop and Japanese has shown interest in buying them

(Gitari & Franzia, 2017). It is an effective way if you manage to create the right marketing content for your segment using stickers. In many cases, Japanese companies have their own character around which stickers are created or collaborated, ie the rights are bought from a popular company. Amongst Japanese these stickers are well-received. If successful, it can positively increase the brand awareness and lead to a brand engagement (Wang, 2019).

1.5.3 LINE Advertisement

Third popular marketing tool is LINE Ads which gives digital marketing tool to create digital advertising in LINE (Wang, 2019). These paid ads are used in LINEs own built-in applications, such as LINE Manga, but also in LINEs main application. For these different applications, companies can buy advertising space, and this has been increasingly a popular way to advertise in LINE. There are both one-way and two-way marketing and communication used in LINE. The literature has classified banner advertising as one-way and the company account as two-way digital marketing channel. (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). As an example, brand can create own banner advertisement in the form of picture, or a video and the advertisement is then integrated in LINE application.

1.6   Introduction of the market i.e. Japan

Japan is an Asian-Pacific country, and it is located in the east coast of Asia. The country's population is 126 million in 2021. Japan was an isolated country for a long time (Hall, Jansen, Kanai & Twitchett, 2008). The rulers kept tradition in high value and national morality has been a key part of the country's system. This was until the nineteenth century when Japan started to familiarize itself with Western influences (Hall et al., 2008). It was at that time when Japan started to identify as an imperial nation-state. After the Second World War, the economic reforms increased the nation's industrialization and development (Kotabe, 1990). This also helped Japan to expand to non-traditional fields of production such as automobile and electronic companies and Japanese corporations became well-known for their new product development processes (Kotabe, 1990). These efforts made Japan one of the fastest growing economies at that time (Ito et al. 2020). Even though Japan experienced the economic bubble burst in the 90's (World Bank 2018), today Japan is the third largest economy in the world (Haghirian, 2021). In 2019 Japan's GDP per capita was USD 43,235.718 in PPP (purchasing power parity) (Santandertrade, 2020).

1.6.1 Relevance of Japan as a market

To understand the relevance of this research, it is important to observe what features Japan as a market holds. As mentioned above, Japan is the third largest economy after USA and China (Haghirian, 2021). Therefore, can be said that Japanese markets holds promising possibilities for both local and foreign investors. According to the study conducted by EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation (2021), attitudes of Japanese consumers are challenging to meet and that is why consumer behavior studies are in high importance. These include factors such as revised business processes, marketing practices, sales management, and development of new products.

Japan is an interesting market for the research from the European perspective because of the recent changes in decreasing trade barriers. In 2019 the free trade agreement between Japan and EU came into force. In practice this means when the agreement has fully come into force, 97% of custom duties are cut from goods imported from the European Union. Therefore, an increase in Finnish companies entering Japanese markets can be expected because this agreement breaks down barriers to 127 million consumers the Japan holds (Maurer, 2019).

1.6.2 Online consumer behaviour in Japan

To understand more the way of Japanese consumer attitudes, in this chapter some basics statistics of Japanese consumer behavior are introduced. With a population of 126 million, Japan is the 11th most populous country in the world (Statistical Handbook of Japan, 2020). Japan is in a unique situation with the aging population which is creating challenged for Japanese nation. Even though there are a huge number of elderly citizens in Japan, they have a remarkably effect on consumption. After all there were only roughly 75 million people in the working age, 15-64 years old (Haghirian, 2021).

Japan also has a satisfactory level of purchasing power. According to the study conducted by EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation (2021), Japan is a high-income society. The average annual income in Japan was $40,573 in 2019. In 2019 Japan's GDP per capita was USD 43,235.718 in PPP (Santandertrade, 2020), meaning that Japanese consumers can be in general stated as middle-class consumers (Haghirian, 2021). In 2018 the total retail sales amounted to almost ¥145 trillion JPY (Diep, 2020). Traditional retail shopping is still highly valued even though online shopping is getting more popular. In 2019 Japan's e-commerce penetration was still remarkably low, 8.7% (Haghirian, 2021).

Japanese population, especially Generation Z, is highly familiar with mobile technology and application (White & Mills, 2014). Already by the 2012, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication reported that 95,6% of Japanese people own a smart device. Also, amongst young people, mobile phones are the most popular way to use internet (White & Mills, 2014). This is relevant and important for this research because the interviews will be focused on the usage of

mobile devices and online shopping behavior. Even though Japanese have been considered as traditional offline shoppers, Japan has been one of the largest countries in e-commerce. The spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in 2020 has changed the consumption pattern even more to more online consumption positive (Watanabe & Omori, 2020). However, it remains unclear how the trend will shift after the pandemic.

1.7   Research structure

The structure of this study is as follows (see FIGURE 2.). The first section introduces reader to the topic by telling what the purpose of the study is. In that section the researcher explains the summary of the study and what is the context, demographics, and technology of the study. Additionally, the researcher explains the research justifications, research questions and objectives of the study. In the next section, the literature review, the researcher goes through literature of the topic and method, opens theoretical approaches on this kind of study and finds holes for the research. In this study, the researcher also interviews Japanese marketing experts from Finland and Finnish companies operating in Japan. The purpose of these interviews is to build relevancy, seek topic proposals and familiarize with foreign market and new application. In the third methodology section the research design and procedures are explained. The researcher tells what kind of data are collected and how and how the interviewees are selected. Also, thematic analysis is explained and how it will be used to analyse the collected data. In the last sections, findings and conclusions, the researcher presents the results from the interviews and presents contributions, importance, managerial implications from the study and gives proposals for the future research.
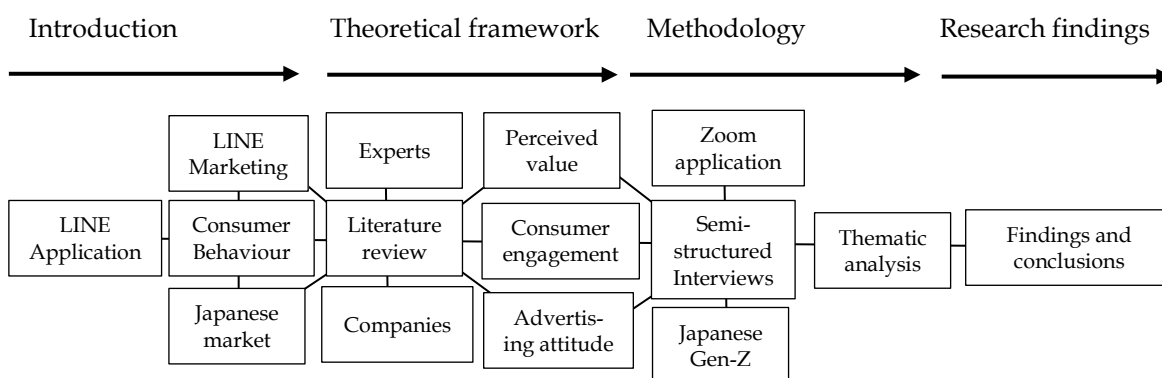

FIGURE 2 Research structure of this study

1.8   Research justifications

It has been proposed to research consumer behavior and attitude towards mobile advertising before setting up any communication plans for a brand marketing (Khan & Allil, 2010). Since the evolution of mobile advertising, it has been a huge challenge to create marketing which is accepted by consumers and therefore the researchers have focused on mobile advertising standards that align with positive consumer acceptance, preference, and behavior towards advertising (Billore & Sadh, 2015). Authors have already found out different standards for mobile advertising that are accepted by consumers, but it has been generalized in mobile advertising field. Also, Ström, Bredican & Vendel (2014) stated that even though literature has found evidence that perceived value of mobile marketing affected the outcome of consumer value, there is a need-to-know what kind of behavior consumers use depending on the device, context, channel and demographic background.

      Based on the findings of Billore & Sadh (2015), the future research on mobile marketing should focus on limited fields. This means that the attitudinal and behavioral measurements should focus on limited mobile environment such in single platforms as LINE. Also, the phenomena and effects can be focused on cross-cultural research and analysing consumer behavior in different cultures. Therefore, the usage of LINE in cross-cultural study in Japan can be justified. In addition, Finnish marketing experts to Japanese markets and Finnish companies interviewed for this research justified these themes to be crucial in studying and implementing marketing preferences. The outcome goal of this research is to identify motives and drivers for Japanese Generation Z consumer behavior in the LINE application to fill the gap in the field of mobile marketing research.

1.9   Research questions and study objectives

The ultimate objective of this research is to contribute to the field of mobile marketing in cross-cultural environments. The general standards have already been created for positive consumer attitudes (Billore & Sadh, 2015) but this research focuses on filling the gaps in research where the different consumer variables are specified, in this case using specific device, context and demographic background. The aim of this study is to identify positive drivers and motivations of Japanese Generation Z to interact with the LINE company accounts and why have they chosen to follow companies in LINE over other similar applications. The researcher uses perceived value to find out reasons for previously mentioned consumer engagement. As there has been accepted dimensions for perceived value, utilitarian, and hedonic dimensions (Ström, Bredican & Vendel, 2014),

they will be analysed from the interviews. The findings of the study can also explain cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects in consumer engagement.

Also, the researcher aims to find out drivers for positive and negative attitudes generated by LINE marketing. For this the researcher has identified main factors for positive attitude drivers towards marketing from the literature. The researcher developed four main research questions for this study. These questions are explained below.

RQ1: What are the motivations for consumers to follow a specific brand in LINE?

The purpose of this research question is to identify motivations why the target group uses LINE application to follow brand accounts. To get a deeper insight the researcher uses perceived consumer values to gain deeper understanding in this phenomenon. The dimensions of perceived value are explained in the next chapter. In the results the researcher aims to find the most relevant value creators which can be compared to existing literature and also contribute by finding detailed information about the target group. In addition, because of the specified application used in this research, the researcher aims to find LINE specific reasons for value creation.

RQ2: Comparing other social media channels, what are the motivations for consumers to follow a specific brand in LINE and not in other social media channels?

The purpose of the second main research question is to identify drivers and motivations why the target group choose to use LINE over other similar platforms. This helps the researcher to identify more the preferences and key concepts why LINE brand accounts create more value to them when comparing to the same brands account in other similar mobile application. As suggested by Billore & Sadh (2015), this helps to give more specific information about the phenomena of consumer value depending on the mobile platform. This means the researcher also aims to find LINE specific indicators for this phenomenon.

RQ3: What are the positive drivers / motivations for consumers when engaging mobile advertisements in LINE?

The objective of the third main research question is to acknowledge variables affecting consumers attitudes towards mobile marketing in the LINE application. The researcher has identified variables affecting consumers attitudes towards mobile marketing which has been studied to have a positive effect on consumer attitudes (Ünal, Erics & Kesel, 2011). The aim is to provide key information of Japanese Generation Z positive mobile marketing attitude, but also identify important details on what kind of drivers are important on that matter. The researcher has detailed different practical, LINE specific marketing practices in the interview to gain more deeper understanding in the context of LINE marketing.

RQ4: What (LINE advertisement) factors irritate or siphoned-away the consumers and how to control them for better consumer engagement?

The aim of the fourth research question is to identify factors which cause a Japanese Generation Z LINE user to react negatively to a LINE advertisement, therefore not indicating an engagement. As in the third research question, researcher has identified irritation as a variable to generate a negative effect on consumer attitude. This question is important as it can provide information for implications to propose better marketing practices.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Digital marketing and its significance in today's business environment

During the last decades, the traditional marketing has gone through many changes using technologic developments, eventually switching marketing more towards digitalization (Langan, Cowley & Nguyen, 2019). Also, these technological advancements have changed the lifestyles and values of consumers (Cornwell, 2008). Wymbs (2011) defined digital marketing as "the use of digital technologies to create integrated, targeted and measurable communication which helps to acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them". On the other words digital marketing has changed the way how the communication with consumers is practiced (Langan, Cowley & Nguyen, 2019). Digital marketing tools are considered as high importance for consumer value creation, therefore making it important to identify different drivers for it (Chaffey & Smith, 2012).

What makes digital marketing relevant for this study, and generally for practitioners and academics is that the field is not only about understanding different technologies but more like researching the behavior of people using the technology (Ryan, 2016). Based on the study made by Bruyn (2008), digital marketing has four main factors which are still considered as standards of platform marketing, web/mobile marketing, search engine optimization, social networks, and customer relationship management. In this research the focus will be in mobile marketing.

Digital marketing as a term explains the use of digital channels, devices, and platforms for marketing purposes and one of the important aspects is social media marketing (Kannan & Li, 2017). Even though LINE is mostly used as an instant communication tool, it can also be seen as a social networking site based on its functions. One of the benefits of social media platforms is that it provides a possibility for people to connect by sharing information efficiently and this has changed consumer behavior remarkably (Fierro & Gavilanez, 2017). Social networking sites offer possibilities for brand awareness, where organizations can connect with their audience and ultimately can create targeted campaigns for their chosen marketing segment (Liu & Ying, 2010). To understand better the benefits of marketing through social media and it's connection to the use of mobile devices, the mobile commerce is explained in the next chapter.

2.2   Mobile commerce

The increased use of mobile devices and the development of mobile technologies has led to the rapid emergence of mobile commerce as a new business phenomenon (Sarkar, Chauhan & Khare, 2020). Today the mobile devices are the primary shopping device (Kaatz, 2020). According to O'Kane (2013) mobile devices were the most used gateway to the internet in world already years ago. The rapid growth in online shopping has made mobile marketing the highest priority for brands (Berman, 2016). This has increased the eagerness to research the mobile commerce. The definition for mobile commerce connects the mobile device and the use of internet. Kalinic, Marinkovic, Kalinic & Liebana-Cabanillas (2021) defined mobile commerce as ''business activities conducted through Internet-enabled mobile devices.'' Billore & Sadh (2015) cited the definition of Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) as follows: "Mobile Marketing is a set of practices that enables organizations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network.'' Another research says that mobile marketing is "the use of the mobile medium as a means of marketing communications" (Smutkupt, Krairit & Esichaikul, 2010 and Karjaluoto, 2010). Rodgers and Thorson (2000) studied and stated that identifying the critical features of advertisements, as well as the brand content itself, can lead to a beneficial consumer behavior. It is important to set up a definition for mobile commerce and mobile marketing in the context of LINE, even though there are many different definitions for the term, it cannot be specifically explained termwise (Karjaluoto, 2010). There are multiple definitions for mobile advertising created by researchers but generally it can only be said as the advertising using mobile platforms connected to network (Billore & Sadh, 2015).

Chopdar and Balakrishnan (2020) conducted a wide literature review concerning the potential and challenges of the mobile commerce. This is an important addition as LINE is a mobile application. They argued that mobile applications are more convenient channels for the consumer to shop as the marketers can perform targeted marketing easier. However, there is still a need for research about mobile commerce as the literature about mobile applications in commerce is very limited, they stated. In the literature review, Chopdar and Balakrishnan (2020), gave suggestions for further research for both academicians and practitioners, that they could get valuable findings when uncovering and validating factors that affect behavior among app users to completely understand its enormous potential.'' Kaatz (2020) suggested in the research that to better understand and satisfy customer needs, marketers should take a customer-centric approach in their marketing practices around distinct customer groups rather than product categories. Therefore, focusing the consumer behavior in this study can be relevant for the literature.

Mobile commerce has changed the way the marketers view consumer marketing (Tong, Luo & Xu, 2019). The possibilities from marketers come from

the fact that over a half of world's population will own a mobile device in the near future, increasing the potential of mobile marketing (Statista, 2019). This provides even more opportunities to offer marketing through mobile applications. As mobile marketing gets even more important, the business potential of mobile marketing is expected to increase to $183 billion within the next 5 years (BusinessWire, 2019). Because of the growth of mobile commerce, it has been stated to be important to identify factors which influence adoption and continued use of it (Kalinic, Marinkovic, Kalinic & Liebana-Cabanillas, 2021).

2.3 Generation-Z consumer

To understand better Generation Z, it is important to explain the topic of similarities and differences between different generations. The researchers have been dividing people from different generations into groups to understand better the changing consumer behavior depending on the age (Dimock, 2019). Originally Strauss and Howe (1991) introduced parallels between generations and that an age group share similar characteristics. This does not mean that all the member of a certain age group shares all the same characteristics (Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017). These members of a certain generation group have been living in the similar kind of world, and the existing literature has described that their values and behavior have been shaped by it, for example by parenting, technology, or economics. (Kim & Park, 2020).

TABLE 1 Generational characteristics

Silent Generations	Born 1925–1945 Traditionalists and might be challenging to learn new technology.
Baby Boomers	Born 1946–1964 Have been introduced to technology in the technology but it has not played a vital role in their lives.
Generation X	Born 1965–1986 The main body of today's labour markets. Familiarized with the tools of information technology and the digital world at a relatively young age.
Millennials	Born 1987-1996 Adopted the use of Internet during their childhood, confident in using digital tools and navigating the web, the digital world has become their natural habitat.
Generation Z	Born 1997-2012 Digital natives. They do not know what life without wireless network, mobile phones and the Web is.
Generation Alpha	2013- Natives in the usage of internet and smart devices. Have not lived in the world without Internet.

The researcher of this study was able to form a table about the characteristics of each generation based on their environment and technological capabilities. Based on the existing literature done by multiple researchers (Haghirian, 2021; Enam & Konduri, 2018; Dimock, 2019; Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017) the in Japan generations can be defined as seen in the table above. The divide is done in similar way than in the Western countries, but the differences in the Japanese consumer groups are explained in the next section.

Generation Z is considered to consist of a group of people born between 1996 and 2012 (Haghirian, 2021). This generation is also known as digital natives because they have been born after the spread of the internet. Therefore, Generation Z are heavy users of technology (Priporas et al, 2017). According to Reinikainen et al (2020), this means that Generation Z have been familiar and lived with the internet, social networks, and mobile systems their whole lives. Eventually this means that this group of people has gotten used to being able to interact with the world at any time possible (Turner, 2015) As a result of being affected by the heavily digitized environment, Generation Z value easy and fast services and information seeking. Also, they can differ significantly from the previous generations in terms of consumer behavior which creates new challenges for organizations (Priporas et al, 2017).

Generation Z is on focus in this research. Therefore, it is important to differentiate them a little bit more from other generations. From marketing perspective, they want the communication to be visual, precise, easy, and constantly evolving (Spooner, 2018). When compared to neighbouring Generations, X and Millennials, the Generation Z have shown to trust more in user-generated information than on company-generated information (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). According to Jeys (2019). Generation Z is seen to be familiar with technology which can also affect their behaviour strongly, they access and comprehend information fast, are very international in their perspective but seem to be easily offended and vulnerable (Jeys 2019). On the other hand, Generation Z is seen as more realistic and individualistic than other generations (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2017). Because of their heavily instantaneous and digitalized lifestyle, Generation Z is argued to be more demanding than earlier generations in terms of consumer behaviour and expectations from products and services (Southgate, 2017).

2.3.1 Generation Z consumer in Japan

In Japan major consumer groups are divided in generational categories which are done of interest to marketing academics and practitioners (Haghirian, 2021). Haghirian (2021) also conducted a research explaining the differences between Japanese generations. The generations are presented below.

In Japan, the group of people born during the 1996 and 2012 are defined as Generation Z. In Japanese culture Generation Z is called the satori generation. This group of people is often compared to millennials, but researchers have stated that there are few differences between these two groups (Haghirian, 2021).

According to the research report created by the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation (2021) there are a couple of main differences. Japanese Generation Z use more time on their phones than millennials, switching the usage of the computers more to the smartphones. They are also more likely to get influenced from social media and are more open for online shopping (Euromonitor, 2020). Even though Japanese Generation Z do not represent the significant amount of Japanese people, only 13,85% of Japan's total population (e-stat Japan, 2020), but it can partly be explained by the high number of dankai generation who are baby boomer generation Japan (Haghirian, 2021).

TABLE 2 Japanese consumer groups

Baby boomers/dankai generation	Born 1946-1964 Known for health and wealth. High expectations towards products and their manufacturers. Traditional shoppers.
Generation X/ dankai junior	Born 1965-1980 Low purchasing power but increasing capacity to spend. Expecting to hold 20% of the total purchasing power in Japan.
Millennials/ yutori generation	Born 1987-1996 Affluent consumer behavior. Millennials in Japan are different from millennials in other countries. They like when products are simple, relatively cheap but still good quality. In fact, Japanese millennials desire for a more simplistic lifestyle. Advanced digital skills.
Generation Z/ satori generation	Born 1996-2012 Willing to pay more for a product than millennials. Digital natives, behaviour shaped by technology. Narrow and deeply insightful marketing preferences instead of a mass approach with a big talent and massive marketing campaigns. Strong online shopping behavior but secure about their personal data.

2.4 Attitude towards mobile marketing theory

As explained earlier by Ertemel & Ammoura (2016), marketing strategies are changing more towards to personalized marketing in both free and paid advertising using different mobile platforms. This way marketing today is more personal, but often viewed as intrusive. This has been quite popular topic for re-

search to understand more the attitude and the acceptance of the mobile marketing, and attitude towards mobile advertising (Eeuwen, 2017). Consumers attitudes has been one of the most researched topics in the mobile marketing area (Leppäniemi, Sinisalo, & Karjaluoto, 2006). It has been stated that doing research about attitudes towards marketing is important because consumer sees its own mobile device as a personal tool and therefore would like to affect the amount of interaction with brands (Watson, McCarthy & Rowley, 2013). LINE is mostly used as a communication tool so if the consumer would like to receive advertisement and what kind of advertisement, it is an important aspect for research. It is also important to study attitudes towards mobile marketing because previous studies have shown that it eventually affects consumers purchasing intentions (Boateng & Okoe, 2015). The researcher uses the advertising model of Ducoffe (1996) to explain the Japanese Generation Z attitudes towards LINE advertising. The model explains how advertising value is individual value of the advertisement. The attitude towards advertising will explain how LINE user perceives the advertising in general. Ducoffe (1996) proposed that three factors may affect a consumer attitude: entertainment, informativeness and irritation. Later the marketing researchers has started to include personalization as one of the factors in mobile marketing (Ünal, Erics & Kesel, 2011). The researcher uses these four factors to find out reasons for consumer attitude in the LINE advertising.
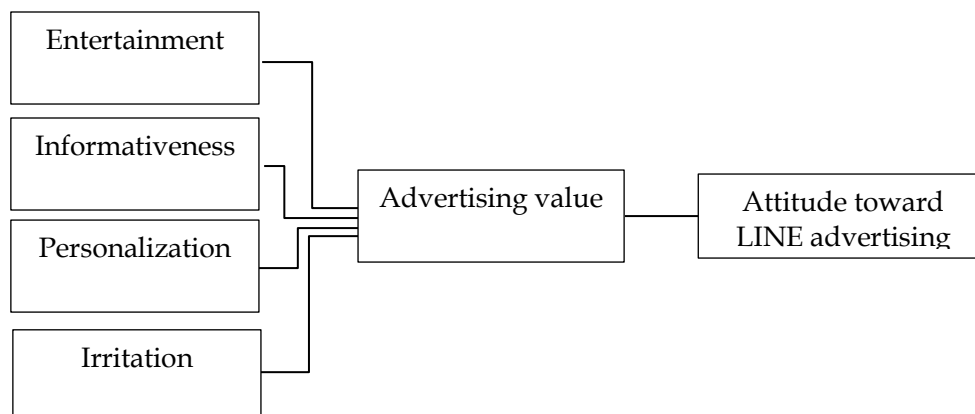
FIGURE 3 Ducoffe's advertising model (1996) used in this research

2.4.1 Entertainment

Entertainment is considered as one of the major factors in creating positive attitude towards mobile advertising (Ünal, Erics & Kesel, 2011). In this case the entertainment means the pleasure the consumer feels when seeing and reviewing the advertisement (Altuna & Konuk, 2009). As explained by McQuail (1987) entertainment is a factor which can fulfil the audience's need for escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment or emotional enjoyment. The feelings created by the advertisement can create an overall positive attitude (Kassim & Hashim, 2018).

This means music, visual aspects or any other sensible content what can be seen in LINE application. Depending on the nature and the purpose of the advertisement, the interviewer aims to find out if this works as a factor for positive brand image in LINE marketing.

2.4.2 Informativeness

Informativeness feature of the advertisement can be defined as the affect on consumer satisfaction trough the quality of information and thus affecting on consumer buying decision (Ducoffe, 1996). It also has the effect on consumers opinion about the brand and its products (Kassim & Hashim, 2018). That is why the information the brand provides to consumer, for example in the research case in LINE, must be correct and relevant to be able to create benefits for the consumer. Informativeness plays an important role in this research. This is because it can be seen in this research if consumers using LINE demand personalized marketing (Kassim & Hashim, 2018) or the information quality is a key factor in consumers approving advertising (Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt & Neumann, 2005). Brands using LINE can use multiple functions to provide information for their followers and in the results can be seen how is affect the brand image.

2.4.3 Personalization

Personalization plays a vital role in today's marketing, as it is easier target the marketing to a certain consumer group based on their demographic background (Ünal, Erics & Kesel, 2011). Therefore, personalization gives a possibility to reach already existing and potential customers directly and use it to develop the consumer relationship (Xu, 2007). It has been studied that through personalization the previously mentioned ''spam'' would reduce because there is no use for irrelevant advertising anymore (Maneesoonthorn, 2006). Zeng et al. (2009) studied the effect of personalization and found out that the relevant advertisement influences positive attitude.

2.4.4 Irritation

When it comes to mobile advertising, there is a potential that the content is viewed as irritating. Irritation is the only negative factor that consumer may have against mobile advertising (Altuna & Konuk, 2009). According to Ducoffe (1996) irritation means when the advertising can be offensive, insulting, or manipulative but also when the information is confusing, distracting or overwhelming for the consumer. What is especially relevant in case of LINE is the highlight of spam, unwanted messages, because one of LINE main marketing functions when following a LINE brand account is direct marketing messaging. Spam is usually seen as irritating intruding in consumers privacy (Dickinger, 2005). Li et al. (2002)

also studied that the negative attitude towards advertising can be caused by disturbing nature of online advertising. This is an important factor to consider if the amount of misleading and irrelevant advertising in LINE affects the option of a brand account. Irritation factors work as a guideline for the fourth research question.

2.5   Consumer engagement theory

Consumer engagement has shown to be an attractive field to study among both academics and practitioners during the last years (Hepola, Leppäniemi & Karjaluoto, 2020). There has been a huge focus on the research for consumer engagement during the beginning of 21st century due to technological developments which has changed the consumer behavior (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2011). Even though ''engagement'' has been widely studied, consumer engagement can be considered as relatively new field of study (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). Based on the research done by Hepola, Leppäniemi & Karjaluoto (2020) consumer engagement has a huge variety of definitions, but it can be divided into three categories: (1) the behavioral stream, (2) the psychological stream, and (3) the stream that views engagement as a combination of the behavioral and psychological dimensions. According to Morgan-Thomas, Dessart and Veloutsou (2020), consumer engagement concept ''captures the interactive and experimental nature of the contemporary relationships with entities such as brands, firms, products, and brand communities.'' As in this study the researcher focuses on consumer behavior of Japanese target group in LINE, it is important to open more the concepts of consumer engagement.

Cheung, Lee & Ming (2011) has proposed three approaches for the engagement which are created by the literature review focused on multi-dimensionality of the concept. As it defined ''consumer engagement as behavioral manifestation from a customer toward an engagement object (brand or firm) which goes beyond purchase behavior. Secondly, ''consumer engagement as a psychological process that leads to the formation of loyalty.'' As a third definition ''consumer engagement as a psychological state of mind that is characterized by a degree of vigor, dedication, absorption, and interaction.''

As the behavioral aspects in consumer engagement started to get more attention, the researchers started to generate common dimensions for it. According to Gatautis et al. (2016) and Hepola, Leppäniemi & Karjaluoto (2020), the three most common dimensions can be identified from the existing literature. Hollenbeek (2011) and other researchers has highlighted the importance of cognitive dimensions. ''Cognitive engagement dimension refers to the consumer's level of engagement object related through processing, concentration, and interest in specific object (business enterprise, brand, online social network, brand community'' (Tarute, Nikou & Gautis, 2017). Another important dimension

which was repeatedly mentioned in the literature were emotional dimensions (Hollenbeek, 2011). According to Tarute, Nikou & Gautis (2017), emotional engagement dimension can be defined as ''a state of emotional activity also known as the feeling of inspiration or pride related to and caused by engagement object. For example, in the brand engagement context emotional engagement refers to consumer association, dedication or commitment regarding specific brand.'' The third important dimension is behavioral dimension. In the context in LINE this can be utilized in the advertisement perspective. It can be defined as ''a state of consumer behavior related to engagement object and understood as endeavor and energy given for interaction. For example, in the brand engagement context behavioral engagement refers to consumer intention to take action towards specific brand or obtain/purchase specific brand'' Gatautis et al. (2016).

According to previous research, it has been considered that following consequences may come from consumer engagement: trust, satisfaction, commitment, emotional connection, empowerment, consumer value and loyalty (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2011). In the context in LINE as a mobile application these might be the initial drivers for marketers in LINE marketing when consumer engagement is the objective. Consumer engagement is seen as a creation of a deeper connection between the company and the customer (Khan et al., 2016), therefore making it a relevant aspect for this study. These dimensions can also be drivers in consumer behavior towards engagement which can explain motivations in the LINE usage, therefore answering the research questions. It is good to keep in mind that perceived value is used to analyze the drivers for consumer engagement and this subject is analyzed just as a phenomenon in the findings section.

2.6   Perceived value theory

Perceived value is generally used to gain understanding of consumer behavior (Shaikh & Karjaluoto, 2016), in this case in the LINE usage. Perceived value can be defined as customers' assessments of the quality of the product or service being sought relative to its sacrifice such as price and is found to positively influence their satisfaction levels (Chopdar & Balakrishnan, 2020). In other words what kind of value the customer gets from the product or service. Value is the benefits offered by the product or service for consumer against what is sacrificed for it, when comparing to competition based on experience (Parasuraman, 1997). According to Zeithaml (1988) perceived value is popular in consumer behavior research and is seen as "the global evaluation of the consumer regarding the utility of the product based on the perception of what is received in exchange for what is given." For many organizations who want to gain a competitive advantage over competitors, it has become increasingly crucial to provide superior value to customers and found that a primary focus for marketing researchers and marketing managers should be perceived value (Yuan, Moon, Wang & Yu, 2020).

According to Wang, Liu, Huang, Zuo & Rameezdeen (2020) perceived value is used as an important factor in marketing to understand what affects consumers purchasing decisions. To understand perceived value better it is suggested to evaluate the exchange between costs and benefits, and in the research, this is often done using the interactions of several independent dimensions for example quality, performance and emotional dimensions (Wang, Liu, Huang, Zuo & Rameezdeen, 2020). It is relevant for this study about LINE to understand these value dimensions because it is in the highest importance to any brand to create value for their consumers (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016) In addition, consumer perceived value is stated to effect on the use of mobile technology, services, and marketing based on consumer experiences and expectations (Constantinou, Papazafeiropoulou & Vendelø, 2009). Because of the complexity and multisided approach of perceived value it has been considered as an effective analysis for the adoption of social media applications, especially now when they are even more popular than ever (Zanuddin & Shaid, 2021). Also, the marketing researchers have stated that the value is a crucial measure for building prospective response from consumers (Chopdar & Balakrishnan, 2020).

Based on multiple studies (Ström, Bredican & Vendel, 2014), research has shown that there are multiple accepted dimensions in mobile service values. As LINE does not charge any fees for their service nor it is not completely considered as social media, in this research the focus will be on utilitarian value, which consists of quality, performance, usefulness, and convenience (Kim, Chan, & Gupta, 2007) and on hedonic value, which consists of non-instrumental, experiential, and effective dimensions, analyzing the pleasure and fun derived from use (Kim & Han, 2011). It has been stated that using these two dimensions together is an effective way to understand consumer behavior (Karjaluoto, Shaikh, Saarijärvi, & Saraniemi, 2018). Therefore, these dimensions are used in this research to identify motivations for Japanese LINE users to follow brand accounts. In this study the researcher uses the dimensions of perceived value to identify reasons for brand engagement in LINE application. Based on the findings from the interviews, the researcher proposes implications for better consumer engagement.
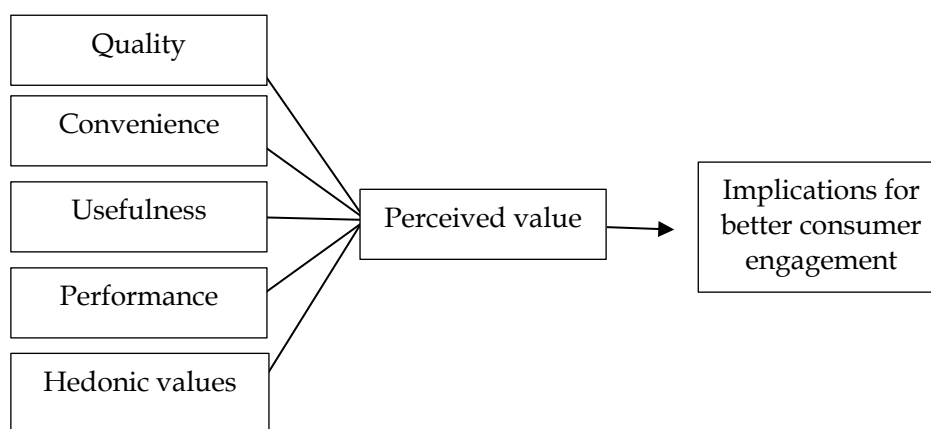

FIGURE 4 Use of perceived value for better consumer engagement

3   METHODOLOGY

3.1   Qualitative research

There are two different research methods which are often observed in research methodology, quantitative and qualitative research (Adams, Khan & Raeside 2014). While quantitative study is based on statistical analysis, in the qualitative business research the researcher focuses on the complexity of a phenomena in its context (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Qualitative research methods have been applied to study behaviors of people from the other cultures (Adams, Khan & Raeside 2014). Therefore, in this research the qualitative approach was selected as more suitable. As in this research the aim is to understand the behavior and attitudes of Japanese Generation Z, it is not possible by using quantitative approach. This is because it does not support the aims of qualitative approaches for example understanding reality as socially constructed or interpretation and understanding the contexts (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Also, according to Adams, Khan & Raeside (2014), qualitative research can be used to understand the reality experienced by the people interviewed, in this case in the usage of LINE application.

The researcher performed three rounds of interviews in this research. These were done to create relevant themes for the actual consumer interview. The groups can be divided in three categories: Japanese marketing expert interviews, company interviews and Japanese consumer interviews. In the following sections all the categories are explained.

3.2   Japanese marketing expert interviews

In this round three Japanese marketing experts were interviewed. They were selected based on their professional expertise in Japanese market and knowledge of LINE application. This group of people helped the researcher to familiarize more with Japanese market, consumer behavior and the possibilities of LINE application. These people worked as a practical and theoretical pointer for the researcher alongside with the literature. The similarities of each findings were used to discover relevant themes to use for the company interviews in the second round. All the relevant discussion agenda were sent to the interviewees before the meeting. The interviews were done using Zoom software. The interviews were recorded to be analyzed after the meeting.

From the interviews, certain themes were mentioned repeatably. The researcher was able to create six different categories:

1. Marketing functions in LINE
2. LINE Official Account and messages
3. LINE Stickers
4. LINE ads
5. LINE marketing material
6. Japanese purchasing decision.

These categories provided a possibility to create an agenda for the company interview. The additional questions were now possible to create to work as a Guide these interviews.

3.3 Finnish companies marketing in Japan

In the second round of the interviews, three Finnish companies who has presence in Japanese markets and marketing activity in the country, were interviewed. They were contacted by the researcher and video call meetings were set up. It was important to involve Finnish companies in this research because they gave both practical and theoretical insight of challenges when entering Japanese market. Therefore, these themes created from the interviews are relevant for consumer behaviour study. The interviews were done by using Zoom software. The themes covered were sent to the group before the meeting. The categories of questions were created based on the findings of LINE expert interviews.

TABLE 3 Questions of the company interviews

Usage of marketing functions in LINE	What kind of marketing functions are you using in LINE? How do these marketing functions differ from other social media marketing functions? What are the most common challenges to making these marketing functions create wanted results?
Usage of LINE Official Account	What kind of methods are you using to gain engagement and followers for your Official account? What kind of messages are you sending to your customers? What kind of messages is the most well-received? What kind of challenges do you face when attracting Japanese consumers?
Usage of LINE Stickers	Have you created stickers for your brand to boost your brand image? How is that received?
Usage of LINE Ads	What kind of LINE ads do you use in marketing? How do you target them with different services to gain a different audience? What kind of ads are most well-received?

	What kind of challenges do you face when planning/targeting a marketing campaign?
Usage of marketing material in LINE	What kind of visuals in an advertisement is the most well-received by Japanese consumers? What kind of information in an advertisement is the most well-received by Japanese consumers? How have you localized the marketing more suitable for Japanese consumers? What kind of challenges do you face when planning efficient marketing material for Japanese consumers?
Purchasing decision	What are the best practices on how to reach/activate the target audience and convert it into a buying decision? What are the main challenges in previously mentioned goals? In what kind of practices do you see potential and would like to know more for example in the results of this thesis?

From the findings of the company interviews various themes were brought up regularly. Here is a list of themes brought up:

1. For what purpose the LINE application is used by Japanese Generation Z and how does it differ from other social media platforms.
2. Attitudes towards LINE marketing done by brands and motivation for interest.
3. Digital marketing preferences in LINE application

From these findings the third round of interviews, the actual consumer interview, is formulated.

3.4 Creating and developing the interview protocol

It has been stated that before doing the interviews the researchers should create an interview protocol to work as a guide through the whole interview process (Jacob & Furgeson, 2012). Arsel (2017) developed four steps of the interview design process (1) Settle with an epistemological tradition, (2) Prepare an interview protocol, (3) Conduct the interview and (4) Iterate and the researcher of this study will follow these steps.

TABLE 4 Four steps of interview design process by Arsel (2017)

Step 1: Settle with an epistemological tradition	**Step 2:** Prepare an interview protocol	**Step 3:** Conduct the interview	**Step 4:** Iterate

First the researcher decided to familiarize himself with the topics of LINE marketing and Japanese Generation Z by studying literature. In this study, the researcher also used the help of Finnish Japanese marketing specialists and Finnish companies operating in Japan to get a deeper understanding of the marketing practice in the target country and possible challenges concerning the topic. By doing that it was possible to develop important themes for the analysis. Also, the additional interviews helped to decide relevant topics which can be then used as implications for both marketing academics and practitioners. After that the researcher conducted a literature to find theories to find relationships with themes to explain consumer engagement phenomenon and attitudes towards LINE marketing.

After the themes and theories had been found, the researcher moved to the second step of the Arsel (2017) interview design process. At this point the research questions of this study have already been generated. It was time to form research questions. As the topic of the study was consumer engagement, the purpose of the interview was to ask about how multiple variables of LINE marketing affect the phenomena. Different LINE marketing explained in the previous chapter. The researcher uses emotion-oriented type of interview research which was presented by Eriksson & Kovalainen (2016). This means that the interview questions were formed with the objective of understanding how the interviewee perceive and experience something, in this case marketing actions performed in the LINE application. The researcher was able to develop five categories for the questions. There are four different concepts in the research. The researcher uses three different types of questions in the interview which are commonly used in qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The first question type is questions introducing the topic, for example ''Please tell me how long you use LINE every day approximately?''. To make an interviewee to justify the answer and to get a deeper understanding of the topic the researcher uses follow-up questions such as ''What makes you want to stay as a follower of a brand in LINE? Why?''. In addition the researcher decided to use indirect questions, for example ''Would the brand feel more attractive to you if they use these Japanese influencers in LINE marketing?'' to find out what is the interviewees perspective on the discussed topic.

Because of the nature of the questions with no ready answers, the researcher is conducting a semi structured interview (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The question pattern is working as a topic guide through the interviews. Because the representative person of the interviewee asked, the questions are sent to the interviewee before the interview to get familiar with the vocabulary. This is done because of the comfortability of the target group which is not native in English language.

After the researcher finalized the questions for the interviews, there was an agreement for the meeting times with the interviewee. This was done following the steps introduced by Arsel (2017). The meetings were done remotely online using Zoom software. The researcher set up a meeting time for one hour. At the

beginning of the meeting there was a time to explain the interview protocol for the interviewee, go through all selected topics and leave time for additional discussion at the end of the meeting. The researcher recorded the interview to transcribe it after the meeting. After the interviews were carefully transcribed, the researcher was able to move to the fourth step of Arsel (2017) and start to iterate the data.

3.5   Data collection

3.5.1 Semi-structured interview

In this research the methods of semi-structured interview are used. This is because the researcher aims to conduct an in-depth research interviews to the target group to understand Japanese consumer behavior over general level. Therefore, the answers give richer information (Adams et al, 2014). In the semi-structured interview approach the ''road-map'' is created to work as a guideline for the interview but the questions do not provide any ready-made answers to rely or focus on. If the focus is too much in the preplanned questions, it can lead to a situation where the relevant topics remain unraised and affects the quality of the interview (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Once a certain question is asked, the interviewee can continue with more questions to deepen the understanding of the interviewees answer (Adams et al, 2014). Basically, it means that there are no ready answers for the questions presented in the interview, but the answers are purely from the interviewees own experience (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

TABLE 5 Questions of the Japanese Generation Z group

The usage of LINE	How long do you use LINE every day approximately?
	What do you use LINE for on a daily basis?
	What kind of products have you recently purchased from LINE? Why did you buy it? What kind of advertisement made you want the product?
Interaction with brand accounts in LINE	How many and what kind of brands are you following in LINE?
	Do you also follow these brands on other social media? What do LINE brand accounts offer that accounts in other social media don't? What does LINE lack compared to other social media channels?
	Think of these brands you follow. What are the main reasons you follow these brands in LINE?

	What did you wish to gain when you started to follow a brand LINE account? (For example campaign information, sale coupons, new products and so on) What makes a company LINE account feel like a good choice for you to follow? (Think of the look of the account, the content they give you and so on) (are they ethical, funny, informative, or so on) Think of the content brands post on their timeline. What kind of posts do you find the most interesting? What kind of posts do you feel like sharing with others? (For example to your own timeline or as a message).
Motivation for following brand accounts in LINE	What makes you want to stay as a follower of a brand in LINE? Why? What makes you unfollow a brand in LINE? Why? Think of the brands you follow in LINE. What kind of gifts have you received from companies to stay as a LINE follower? (For example stickers, coupons, or other benefits) What kind of gifts would you like to receive from a company to stay as a LINE follower? Why?
Attitude towards digital marketing in LINE	What kind of LINE marketing gives you a positive attitude towards a brand? Why? What kind of LINE marketing gives you a negative attitude towards a brand? Why? Think of the appearance of a LINE advertisement. What kind of LINE advertisement makes you want to click on it? Why? What kind of visuals/information would like to see in LINE marketing? Why? Do you follow any Japanese influencers? What kind of influencers? Would the brand feel more attractive to you if they use these Japanese influencers in LINE marketing? Why? Do you think a brand should have a mascot (yuru-kara) in LINE marketing? Why? What would you think about brands using mascots in marketing?

The interviews were done by using Zoom software. The themes covered were sent to the group before the meeting. The language of the interviews was English.

3.5.2 Sampling of the Japanese consumer interview

The general understanding of sampling is that only a selected portion of a population is measured, in this case selected for the interview (Thompson, 2012). The researcher must decide the size of a sampling group and whether to include participants in the study, meaning if the interviewee candidate meets the requirements for the nature of the study (Mujere, 2016). According to Salant & Dillman (1994) the selected people must be a suitable sample of population so that they represent parameters or characteristics of whole population, therefore making generalization of the findings possible. When planning the sample of population, the researcher decides a sampling technique, a sampling method (Mujere, 2016). There are two different kinds of sampling classifications which are probability or non-probability sampling methods (Salant & Dillman, 1994).

In this research non-probability sampling technique is used. It means that the interviewees are decided based on the researcher's subjective judgement. This gives the researcher a better situation to select people from the population which are interesting for the study (Mujere, 2016). In more detail the sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling. The main reason to use this technique to focus on characteristics of a population which is relevant to the research question and serves the purpose of a qualitative study better. One of the advantages to use this technique is that the researcher is given a possibility to create theoretical, analytic and logical generalizations from the results. In this case the researcher uses homogeneous sampling where the people interviewed share same characteristics as age, nationality and so on. (Mujere, 2016).

This research is about Japanese Generation Z meaning that the interviewees must meet the requirements of previously mentioned characteristics on Generation Z group. In this case it means Japanese people aged between 16 and 24. The minimum age of 16 is based on the somewhat maturity to use own money for purchases without consent of another adult person. All these interviewees must be using LINE in a daily basis. Therefore, the interviewees must have at least basic understanding of LINE application functions. Also, because of the interviewer's limitation with Japanese language skills, these interviewees must be able to speak English to a certain extent. Also, as a requirement the person participating in this interview must be residing in Japan because only then the user has access to all functions in LINE. These requirements make the sample group suitable for the study nature and can represent their group of population (Mujere, 2016).

3.5.3 Finding the target group candidates

After the sampling was done it was clear for the researcher that the interviewee candidates cannot be found in Finland but in Japan. That way the results of the study would be the most reliable. To find collectively the largest sample of the target group for the set demographics, the researcher decided to approach Japanese universities. All the universities are exchange partner universities of the University of Jyväskylä. These universities were sent an introductory email where the nature and the goal of the study were introduced but also practical arrangements and data privacy compliance were carefully explained. No certain faculty was approached directly but the email was directed to the international affairs offices of the university.

The response rate was satisfactory for the need of the research. In total 8 different universities were contacted and two universities showed interest in collaboration. The cooperation was not set up directly, but it required 1-2 weeks of email exchange until the common understanding and practical issues were settled. After this the researcher got a permission to ask students for the interview. In practice this meant that the two universities started to recruit suitable candidates for the interview from their students and asked them to contact me directly via email which was given to them. Another way which was implemented was that university's contact person either collectively or once suitable candidate was found, shared the information of students. It was important that the university professors were aware of the target group demographics, explained in the sampling section of this research, so that the people participating would represent the target group.

3.5.4 Setting up the meetings with target group

After the contact information was received it was time to approach the students either directly or by answering the email they have sent themselves. The communication with the Japanese students was done only using email. Before setting up the date for the interview the students were introduced the researcher and the topic of the research more detailed. Also, they were sent wide range of themes the interview could possibly be about. This was done because both university professors and students asked for this so the students could prepare the vocabulary. This was also helpful for the students to understand what the interview would be about. In the same document, each theme included some example questions. It was explained that these questions would act as a guide trough the interview, but it would not be followed strictly. The questions asked would strongly depend on what the interviewee answers.

In accordance with data privacy compliance, no personal information was asked from the students in this point. After everything was clear, the dates for the meeting were settled. The researcher proposed few possible dates for each student and they were able to decide the most suitable for them. When the date

was decided, the students were sent an invitation to meeting created in Zoom online meeting software.

3.5.5 Data collection from the interviews

As mentioned before the Zoom software used for the data collection in this research. In practice the meeting works as follows. The meeting host, the researcher, starts the meeting and the interviewee can then join the session using the link the researcher sent as an email. Before the actual interview started the interviewee was given a chance to ask questions about the interview to have a complete understanding of the research. The recoding was not on at this point. The interviewee was told again the nature and purpose of the interview, how the data will be used and the life cycle of it. After everything was clear for the participant, the recording was started, and the interview begun.

During the interview, the researcher started to go through all the themes listed in the document sent to the students. The set of questions were not a strict rule for the questions, but the focus depended on the interviewee's answers. This means that the nature of the semi-structured interview was respected. The researcher did not want answers to ready made statements, but aim was that the answers are purely from the interviewees own experience when using LINE (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Each of the interviews lasted approximately less than one hour.

After the interview, when the recoding has stopped the participant was given a possibility to ask again additional questions. Then the interviews were over. The data in video form was collected in two places: to the researcher's personal computers hard-drive and to a cloud drive as a backup file.

In the next step the researcher transcribed the interviews to a text form for further analysis. The researcher familiarized himself with the data and wrote down everything to Microsoft Word documents. Once the transcribing was done, the interview videos were permanently deleted from both drives, respecting the data privacy.

3.5.6 Practical challenges

One of the biggest practical challenges is electing a field site and acquiring access to the field (Thummapol, Park, Jackson & Barton, 2019). In this research all the interview participants were currently residing in Japan, as it was a requirement for the participation. In some of the cases the target group is difficult to reach, as in this case Japanese target group. The researcher had to create initial contacts to Japan to overcome this challenge. This was a crucial part of the practical strategy because it has been stated that this part can be one of the reasons the research is not conducted successfully (Johl & Renganathan, 2009). Many studies have announced that negotiating access and gaining entry to the different country can be a huge challenge for the researcher (Liamputtong, 2007). The success was

achieved after careful planning to approach Japanese universities, reliable content and creating good relationship with the contact person.

The second practical challenge worth notice was recruiting Japanese Generation Z for the interview and building trust with them. According to many studies, this part can be time-consuming (Liamputtong, 2007). In this research this required quite a long time even though the researcher did not recruit interviewees directly. The researcher sent demographic requirements for the Japanese universities contact persons and they recruited candidates for the interview. The contact person or the student then approached directly the researcher using email with willingness to participate in the research. This part was a complex, as said by Roper & Shapira (2000), this requires effort in communication, negotiation, trust-building and mutual respect with every interviewee candidate.

Maintaining privacy and confidentiality is extremely important when doing a research (Thummapol, Park, Jackson & Barton, 2019). Therefore, the researcher is responsible to arrange and respect the interviewees rights for privacy and confidentiality as a human being (Wilson & Neville, 2009). Also in the case of different demographic background, it is crucial to consider and plan the research carefully that it is ethically and culturally appropriate, meaning In this research that the study respects the social and cultural norms of Japan (Woodgate, Tennent & Zurba, 2017). In this study, the researcher took all the data privacy instructions of both university in the consideration. The university contact person and the interviewee were made sure to be aware of the data life cycle and the purpose it was used. The interview was recorded with carefully selected meeting software and no personal information were collected, respecting the interviewee privacy.

3.6   Data analysis

3.6.1 Thematic analysis

In this research the thematic analysis method is used to analyze the interviews. Thematic analysis is defined by Braun & Clarke (2006) as a method to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes within the collected data. This is used to understand shared meanings and experiences of the people interviewed (Braun & Clarke 2012). This means that the aim of this research is not to find out unique experiences from one interviewee but rather to identify what is common between all the data. From these divided data the researcher can form various themes for further analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Thematic analysis is also suitable for this consumer behavior research because of its flexibility. It provides a possibility for the researcher to analyze the entire gathered dataset or focus on certain phenomenon in depth (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, thematic analysis introduces the researcher to coding and provides a possibility to analyze data systematically

which can eventually be linked to theoretical or conceptual issues (Braun & Clarke 2012).

O'Gorman & MacIntosh (2015) introduced six phases for thematic analysis which will be implemented also in this research. The six phases are as follows: 1. familiarizing yourself with the data 2. generating initial codes 3. searching for themes 4. reviewing themes 5. defining and naming themes 6. producing the report. The fundamental part in this research data analysis is coding and it will be explained in more detail in the next section.

3.6.2 Coding

After familiarizing with the gathered data, the generation of initial codes is one of the essential steps in the data analysis (Belk et al, 2013). Cresswell (2007) defined coding as ''reducing data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments.'' In practice this means separating out elements whose meaning remains the same even though they are removed from the context. These elements can be words, sentences, paragraphs, text sequences and so on (Belk et al, 2013). After the gathered data is coded, the next step is to sort different codes into potential themes. Coding process is considered as convenient because it allows the the interpretation of huge amounts of text and portions of information (Belotto, 2018). After organizing these codes to single units, it provides a possibility to create themes, eventually providing meaningful themes to answer research questions of the study (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

4 RESEARCH FINDINS

In total, 9 interviews were considered as a suitable research data. As can be seen in the table 4 below, all the qualified respondents were Japanese and aged between 16 and 25. This was a basic requirement for the analysis. All the interviews were done using Zoom application. Most of the interviewee were university students and few of them were also already working.

TABLE 6 Demographic information of participants from the interviews

Respondent	Nationality/ Profession	Age	Interview method
R1	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R2	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R3	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R4	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R5	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R6	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R7	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R8	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom
R9	Japanese/bachelor student	16-25	Zoom

In this section the findings from the interviews are presented. The researcher has used existing literature of digital marketing, mobile commerce and marketing, Japanese generation Z and attitudes towards marketing to generate themes for the interview. Also, the researcher has found specific findings from the transcript as themes which were not included in the theoretical framework before. These findings are themes which were not aligned before the interview and are added after the thematic analysis. These themes will be presented together in the analysis.

The researcher was able to identify two new themes for the interview transcribes, consumer engagement and perceived value theory. Consumer engagement proved to be an important and repetitive theme to understand the drivers behind the LINE consumer behavior. As mentioned in the literature review above, consumer engagement is seen as a creation of a deeper connection between the company and the customer (Khan et al., 2016), therefore making it a relevant aspect for this study. Another theme, which proved to be a driving behavioral theory in this study was perceived value theory. In this context both utilitarian and hedonic dimensions were noted from the interview data. The researcher uses Zeithaml (1988) perceived value theory to understand motivations and drivers behind the LINE consumer behavior and the researcher will propose findings based on the model. These new added themes are expected to gain even

deeper understanding about LINE consumer behavior as they showed strong presence in the interview transcribes.

4.1 Identifying drivers for Japanese Generation Z to engage with the brand official accounts in LINE

Perceived value is considered as an effective way to understand consumer behavior. More specifically utilitarian value and hedonic value together form a reliable combination to analyses what themes consumer values (Karjaluoto, Shaikh, Saarijärvi, & Saraniemi, 2018). To identify the drivers for the phenomena in the research question, the researcher asked open questions from the candidates. The interview section consisted of questions concerning the reasons why the candidate decided to follow a brand account, what is the reason for continuous following and what do the consumer with to get out from the decision to follow. It was relevant also to ask what the reasons are for not to do previously mentioned actions. For more detailed information see the interview structure in the set of questions earlier. In this section two previously mentioned themes will be analyzed separately. Utilitarian values proved to be in higher importance in the decision making to follow LINE official brand account, as you can see in the figure below.

FIGURE 5 Reasons for target group to follow LINE official accounts (NVivo generated)

4.1.1 Utilitarian values

Convenience was chosen as one of the themes for interviews because it is considered as one of the four main dimensions for utilitarian value. Convenience proved to be the most repetitive reason why Japanese Generation Z follow LINE brand accounts. When asked from the interviewees what motivated them to follow brand accounts, they mostly highlighted the possible financial and material benefits they can get out from it. Different benefits such as coupons, stickers and other gifts were mentioned often. There were many arguments to support the importance of convenience as follows:

> **R1:** '' Maybe the main reason would be coupons or more comfortable shopping. Also I would like to receive information from sales of products, new product releases. For example I have followed Starbucks and they send me information about their products and how to modify their products. More relevant coupons and exclusive information would be great. But sometimes I just follow uninteresting brands for stickers.''

In addition, the target group was asked what factors motivate not to follow a LINE brand account and the findings were remarkably repetitive. Almost all the participants stated the irritation as the main reason why not to follow a brand account. As stated by to Ducoffe (1996), if the advertisement is overwhelming, it can cause a negative acceptance for consumer. In LINE there are many ways to market directly to followers, as mentioned in the introduction section, respondents saw too many notifications. Few answers are presented below to support this argument.

> **R1:** ''If the account is too busy and noisy I would delete the account. I would get annoyed. Then I would not want to receive even information. I usually start to follow when brands give some benefits/gifts for following. However I would not go to a store to buy the product if the brand is not interesting to me.''

The usefulness was identified as the second most focused theme by respondents. As one of the key factors for perceived utilitarian value it highlights the extreme positive value for consumers. Together with convenience it is one of the main reasons to follow LINE brand accounts. Respondents stated to follow brands for campaign information, new product releases and other similar reasons. To get a deeper understanding the benefit consumer get, here are the reasons for it.

> **R9:** '' I wanted to have sales coupons, stickers and sales information. I don't have to google sales or new product releases when I get a notification in LINE.

It was seen in the data that the source of information was one of the main drivers for the continuous engagement. An interesting observation was the lack of information and the quality of it in consumer's perspective. It was even repeatedly mentioned as one of the reasons why respondents would not follow a brand

LINE account. Here are couple of reasons from respondents why they would un-follow an account.

> **R5:** ''I think something that only gives me the information I can easily get other ways. Something where I don't receive any benefits. I want to feel exclusive in a way that the LINE is the only way to get those.''

The other two factors in utilitarian values were not seen remarkable in the findings. In minor importance, the Japanese Generation Z consumer sees performance and quality as lesser value creators. Therefore, these two factors may not consider as relevant drivers to follow LINE official brand accounts. Here are examples responds from the interviewee to support quality as a value creator.

> **R7:** ''I guess the balance is important. If there is too much information about sales I would think I am targeted and they push products to me. If they post about the brand and their stories then I can familiarize myself with the brands and their people. Then I would feel more comfortable with the sales posts and messages.''

And here are example answers to state performance as a value creator.

> **R5:** ''Maybe because LINE is more focused on communication, if there is a surface where I can send my photo to for example to the shopkeeper directly or get a direct recommendation about news or products, then it would be convenient. That could be easier to try out compared to other social media because LINE is already made for communication.''

4.1.2 Hedonic values

Together with utilitarian values, key element to analyze consumer motivations to follow LINE brand accounts is hedonic value, which consists of non-instrumental, experiential, and effective dimensions, analyzing the pleasure and fun derived from use (Kim & Han, 2011). As a result, hedonic value plays a vital role in identifying important themes for understanding consumer behavior, even though in slightly lesser importance than utilitarian value. From the findings the researcher was able to identify five main themes to evaluate hedonic value in this study: ethics, exclusiveness, familiarity, positive atmosphere, and security. Based on the results only two themes were considered as relevant or at least moderate, exclusiveness and positive atmosphere. The feeling of exclusiveness was the most presented reason to follow a brand LINE account from the hedonic value themes. Below the statements from the respondents.

> **R5:** ''I think I would stay as a follower if it's something I would like to keep up with, keep updated quite intensively, something I would miss if I used only other social media.'' ''I want to feel exclusive in a way that the LINE is the only way to get those.''

> **R9:** ''Also, the LINE brand account must be relevant and give me exclusive information. If I get the same information on Instagram I would stop following.'' '' Sometimes I receive benefits that are only for LINE followers, I like that.''

The second value which the respondents saw in moderate value was the positive atmosphere of the LINE brand account. As hedonic value can be based on experiment and acceptance on emotional level, this is a relevant finding for this research. Therefore, positive atmosphere on LINE brand account may be a driver for the motivation to follow it. Below the responses are presented.

> **R7:** '' They have to be friendly and interesting accounts. And funny. Like for example, I want the stickers to be funny. Some official accounts have AI answering back a message when I send a message to brands. It is interesting and I prefer that compared to accounts where there is no answer at all. So a rather friendly and funny atmosphere than a polite and serious.''

Implementing hedonic values in this research made it possible to understand the motivations more on a personal level. Even though other responses were not in high importance, the researcher was able to identify reasons as ethics, familiarity of the brand and secure feeling to follow the brand.

In the end, the usage of perceived value made it possible to generate a huge number of themes and thus provided a way to identify both positive and negative reasons for LINE brand account interaction. Because of the open nature of perceived value, the respondents were able to give answer on broad perspective. Eventually the researcher was able to find relationships between the answers. The data can be implemented to answer the research question.

4.2   Identifying the reasons to follow a specific brand account in LINE over other similar applications

The second research question focuses on reasons why Japanese Generation Z respondent decides to follow brand accounts in LINE but not in other similar applications. In the interview, researcher started by asking if the respondent follows the same brands the person follows in LINE in other social media or similar application. The findings were considerable one sided. Seven respondents out of nine prefer to follow brand accounts only in LINE. One respondent follows brands in multiple platforms and one respondent does not follow brands in any platform. Below the statements from each respondent are presented when asked if they follow the brands in any other social media or similar platforms.

> **R7:** ''I have news media applications on my phone. Other brands, like fashion and cosmetic brands, I don't follow in other social media, only in LINE.''

To get a deeper understanding of this phenomena, the researcher again uses two generally accepted perceived value dimensions (Ström, Bredican & Vendel, 2014), as it has been stated that using these two dimensions together is an effective way to understand consumer behavior (Karjaluoto, Shaikh, Saarijärvi, & Saraniemi, 2018). The question formed for the interviewee focused on identifying reasons why they choose LINE to follow brand accounts over any other possibility. The results are shown in the figure below. Utilitarian value creators for perceived value proved to be more important than hedonic values. To get a better understanding of each key indicators, the researcher presents the findings separately, utilitarian values and hedonic values in each section.
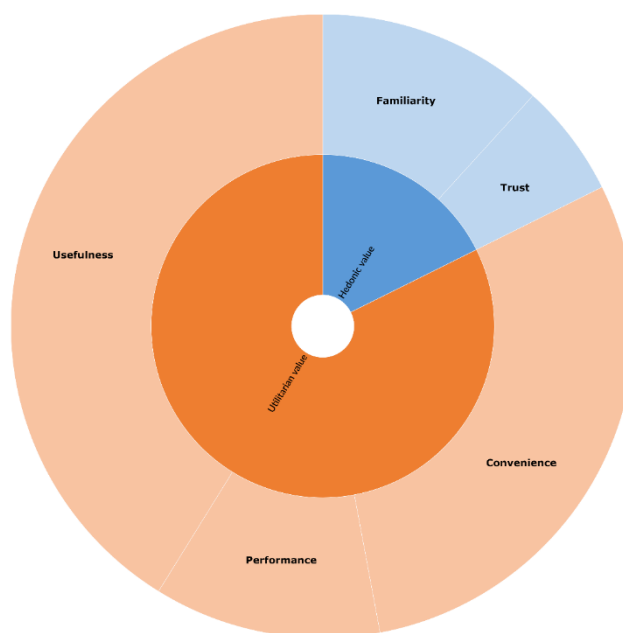

FIGURE 6 Reasons to follow brand accounts in LINE over other mobile applications (NVivo generated)

4.2.1 Utilitarian values

Usefulness proved to be the most important perceived value indicator to follow brand accounts in LINE over other mobile applications. Being one of the key factors for perceived utilitarian value it highlights the extreme positive value for consumers to choose LINE. Together with convenience it is one of the main reasons for studied phenomena. To support this argument, below some the responses from interviewee are presented.

> **R2:** ''I don't follow them on Instagram because I feel like I don't need them. I use Instagram for fun, but I use LINE to get information and for chatting. So I could say I use LINE for relevant things I want to know from a brand.''

> **R6:** ''In the LINE account, they provide us information like next week we will have a sale and so on. They are useful information for me. I feel like other social media do not provide this. Most of the purpose is indeed the useful information.''

As the second most mentioned indicator was convenience. As one of the main functions in LINE application, exclusive benefits were expected to make convenience one of the key indicators. Different coupons, gifts, stickers and other benefits were seen as important differentiator compared to other mobile applications. Below comprehensive statements are presented.

> **R7:** ''Actually, when I follow brands, there are benefits, like gifts. Conditional gifts. For example, when I want to get stickers for free I have to follow the brands.'' ''Sometimes I get coupons to buy something at a cheaper price and coffee, like in 7eleven. I guess in other social media this is not that convenient.''

As presented in the literature, perceived value also consists of two accepted utilitarian value standards more, performance and quality. These two were in minor importance in this case. Brand account quality hold nonexistent value for Japanese Generation Z when choosing a platform to follow brands. Performance on the other hand proved to be existing for perceived value creation, but with less importance. The functionality of LINE was stated to be a reason to choose it. An example of the answers is given below.

> **R3:** ''LINE is very easy to use. Facebook and Instagram are a little bit uncomfortable to use for me. This is mostly because I find them hard to use.''

4.2.2 Hedonic values

Hedonic values proved to hold lesser importance as a perceived indicator. Only two themes were identified from the findings, familiarity, and trust. With familiarity the research means how well the respondent knows the LINE, and how they use it, eventually explaining how it affected the decision to follow brands in that application. A short example can be seen below.

> **R2:** ''For example home delivery service, I don't know if they have Instagram but I only know they have a LINE account.''

4.3   Identifying drivers for a positive attitude towards LINE marketing

In this part the reasons for positive attitude towards LINE advertising were identified. From the literature, the researcher was able to identify three positive key indicators for positive consumer response, entertainment, informativeness and

personalization, and one key negative indicator, irritation. To identify the drivers for the phenomena in the research question, the researcher asked open questions from the candidates. The questions concerned directly advertising preferences for positive receive but also what causes a negative attitude. The researcher's objective was to compare existing standards if they can be applied to a specific context, technology, and demographic background. Also, the researcher aimed to find more detailed information how these indicators effect on Japanese Generation Z in LINE application. The LINE marketing functions were explained in the introduction section. After the analysis it can be proposed that there is a correlation between findings and existing relationship. Before giving any conclusions, all the themes are explained below starting with positive indicators.
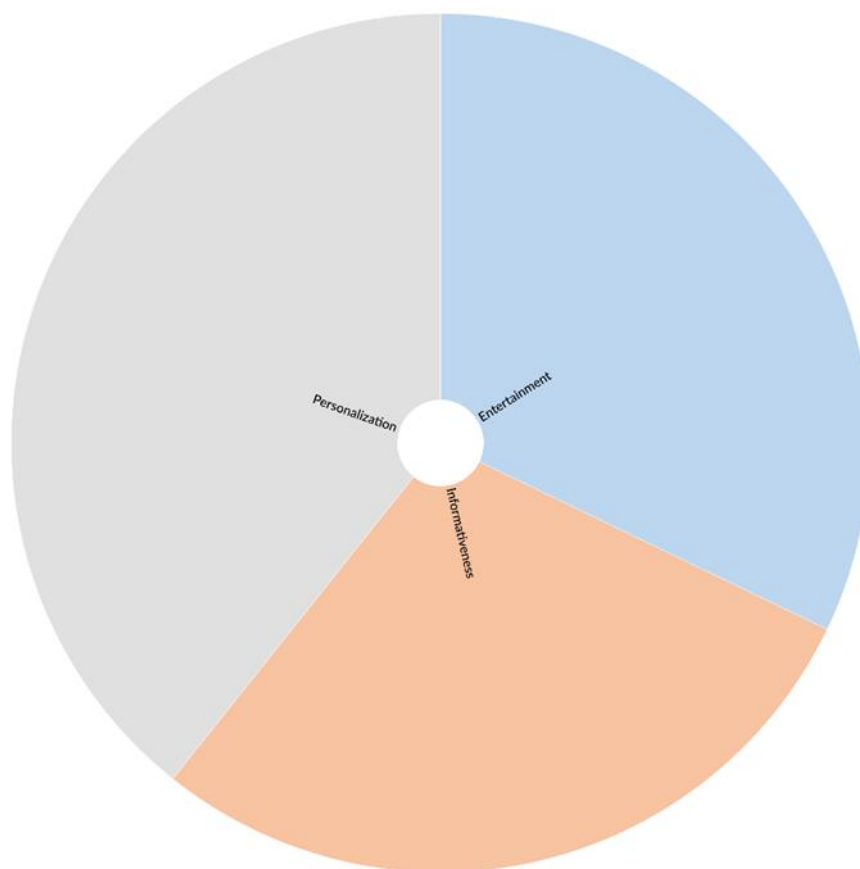

FIGURE 7 Reasons for positive attitude towards LINE marketing (NVivo generated)

4.3.1 Personalization

Even though the results proved to be almost equal, personalization was the most important indicator for positive attitude. As Zeng et al. (2009) studied the effect of personalization has a positive effect on attitudes and it may be also the case in LINE marketing. Almost all the respondents stated the personalized advertising

as their preferred indicator. The most popular definitions for personalized advertising were the advertisements concerning the personal interests of the respondent, lifestyle and needs. There were many forms of what the respondent meant with personalization and the answers to support the presented argument can be seen below.

> **R4:** ''I have recently been thinking that I want to change job. So I think if LINE gives me a targeted advertisement concerning that I would like it and click it. That is good advertising when it is relevant.'' '' For me, relevancy is important in this one too. The curious title is important for me, like ''get a job'' simple. Then I would click on it.''

> **R5:** ''Yeah, I think if it's something I can imagine myself in that video or photo, then I am more motivated to see what the ad is about. If there is something, I am familiar with or I like to do, I am more eager to click it. Advertisement must be relatable.''

4.3.2 Entertainment

The second most highlighted indicator for positive attitude was the entertainment factors of the marketing. When reflecting the existing literature, the lesser value compared to personalization is something to be expected. As presented in the literature entertainment is considered as one of the major factors in creating positive attitude towards mobile advertising (Ünal, Erics & Kesel, 2011). The Japanese Generation Z focused on three major themes when talking about entertainment factor, visuals, atmosphere, and quality. Below you can see some of their statements as examples.
Some of the respondents presented visual importance as entertainment factor in the following way.

> **R7:** ''I like simple visuals. I want the information I need but if they put too much information it is too complex to see what the message is. Color is also important, clear and vivid colors.''

Some of the respondents presented atmosphere importance as entertainment factor in the following way.

> **R8:** '' I like colorful advertisements but not vivid ones. Also the advertisements must be positive. Also the ad must be about my interests. From the information side I want to know how useful the product useful, how much it is and where I can buy it.

And finally, some of the respondents presented quality importance as entertainment factor in the following way.

> **R1**: ''I want to click on videos as I said. Good landscapes, good animation, the delivery is nicely done. That the pictures are beautiful and well connected to the product.''

As it can be seen in the responses, defining entertainment factors as indicators can be a complex analysis process but in the end the research managed to conduct relevant themes to understand the phenomena better. In the LINE application the advertising can be performed in different way compared to general way thus making it important to identify key entertainment factors, in this case visuals, atmosphere, and quality.

4.3.3 Informativeness

Informativeness is the third positive attitude indicator identified from the literature. The information quality is a key factor in consumers approving advertising (Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt & Neumann, 2005), therefore making it a relevant theme in this research. Based on the findings from the results it was considered as less important compared to personalization and entertainment factors. Even though it was not present in the transcribes as much as other indicators, the findings can still be considered relevant for the phenomena. Below some of the interviewee answers are given to support the finding.

> **R7:** ''For example advertisements I prefer which include the price of a product or service. Because in most cases I do not spend time clicking on the ad to check the price. Even though I am interested in it, it is a bit troublesome to check them out by clicking. If there is a price I would click to get further information about the product. That kind of advertisement is kind to us because it does not take time to check them out.''

> **R1:** ''The product information should be clear or I would think they are lying about the product. My opinion can be different from others but advertisements should be trustworthy and true to their products.''

It was a finding worth notice that there were also repetitive sub-themes in the analysis. Most of the respondents highlighted the price and product information as the most important information what they preferred to be presented. In addition, the respondents wanted to get exclusive information from LINE. With this they meant that they want to get information which is only presented in LINE concerning new products and services. This supports the fact many respondents highlighted the feeling of exclusiveness as the reason to use LINE to follow brand accounts. An example below.

> **R6:** ''We can see the new products before we go to the store. Also I want to see new releases before they enter the stores.''

4.4 Identifying drivers for a negative attitude towards LINE marketing

The fourth research questions concerned to identify reasons for negative image drivers in LINE marketing. The last indicator used in this analysis is irritation. It is different from other indicators because irritation is the only negative factor that consumer may have against mobile advertising (Altuna & Konuk, 2009), thus making the relevant factor to analyze in this study. To gain a better understanding of irritations in LINE advertising, the researcher asked directly what kind of advertising can cause a negative attitude towards a brand. In the findings the researcher was able to identify three sub-themes, irrelevancy, repetition, and location. As you can see in the figure below, the irrelevancy of the marketing is considered as the most highlighted indication for irritation.
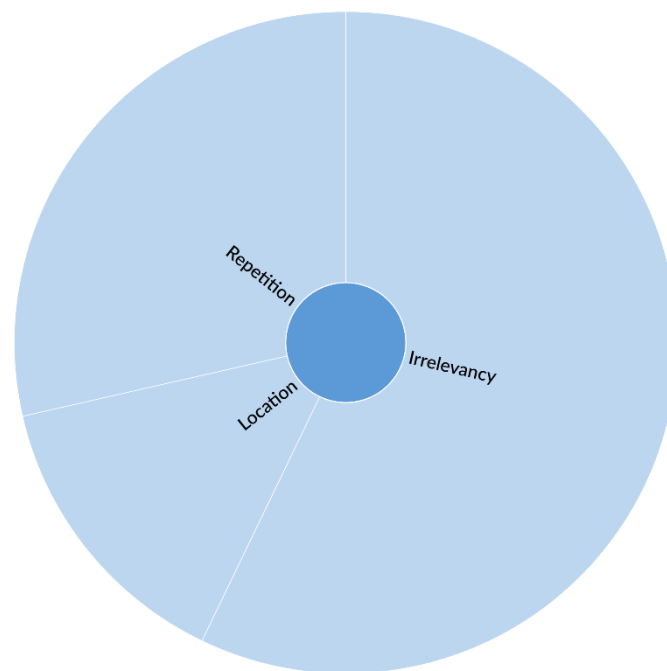

FIGURE 8 Identified causes for marketing irritation (NVivo generated)

With irrelevancy the respondents meant advertisement which was not of their interest but still received these advertisements. Below you can see respondents' answers what can cause a negative attitude towards a LINE marketing based on irrelevancy.

> **R6:** ''I don't like advertisements for games. I don't play games so I don't like to receive them so much. The information about games in an advertisement is irrelevant and makes me want to delete it.''

The other two reasons for irritation were repetition and location. These were in lesser importance but still visible in the findings. With repetition respondents mean that they see the same advertisement too many times and given in many different advertisement forms. As seen in the example below, it does not matter what the content is, the over-use of push marketing causes negative attitude toward LINE marketing. The third driver for irritation was the location of the advertisement. Many respondents highlighted that when the advertisement is located in wrongly, meaning shown in the wrong context or too visible, it can cause negative attitude towards marketing.

> **R5:** ''Advertisements that are repetitive are annoying. Like the video or a picture. Also if it shows too many times to me, no matter what the content is, it can be annoying. I feel that too targeted advertising can be scary.''

4.5   Identifying consumer engagement dimensions in the LINE usage

In the last findings section the researcher will analyse the three most common dimensions for consumer engagement in the LINE usage (Gatautis et al., 2016). Perceived value has identified important aspects in the value creation above. Also, the findings proposed important positive and negative attitude drivers in LINE marketing. In the literature review the researcher proposed three most common dimensions for consumer engagement: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions. These three will be reviewed in the hierarchical order.

Cognitive engagement dimension presented strong presence in the LINE usage. When asked if the respondent followed specific brands also other similar application, the findings were considerable one sided. Seven respondents out of nine preferred to follow brand accounts only in LINE. One respondent follows brands in multiple platforms and one respondent does not follow brands in any platform. Therefore, the specific object related interest and concentration in LINE (Tarute, Nikou & Gautis, 2017) proved to be a driving force to engage with brands in LINE.

Also, one of the main reasons to engage with a brand in LINE was the areas of personal interest towards a brand as LINE gives the person a freedom to choose to follow the brand or not.

Another important dimension, behavioural, is related to the findings of the previous dimensions. As stated in the research multiple the Japanese Generation Z sees LINE as their top pick for brand engagement over other similar applications. As the behavioural engagement can be defined as ''a state of consumer behavior related to engagement object and understood as endeavour and energy

given for interaction'', the findings proposes that the LINE as a number one application for Japanese is a ''natural'' choice for them to use for brand engagement. For example, the user does not have to take complicated actions to follow a brand as the LINE is integrated in their business culture and daily lives. Also, many respondents highlighted their appreciation when the LINE brand accounts send for example coupons and sale information to them.

The third identified important aspect in consumer engagement was emotional engagement dimension (Hollenbeek, 2011). Based on the study there was hardly any evidence for emotional engagement drivers. As presented in the previous section (see Table 5.), the reasons to engage with LINE brand accounts were almost completely based on utilitarian values, meaning that there was a benefit in following a brand. The respondents gave reasons such information, coupons, gifts, LINE stickers and other benefits to follow a brand in LINE. The most important theme identified even from the hedonic side was the feeling of exclusiveness which was still considered as a possibility to gain benefits from the engagement.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study was to identify reasons to follow LINE brand accounts and thus generating consumer engagement. Another objective was to identify reasons for positive and negative attitude towards LINE marketing. The results of this study indicate that there can be context driven reasons for consumer behavior, in this case concerning the Japanese Generation Z usage of LINE and attitudes towards the LINE marketing. As stated earlier, authors have already found out different standards for mobile advertising that are accepted by consumers, but it has been generalized in mobile advertising field (Ström, Bredican & Vendel, 2014). Previous studies also suggested that the future research on mobile marketing should focus on limited fields (Billore & Sadh, 2015). The researcher has used existing literature of digital marketing, mobile commerce and marketing, Japanese generation Z and attitudes towards marketing in this researcher to identify these motivations and drivers for LINE consumer behavior. These themes were covered in the interviews. The researcher was also able to identify new themes from the interview transcribes. To support the understanding of LINE consumer behavior, the researcher added the theories of consumer engagement and perceived value to the thematic analysis. These both showed strong presence in the consumer behavior analysis and were utilized in this study. Therefore, these two previously mentioned were added to this study and utilized in the findings. The researcher also aims to contribute to the literature of all themes and generate implications for further research.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study has provided a partial support for identifying motivational drivers for LINE consumer behavior. As stated earlier, the complex and multisided approach of perceived value has been considered as an effective analysis for the adoption of social media applications (Zanuddin & Shaid, 2021). However, this research indicates that perceived value cannot be generalized without further research of the context. The findings did not fall equally on every dimension of utilitarian value creator. In this case the Japanese Generation Z LINE users valued more convenience and usefulness over performance and quality. Also, the researcher argues that this study provided support for identifying context driver dimensions for hedonic values, which are generally considered as quite open because of its personal nature (Kim & Han, 2011). The perceived value analysis also helped to identify reasons why Japanese Generation Z has chosen to use LINE over other similar applications.

The researcher found significant relationship between perceived value dimensions and user engagement in the LINE usage. Eventually this also contributed to the three most common dimensions of consumer engagement (Hepola, Leppäniemi & Karjaluoto, 2020) by identifying context driver variables for it. It is also important to highlight that also the consumer engagement dimension analysis highlights the fact that LINE is strongly focused on utilitarianism benefits for the Japanese user. As the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions were analysed, the researcher concluded strong evidence that the LINE is the number one application for Japanese Generation Z to use and therefore a ''natural'' channel for brand consumer engagement. Also there was hardly any emotional reasons for engagement but mostly respondents wanted to get information, sales, coupons, stickers and so on.

The third research question was to identify drivers for positive attitude towards LINE marketing. When doing a research about the attitudes of mobile advertising, entertainment, personalization and informativeness have been studied to have a positive effect on the consumer (Ünal, Erics & Kesel, 2011). Irritation was considered a negative indicator. The researcher used the advertising model of Ducoffe (1996) to explain the phenomena using different variables: entertainment, personalization, informativeness and irritation. Ducoffe's model has been used to identify drivers for consumer attitudes towards advertising and this study contributed to this field by examining the model in certain context. Ducoffe's advertising model proved to be convenient when analysing interview results in qualitative research. There was a relationship with the existing research findings and the results of this study. Even though these mentioned key factors have been studied to have a positive attitude towards marketing, the researcher argues that this can also be context driven and therefore it is important to identify reasons in this analysis. Also, the researcher proves some evidence in the fourth research question, on how LINE marketing can be irritating for the LINE user by being irrelevant, repetitive, and badly located. These are important notes for even more optimized digital marketing.

This research also contributed in the generational theory introduced by Strauss and Howe (1991) where parallels between generations are argued and that an age group share similar characteristics. It was tested this time using the generation category of Generation Z, more precisely ''satori generation''. As the target group shared mostly similar background, the implication can be considered as representative of Japanese Generation Z in LINE consumer engagement. After all, if the study would have been conducted to millennials or Generation X, the results could have been completely different.

The evidence in this research has identified reasons for Japanese Generation Z behavior in LINE application. Overall, this paper provides to literature of mobile marketing field and how the consumer behavior can be specified depending on context, demographic background, and technology. The researcher is positive and hopes that these examined insights can provide support when designing marketing strategies to Japanese Generation Z using LINE as a platform.

5.2   Managerial implications

The managerial purpose of this study was to give insights for more effective LINE marketing targeting Japanese Generation Z target group. All the participants were from the same demographic background and using the same technology in the same context, thus giving deeper understanding of Japanese preferences for brands LINE presence. These objectives were achieved, and this research presented knowledge which can be utilized for marketing purposes. There was a clear consumer motivation for the convenience and informative purpose of LINE. The most common reason to follow LINE brand accounts when asked from the interviewees, they mostly highlighted the possible financial and material benefits they can get out from it. With this they mostly meant coupons, sales and stickers given by brands. Majority Japanese Generation Z respondents also considered LINE as the main source of information about products, campaigns, sales and so on. An interesting observation was the lack of information and the quality of it in consumer's perspective. It was even repeatedly mentioned as one of the reasons why respondents would not follow a brand LINE account. Also, according to this study, two hedonic themes were considered as relevant reason why to follow a LINE brand account, the feeling of exclusiveness through benefits and information received and positive atmosphere through content. It is also important to acknowledge that these mentioned implications do not only effect on acquiring followers inside LINE application, but they also work as key motivations to use LINE as main platform to follow brands.

When using LINE as a marketing channel it is important to understand the possible negative effects which can cause the Japanese Generation Z to unfollow a brand. Almost all the participants stated the irritation as the main reason why not to follow a brand account. The respondents saw that if the brand sends too many messages or just use LINE as push marketing channel it can make the consumer to unfollow.

As one of the main managerial implication this study gave a deeper insight on consumer engagement in the LINE application. The researcher analysed multiple marketing function is LINE and therefore can give suggestions for marketing practitioners to increase consumer engagement in brands social media sites. Based on this research the consumer engagement can be increased by focusing on utilitarian values in LINE application. The Japanese Generation Z valued benefits which can be received by following a brand account or clicking an advertisement over hedonic values. Therefore, the marketing practitioners should focus on giving some material or financial benefits for the LINE user rather than only focusing on emotional experiences an user might feel. It is good to keep in mind that the researcher did not focus on certain industry in this study so the preferred practices might differ.

This research also gave insight to what kind of advertisement Japanese target group prefer and provides the most value. There are three main themes to

focus on, entertainment, personalization and informativeness. All these factors were equally preferred, making it important to balance these drivers. Therefore, this means that a positive attitude towards marketing can be caused by relevant advertising focused on respondent's personal life and interests. Also, Japanese seem to value informative advertisements over others, meaning that aspects such product, price, benefits and others should be presented in LINE marketing. From the entertainment side, Japanese seem to prefer funny and positive advertisements with colourful visuals.

5.3   Limitations of this study and reliability

Because of the specified respondent group and technology, the researcher sees findings somewhat reliable. A major limitation of this study is the size of the sampling group, even though all the respondents were carefully selected to represent the target group. As a nature of thematic analysis, the researcher was able to identify key themes to answer the research questions. To make the research more reliable, all the participants were from the same demographic background and using the same technology in the same context. Still the researcher sees the group size too small to make strong evidence, especially concerning Japanese consumer behaviour. Therefore, in most cases the generalization of results to other Japanese Generation Z groups is quite limited but gives insight and direction for implications and leaves room for future research.

Furthermore, this research is subject to sample bias as respondents are mostly university students, meaning higher educated sample group. Also, the age group of the respondents are aged 16-25, therefore not representing the whole Generation Z group. This ultimately means that the results cannot be generalized to younger Japanese members of Generation Z. On the other hand, the respondents present their own age group making their answers reliable for this research context and based on their experience all of them were familiar with the LINE application. As they responded, they use LINE in their everyday life making their statements purely based on personal experience.

5.4   Suggestions for Future Research

In terms of future research within this study context, the wider sampling size is suggested in order to understand the consumer behaviour in LINE application even better. It has proven to be accepted by Japanese as their everyday life communication tool so the relevancy would be in order. Also, it could be an interesting study to examine would also be to identify motivations of Japanese consum-

ers in even more limited context, for example in different types of industries. Perceived value has proven to be useful way to identify indicators for value creation and in the future studies it could be applied. This could examine and get a deeper understanding of the effect of LINE marketing to a customer journey. It could consist of two sections, the effect of LINE before the purchase and after the purchase. This could give more insight to the importance of LINE presence for brands.

Another research suggestion is to study the LINE consumer engagement by comparing different generations introduced by Strauss and Howe (1991). As it has been studied in the marketing literature, the differences in consumer engagement between different generation would give more insight for the use of LINE. At the same time, it could contribute to the generational differences in the use of perceived value. The hierarchical orders of perceived value dimensions in this study do not represent other Japanese generation so there is room for further research on that matter. The hedonic and utilities values could prove to differ a lot and therefore contribute more to the relationship between perceived value and consumer engagement.

Also, the findings in this research emphasize for the research of demographically defined characteristics and cultural values in the response for mobile marketing. In this research the influence of these aspects was proved. For example, next studies would bring to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour. These topics has a wide range of possibilities such as cultural dimensions or how do Japanese value data privacy in the mobile applications usage. Today the concern of data privacy has increased and the attitudes for mobile applications to collect data could make an interesting study in the field of mobile marketing acceptance. This kind of research could also be done comparing two or three different countries together and propose findings for cultural differences in mobile marketing adoption.

Another subject proposal for future research would be the role of Artificial Intelligence in LINE marketing and consumer engagement. Mobile devices and applications, including LINE, can utilize in-depth learning to give even more personalized marketing in the future. There have been multiple studies about the effect on mobile targeted marketing and they could be implemented in the context of LINE (Tong, Luo & Xu, 2019). As personalized marketing affects the motivation to use LINE and how LINE users receive advertisements, it would be a relevant field of study. Eventually these research topics could be utilized in studying how the usage of AI in LINE will affect the consumer behaviour for example towards better performance of online marketing campaign. This could also be studied from the consumer experience perspective, for example how the LINE users interact with AI and how does it generate better user experience as chatbots becomes more and more popular as a communication tool done by LINE company accounts.

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