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EdoCeleste: A music promotion portal designed to market the Japanese Visual-Kei genre, over the Internet, through viral and cross-promotion techniques, for a maximum promotional potential of the bands involved.

Graduate School of Media Design,
Keio Univeristy

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A Master's Thesis
submitted to the Graduate School of Media Design, Keio University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER of Media Design

Joan Bonnici

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Chapter 1

Introduction:

Technological advancements have always brought changes in related industries. The music industry started suffering ever since the recording button was introduced on cassette players, and music was being obtained for free off radio stations. Fast forward to nowadays and Internet services, such as peer to peer file sharing software, and youtube, have turned the situation into one impossible to handle, for both major and minor recording labels.

This out of control spin of downloads is also coupled with an increased musical portability through devices such as the iPod which can hold millions of songs. Furthermore, current technological advancements make it so that anyone can download a huge number of songs on their cellular phones, and those having an online connection on it, can even access online video. This means that anyone with a mobile phone can listen and view songs anywhere, anytime, and for free, without having to carry around a separate piece of equipment.

Music record labels and other entertainment companies have long sought out to make this free availability of copyrighted content illegal. Their latest endeavour can be seen in the revival of ACTA, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, dedicated to helping '*countries work together to tackle more effectively large-scale Intellectual Property Rights violations*' (European Commission, 2010), and SOPA, the Stop Online Piracy Act dedicated to *'combating online piracy'* (House of Representatives, 2012).

Japan, having the second largest world market for music sales was also involved in the creation of ACTA (RIAJ, 2011a). Although global music sales have been facing losses, many recording labels and artist have started to think of and adapt to, new promotional methods, in order to keep the sales going. Japan however, has failed to come up with a new strategy to overcome this depression in music sales, and as a result, instead of embracing the technological phenomenon that led to the current crisis, is trying to resist the change (Veryard Projects, 2012). This is causing continuous profitability losses for Japanese record labels.

The online music portal EdoCeleste was designed with the aim of observing the current techniques adopted to counter this change and develop an even more efficient solution to the problem. Part of the project's work consists of introducing the Japanese music genre known as *J-rock* and *Visual-Kei,* to foreign markets that have already been showing interest in Japanese artists. Such markets include U.S. and other countries in Europe, such as France, U.K. and Spain. Japan first boosted its music exports through the inclusion of popular Japanese bands in U.S. comic conventions. Their acceptance led to more and more Japanese artists realizing the potential of foreign markets, resulting in an ever increasing number of local bands touring abroad in order to explore these markets (Rokkyuu, 2012).

Japan competes for the title in sales record with U.S. (RIAJ, 2011a). Taking geography and population into consideration, this proves that the Japanese consumer is one of the most active, yet sales have been plummeting (Schwartz, 2011). As an effort to increase sales and to promote Japanese artists, the Recording Industry Association of Japan (RIAJ) has re-launched a site dedicated to *'showcase the best in local repertoire.'* (RIAJ, 2011b). This website has been made accessible again since 2010, yet as compared to 2010, Japanese music sales in 2011 have decreased still (RIAJ, 2011b). This, together with the worried vociferations from those active in the industry reveals that something radically different needs to be done in order to maximize Japanese music sales (Ishizaka in Mcclure, 2012).

The future status quo of promotion in the music industry will revolve around viral global promotion intended to maximize the visibility of the artist. The development and incorporation of a digital promotion platform format is needed in order to increase the exposure of J-rock artists to international music fans. Such fans demand a constant inflow of new materials, not only music-wise but also regarding the information about the artist and his current activities, both work-related and not. Teamed with the appropriate platform, availability of such information would be capitalized on, either directly; by the availability of direct purchase, or indirectly; through free distribution in order to obtain more fame, for future capitalization through different methods, thus catering to the new distribution model portrayed in EdoCelste.

1.1 Visual-Kei, an overview

Visual-Kei could be loosely defined as a Japanese endemic music genre, with a sound mostly similar to western rock bands, with a Japanese influence. Most typical bands consist of a vocalist, a lead guitarist, a rhythm guitarist, a bassist and a drummer. Within the same genre, other styles of music such as blues, hard rock, symphonic orchestras and even death metal can be found, creating a somewhat huge sound gap between bands that are on the softer and harder ends of the spectrum respectively. Band members are mostly Japanese males, with some bands having members from other parts of Asia (Stevens, 2009:56).

Bands such as 'X-JAPAN,' 'LUNA SEA,' and 'Shazna' are some of the bands that were there at the beginning in the late 1980's. They managed to survive and achieve some fame within Japan (Stevens, 2009:56). Similarities could be observed in their unique heavy make-up and flamboyant hairstyles reminiscent of Kabuki theatre. Androgyny was used to convey imaginary and unattainable characters. Clothing included leather, PVC, French Rococo outfits and traditional Japanese Yukata. This mix and match of various clothing styles from different eras has been handed down to Visual-Kei bands of this time (Kamba, 2011).

Some bands have also been associated to famous anime by singing the intro or final song for anime (Stevens, 2009:30). Besides promoting themselves through this, bands often dressed up in clothing resembling that of the characters in the anime series. Intricate cosplay makes these band members appear even more unreal and untouchable. Cosplay types vary from the cute and girly look, to the dark and evil look, with each member of the band having a somewhat different style and attracting their own portion of the fan base. This often proved useful in cases where the band broke up, and each member would have a fan base significant enough to start a new music project and thrive on it.

Although not the most musical famous style of music exported from Japan, Visual-Kei does have an addicted following. Some cover bands from non-Japanese members have made it big. The now defunct German band 'Cinema Bizarre' adapted Japanese sounding names and admitted in many interviews that their influences were

based on J-rock. Their first single in 2007 *'Love Songs (They Kill Me)'* debuted at the number nine position in German charts, also trying the American market before their break in 2010 (Cinema Bizarre, 2012).

Another multitude of cover bands, and minor Visual-Kei imitation bands have never made it big. One that did is 'Seremedy,' who have managed to get a small following in their native Sweden, and generated an interest about them in Japan. Yohio, the guitarist, uses the Japanese blog site Ameblo to reach his Japanese fans. He writes in Japanese (Yohio, 2012). They had a feature in the Japanese Visual-Kei centric Cure Magazine in July 2010, after which they toured in Japan, opened for the well known band 'Versailles,' and participated in V-rock festival, one of the biggest yearly events in Visual-Kei (Seremedy, 2012). So instead of exporting Japanese bands abroad, the phenomenon in Japan is very unique, because foreigners imitating the Japanese sound are being included with success in the Japanese market.

1.2 Globalisation

Attempts to introduce Japanese musicians into foreign markets have been going on for years. Japanese heavy-metal act 'Loudness' is one of the first who tried to enter U.S. markets in the 1990s and failed. Other Japanese artists have tried to follow their path, but very few have managed to acquire a following. Below is a discussion of the reasons behind this.

1.3 Language Barriers

The most obvious reason for Japanese artists not making it outside of Japan is the strong language barrier. Most existing artists have limited or no knowledge of English. This means that when they manage to go on showcase tours abroad, they cannot communicate with their fans at all. MCs, when the vocalist or other band members stop during the show to talk directly to their public, cannot be done by such artists, and this takes away some of the personal concert experience for the fans. Furthermore, it is difficult for bands that don't have a management agency, or English speaking translators, to contact foreign

distribution and recording labels. This hinders them in being assisted by those already prominent in foreign industries, which are the only people who could facilitate their transition into foreign markets.

Conversely, there is also a problem with the lack of accurate information. Fans who try to find out information about Japanese bands with no official English website are often faced with multiple differing fan-translations, making the communication from the band hard. The same goes for fans that would like to access the artist's blogs and such related websites. Similar language problems are reflected in song lyrics where the Japanese artist uses English irrespective or it's meaning, grammar, or order, making the few phrases available in English sound weird to the foreign following (Stevens, 2009: 144).

1.3.1   Recording Label Control

Japanese recording labels noticed that high profitability could be made through their emerging idol artists through targeted merchandise sales and commercial appearances (Stevens, 2009: 128). Ever since then signing as a recording artist does not only mean giving away the rights to one's music, but also giving away image and commercial rights.

The label decides when the next single or album should be made available. Appearances on adverts, magazines, interviews, commercials, dramas and co-productions with other artist always have to go through acceptance from a manager. Therefore, although the artist may have control over his art, it always has to go through managerial approval first. Control is so tight that even before images of an artist appear in magazines, the label has to decide if the pictures are of good quality or not. When it comes to trying out foreign markets, signing with a foreign label, tour dates, tour organisation, marketing campaigns and re-release dates all have to be accepted by the main Japanese label unless the artist branches off completely.

1.3.2 Foreign distribution and record labels

For artist on major recording labels such as Sony, Warner, Emi and Universal, landing ashore might not be so hard. The lack of necessity of acquiring a different label makes attempts at being introduced to a foreign fan base easier and less costly. In former patterns of promotion an artist would be exposed to foreign audiences only once he has reached a high selling status in Japan for a number of years.

Current sales trends have been making it harder for artist to reach such fame such that many try to gain the likes of foreign audiences from their early Indies (non-famous) stages. There are some foreign records and distribution labels created solely with the purpose of promoting Japanese Visual-kei such as Germany based CLJ Records (CLJ, 2012). Other emerging labels promoting specific genres internationally such as Trisol Music Group GmbH, promoting goth music in Europe, signed the gothic influenced Visual-Kei bands 'Malice Mizer,' 'The Candy Spooky Theatre' and 'Moi Dix Mois' (Trisol Music Group GmbH, 2012). As part of their contracts these bands had to give away their distribution rights to their European labels so that promotion across Europe or European iTunes could only be conducted through the label, meaning that the band cannot promote themselves in Europe without the consent of the label.

Indies bands without the prospect of a label face harsher issues when testing out foreign markets because of the lack of connections and the huge expenses needed to front the costs of aeroplane and hotel tickets, and live space rental.

1.4 Music market adaptation in the Internet Era

As stated above, instead of embracing technology many record labels and recording artists are still in fear and refusal of complete Internet use. As Owsinski suggests '*Today's audience is a stratified vortex of special tastes and ultra-targeted desires*' (Owsinski, 2009:38). Houghton continues to explain how *'niche markets [find] coherent audiences,' and no matter how specific or unusual a band's sound is, there will always be a following for them provided they become accessible to such fans* (Houghton in Owsinski, 2009:38).

Up-to-date information about the artist, an official blog, and official tour dates and release dates all form part of what is needed to promote an artist abroad. Websites are also an important tool in observing viewing trends to discover these potential niche markets and observe in which countries the artist has a following so that marketing can be targeted and the outcome more beneficial (Allen, 2007:52). This and other online software could be used to reach an expanded fan base, and for the artist to profit from these fans as well.

1.5 Overview of EdoCeleste

After considering the factors detrimental to the foreign success of Visual-Kei artists, and viewing current existing models for international music promotion, the requisite items necessary for a more favourable promotion of J-rock bands was created with EdoCeleste. This online music portal is a free music promotion website aimed at overcoming inhibitors in viral promotion. The bands that agreed to take part in this project are not signed on a major recording label. This has facilitated the design of the website to be one that caters for a 360 degrees promotion of the bands involved, without restrictions from a major label or manager.

EdoCeleste makes use of other social media such as youtube and facebook to promote itself and its bands amongst existing Japanese music fans. It offers direct links for the viewing of band videos and music, and updated information on releases and lives. Hyperlinks to the artists' personal sites, and online music stores such as iTunes and CD Baby are also available to induce impulse buying of the songs a visitor likes, offering a monetization prospect for the bands.

Overall, the website is designed to cater for and create opportunities for a grouped cross-promotion value which generates a constant buzz about the artists involved in the project, thus increasing the artist's fame. The site is also equipped with site statistics analysis software allow interpretation of viewing trends.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of 7 chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the present state of the Japanese Visual-Kei music genre in its limitations and its international popularity. It analyses some of the issues that prevent increased monetization from the genre, and offers a different use of Internet as a solution for more profitability, through the marketing and development of an online portal which caters for the need of international fans. Chapter 2 examines research through books and academic papers. It explains strategies about fan formation and maintenance, use of Internet, and different marketing strategies. It also offers an exploration of what the Visual-Kei scene was and what it is today. The final section of this chapter consists of an exploration of existing music marketing websites and a discussion of the methods they use. Chapter 3 discusses the fieldwork conducted prior to the study through interviews and other data. Chapter 4 presents the vision and concept behind the design of EdoCeleste, its target markets and its competition. The prototype and ideal model for EdoCeleste are explored in this chapter. Chapter 5 explains in detail the function of all the components included in the model. Chapter 6 explores the frameworks used for evaluation, together with evaluation results, followed by a discussion of these results. Chapter 7 offers the concluding remarks regarding this research together with limitations and ideas for future works.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This thesis is written under the design track under Professor Nakamura's Pop power project. It follows a design centric approach and action research made to determine whether the design presented here is effective or not. This project consists of the creation and testing out of an online music portal created with the purpose of enhancing viral and cross promotion of the bands represented on it. Below is a discussion about what led to the current situation in music promotion, together with some existing models and what they lack for an effective promotion.

2.1 A brief history of the worldwide music evolution

Music distribution started back in the 1950's where an artist would be signed to a recording label and songs made for distribution in shops. It soon became a highly profitable business that was noticed by Wall Street. The involvement and investment of shareholders led to large conglomerates buying the available music labels, giving rise to super labels, four of which monopolize most of the music markets today. In the past, music consumption and marketing was achieved via the radio. Subsequent evolutions of the radio, namely the portable version, meant that music consumption was no longer stationary and localized to any particular venue having a radio. Mobility and its achievement was the first evolution in the music market. The competition for being heard on the radio escalated to the point of payola where radio DJs were being gifted in order to push a song on their station. This and other indirect forms of payola were outlawed, forcing the labels to adapt self-promotion of the artist and their songs before they were heard on the radio (Owsinski, 2009).

The introduction of the compact disc forced a reduction of the royalties for the artist as a counter-measure for the high price of the new technology. Even when the technology became easily available and cheap, the royalty rates never changed. This meant that the artists started making less money out of their music. In the same period

MTV started showing videos covering music songs, and the image factor became a driving force in music sales. Lower drinking ages in U.S. catered for live-music every night, and many bands start surviving through live events whilst obtaining the live experience practice before moving into label-induced limelight (Owsinski, 2009). The next music marketing metamorphosis after MTV was the rise of Internet.

2.2 The mark: The irreversible change Internet and new advanced technologies left on current music marketing methods.

The following section will focus on some of the changes forced on the music industry through the introduction of Internet. As Internet accessibility became more popular and the number of home users was increasing, so were its effects on the music marketing industry.

2.2.1 Piracy and digital distribution

Internet started in 1993, and the first mp3 was shared in 1994. With this, exclusive corporate control over distribution models was removed. Napster and other peer-to-peer networks completely revolutionized music distribution; now availability was passed from computer to computer. This was disruptive to traditional marketing methods, where in order to be able to listen to a high quality recording, one would have to buy a physical copy of the song. The initial feeling about if from the music industry was one of panic: *'...we have more "turntable hits" than ever before, in which a recording gets massive exposure but no one is willing to purchase it.'* (Owsinski, 2009:28). This was also the reason why many major labels were upfront against Napster and its services. The creation of iTunes solved part of the problem with monetization of digital distribution (Owsinski, 2009). Digital distribution was recorded at 13% by 2008 (Brae, 2009:13), reaching 32% in 2009 (RIAA in Brae, 2009:16). As Perry points out, whilst the music industry is stressing that piracy is what's ruining current music sales figures, online digital sales through iTunes keep on increasing, proving that there is a willing market for music (Perry in Owsinski, 2009:40). It is also not the first time that the music industry had to face the

phenomenon of devaluation of recorded music. With the introduction of digital downloads we have been moving back to an old model with the preference of single sales over album sales. Tower records started selling vinyls at 99 cents each when they were trying to clear them out. What is happening with online distribution through iTunes is very similar (Brae, 2009:13).

Another factor, which might contribute to the apparent decrease of music sales, is the increasing number of recording artists. Recording costs used to be much higher for the self-entrepreneur, yet, with the advancements of technology recording prices went down. There are many local bands worldwide that record and sell their CDs without enlisting them on tracking services like Soundscan. In 2004, Indies sales in U.S. were accountable for 25% of the music recorded worldwide (Allen, 2007:118). The number may actually vary because unless an artist records his albums to Soundscan, the number of sales is not recorded; therefore Indies sales sell more than is known.

Availability of new genres of music means that listeners are turning to new sources to find out about new and upcoming artist. Research statistics from NPD Group show that '*People turning to Internet radio to find new music to purchase increased by 15% over the last year* [2008],' (Brae, 2009:13). The average twitter user purchased 77% more digital downloads than the non-twitter user. In the same year CD sales went down by 18% (Brae, 2009:13). Therefore, unlike the feeling that Internet is responsible for the reduction of music sales, it's merely presenting a new method of sales, pricing and distribution of music.

2.2.2 Availability of the product as per Anderson's Long Tail Theory

Chris Anderson's Long Tail Theory is directly opposed to the traditional 80:20 theory used in music sales. This states that 80% of your sales will come from 20% of your products, or in this case, the most famous twenty per cent of the singles or albums issued throughout the year will be solely responsible for 80% of all music sales. Chris Anderson's Long Tail Theory proves the contrary by stating that if made as easily available, the other 80% of the songs will cater for more sales than the popular 20% ones. He demonstrated this through the use of the online, pay per month, music streaming

service Rhapsody. This acts like a huge song database, so a song, no matter how old, and no matter how long the physical CD has been sold out for, will always be available. Hence a situation of demand and supply is possible, where the customers actually listen more often to these non-popular tracks rather than the popular ones, proving that customers are paying for the ability to listen to the older songs rather than the new ones (Anderson in Owsinski, 2009:55). The exact percentages might be debatable, but other data from Nielson/ Soundscan reports how out of 44,000 new albums for 2008, where the top 100 were accountable for almost 50% of the sales, 58% of the new titles sold less than a 100 albums, and 81% sold less than a 1,000 albums (Brae, 2009:12). Although the exact numbers for this theory are still debatable it proves a highly important point when it comes to sales. Easier availability ensures more sales, and Internet is the tool to both. Music distributors need to learn how to make better use of this tool.

2.2.3 Direct communication to the fans

Internet was the first medium to enable artist to fan communication where the artist no longer relied on label distribution, radio, or T.V. promotion, relying instead on a platform, which enables direct communication with the fans. Social networks now occupy the time previously spent listening to music, changing previous music sales points and techniques (Owsinski, 2009:39).

Advertising used to be relocated to a particular area like the radio, TV, or newspapers, whilst now the consumer is being bombarded with a constant inflow of information they selectively learnt to ignore (Rampley, 2005:182). Besides innovative buzz generating promotions, word of mouth and other direct forms of communication, have become the most effective at breaching this barrier and gaining an audience, and therefore potential customers. This system is further fulfilled when the artist pays attention to the concerns of the fans and takes action to adjust anything the fans are complaining about (Barnes, 2011:56).

Matt Rosof cites a Columbia University study, which proves how music sales are determined by the opinion of others about music, and not how good the song actually is. The reasons for this vary, however peer pressure and common interests play a big role

(Rosof in Owsinski 2009:123). Derek Sivers continues to explain why the music consumer can no longer be *spoon fed* into buying the music selected by the record labels. Only suggestions from friends will have any sort of influence (Owsinski, 2009:38). A direct artist to fan interaction builds a stronger fan base and a following which will be ready to buy anything from the artist. Fans who talk to their friends about the artist would be performing free, targeted advertising through word of mouth, and it saves the artist and labels a sizeable amount of money when it comes to advertising.

Another important factor that is usually overlooked is that bigger music labels use multiple managers for different functions. They have a band manager, a tour manager, a marketing manager and many others. They work together to reach the consumer with a common and compelling message. In the music industry all various managers have become highly adept at working in harmony, yet when the sales messages regarding concerts, tours or merchandise are supplied by third parties using the name of the band, part of the artist to fan communication is cut, and most of the messages used in social media become advertising efforts. This makes *personal selling* a critical factor in tailoring to the user's needs or ideal consumption trends. For instance, CDs and Vinyls have acquired a potential higher sale value, for example through personalization by a signature from the artist, and this should be catered for in future sales models where digital distribution is the main sales platform, and physical distribution is achieved via marketing of CDs and other media as collector's items (O'Guinn et al., 2009: 641).

Elimination of the middlemen like T.V. and radio brought about an important change to artist signing on record labels. Labels sign artists based on the number of fans they have, or would potentially have. Good use of social media by the artist feeds a following of fans that are responsible for fan-to-fan communication and advertisement related to the artist in question. Now that MTV and radio no longer play such a major role in selling up to platinum level, it is the quality of the music that sells. Thus, when a label sees that the music by the artist already has a following, they are less likely to ask the artist to change to more popular and appealing music tones (Owsinksi, 2009). As Bruce Houghton puts it, technology provided rapid dramatic change in the music industry:

'I think that the end of music retail is in sight(....).On the other hand, it's really exciting because that barrier where a band feels that hey needed a nationally distributed release is gone.' (Bruce Houghton in Owsinski, 2009:24).

Digital changes were reflected in the creation of new audiences, and musical variety has been increasing proportionately. Niche markets for any sub-genre of music imaginable have become attainable, and no matter where the fans are, it's possible for them to access the band's information and buy their goods (Bruce Houghton and Owsinski, 2009:38). Direct communication to the fan also made it easier to make fans more knowledgeable about the band they loved. Fans started sharing these bands with their friends, and tribalism came into play.

2.2.4 True fans in tribalism

'What the tribe craves the most is communication and direction.' (Owsinski, 2009:44). Social media and artist blogs have achieved constant communication and connection to the fan. By letting the fan have a window on their life, the fan constructs an essential attachment to the artist, which the fan wouldn't be able to create unless he or she had a constant flow of direct fresh pieces of information from the artist himself.

Seth Godin explores tribalism in the context of direct contact through social media, creating a highly loyal fanbase that will do most of the promotion, create and generate buzz about the artist, buy almost everything with the musician's trademark on it, and expose the artist to other new fans. An essential part of it, is direct communication from the leader to the tribe, so from the artist directly to the fans. In it's primal form, this is low cost, low maintenance viral marketing of the artist. The number of loyal fans one has is what distinguishes a part time artist from a full time performer, so it's not a trivial matter (Godin in Owsinski, 2009:44). Such loyal fans are the ones who will make an added effort in order to promote the artist by in turn, using social media to reach out to other fans, thus promoting the artist:

'*Most bloggers are true music fans who want to discover great new music and share it with the world… or at least their 37 friends who read them faithfully. If 10% of those 37 readers come to one of your shows, that's 3.7% fans that you didn't have yesterday telling their friends about you.*', (Houghton in Owsinski, 2009:81).

Another characteristic of the leader of the tribe is the elevation to a super-human level by fans. The extremes can vary from the fans viewing the artist as god-like to the fans thinking that the artist is someone they want to look up to. Baudrillad calls this hyper-reality created via simulacra; simulations and idealisations of what people expect (Baudrillad in Rample, 2005:220). What people expect is an artist or musician who can live this idealised life because of their talent, that is music. So when an artist sells this message through social media they are selling the simulation of a fantasy world that the fans admire. Ultimately unless the artist is one with personal charisma with 360 abilities, fans won't be fooled into perceiving what is common as extraordinary. This might be highly damaging to the musician.

Aside from having a dependable leader which guides the tribe, fans support each other to create a cohesive community which helps both in aiding the success of the band and in regulating the entry and acceptance of newer fans in the community (Barnes, 2011: 98).

Tribalism creates a sense of involvement and a support system for fans that have similar interests and likes. This enables fans to encourage each other in their enthusiasm for the band so that fans become more likely to buy material from the artists for a longer period of time as opposed to isolated fans. The continuous commitment, exchange of information, and the sense of belonging that comes from being in a tribe, satisfies the need for acceptance. It is also another reason why if one's friends buy an original CD, their friends are more likely to do a similar purchase in order to belong and to prove to friends that they belong (Hashimoto, 2007:94).

2.2.5 Inbound Marketing

This marketing method evolved by the band 'Grateful Dead' was around before Internet even existed; yet it did not fail at adapting to Internet from its very start and to evolve into an even stronger marketing method (Barnes, 2011:98). Inbound marketing refers to feeding one's own market or fans through the use of a freemium model through freedom of content (Meerman Scott et al., 2010: xix). Instead of increasing benefits in order to attract new potential fans, loyal and long-standing fans are given the greatest rewards. This loyalty from the artist to the fans guarantees bigger numbers of loyal fans, the kind that does marketing for the band, buy all the merchandise and follows the band around during live tours (Meerman Scott et al., 2010: 76).

Here, the concert and community experience create a unique setting, which is indispensable for the fan that craves it over and over (Meerman Scott et al., 2010: 37). The 'Grateful Dead' were ready to really listen to the suggestions of their fans, so that their fans became participatory members as equal partners in the journey that led them to become one of the most famous American bands (Meerman Scott et al., 2010: 71). Some of the most notable strategies they used was the creation of a free fan newsletter, printed and distributed for their mailing list for free, and later evolved to emails, ticketing systems that allow the most loyal fans to obtain better seats, the rejection of core assumptions assumed in the music industry, and the giving away of all of their music for free. The extent to which they gave music away for free was by allowing fans to record whole concerts and trade them with other fans at no cost. This created a higher demand for high quality studio recording of their albums, and for the live show recordings and original merchandise resulting in great fame and monetary gain (Barnes, 2011: 79).

2.3 Viral promotion and other promotion techniques

Andy Sernovitz wrote about attaining the ideal atmosphere for intensified promotion in his book *'Word of Mouth Marketing: How Smart Companies Get People Talking.'* Success principles include the use of the *'Five Ts: Talkers, Topics, Tools, Talking part, Tracking.'*, (Sernovitz in O'Guinn et al., 2009: 665). When supplied with enough topics,

people who are predisposed to talking will have extra reason to talk about you. Talking doesn't necessarily imply new tour dates or new song release anticipation. In the case of the artist it would be keeping the fans interested by a constant stream of information, such as pictures, blogs about activities, and other quirks. All of that combined with the appropriate tools, that is, Internet and social media, creates the scenario for viral marketing, the most important tool in comprehensive marketing today. Anything supplied in a format that is *'linkable, portable, and built to travel across the Internet'* such as a blog will do. Single sided conversations are no longer the norm. Dialogues represent an interest from whoever did the original post, and they also show respect and acknowledgment of the opinions of others. This all ties in with the concept of tribalism, however it furthers into effective buzz generation with the aim of continuous promotion. Another positive part to all of this is tracking. Whatever is said and done over the Internet is traceable and measurable; meaning an artist no longer requires lengthy and detailed questionnaires in order to find out about the thoughts and whims of their fans. It's all available online for free (Sernovitz in O'Guinn et al., 2009: 665). Services like Nielsen Buzz Metrics can help track online buzz over multiple social platforms.

In order to attain viral promotion at its maximum level, an ideal artist website must have the following: description, biography, photos, press release, discography, song lyrics, audio files, fan club membership, tour information, e-store (for the sales of merchandise), contests and give-aways, links to other artist related sites, contact information, a message board for chat rooms, RSS feed availability, and a blog (Allen, 2007: 81). Unfortunately the concept of *freedom of speech* raises some dilemmas within the viral use of Internet. The artist should constantly monitor what is being said about him to avoid misinformation (Rampley, 2005: 225). Naturally viral promotion is intensified when music is given away for free, and although most bands are hesitant to give away all of their music for free, previous experiences like that from the 'Grateful Dead' reveals how a *freemium* strategy helps to gather new fans. If artists understand how to successfully market themselves then they would be able to do money through such new fans (Barnes, 2011: 79).

As suggested by the famous Japanese advertising company Dentsu, with the rise of Internet advertising models have been changing, and it's essential for new and old

businesses alike to adapt to it in order to appeal to the consumer. Customers have been locking themselves in a cocoon as a shelter from information bombardment and the best solution to overcome this is through the generation of interest and easy communication. Therefore, the current model of advertising is *'AISAS, Attention, Interest, Search, Action and Share,'* the model for advertising through the inclusion of modern technology and Internet. It caters for the modern consumer and emphasizes the use of cross-communication. Compared to the previous model *'AIDMA, Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory, Action,'* AISAS is non-linear allowing for repetition and deletion of parts of the process (Sugiyama et al., 2011:80). Simplified, AISAS is about generating attention from the customer by generating interest. The consumer will search further information, buy and use the product themselves, rate it an talk about it to their friends or through a blog and other social media. As mentioned above AISAS is non-linear in which steps of the process might be excluded altogether or repeated, generating availability for a model with the flexible environment found online.

A recent implementation of these new marketing schemes would be Radiohead's album 'In Rainbows.' It was released only as a digital download where customers were encouraged to pay as much as they wanted for it. The album was not advertised on traditional media, but only on the vocalist's blog and band website saving on advertising costs. Sales totalled 1.2 million dollars in prepays for the album. Most of the fans downloaded it for free, however with the money from those that paid Radiohead made a profit from the album anyways. The money was going directly in their pockets by avoiding expensive printing and distribution networks, proving that digital availability does indeed have it's advantages when used properly (Owsinski 2009:47). Other models include artists Moby and Corey Smith who increased their digital sales by making their tracks available on their sites and for sales on iTunes. Corey Smith decided to take down the free songs on his official website to test out a new marketing strategy and during that period his digital music sales decreased (Owsinski, 2009:65).

This model is referred to as *Economics of Free.* The artist gives away something for free in order to attract a greater number of potential buyers (Owsinski, 2009:49). *Economics of Free* is just part of the greater marketing plan including the availability and distribution of *infinite and scarce products.* Infinite products, like digital downloads, are

easy to copy and available for cost-less distribution. Scarce products include limited print CDs and DVDs, photobooks, concert tickets, autographed goods and merchandise. By making the infinite products wildly available by putting them directly on peer-to-peer networks, Myspace, youtube and such media, the artist exposes himself to the fans, and has the ability to make the limited merchandise even more valuable. This generates competition for possession of the limited items that are now viewed as collectibles. Furthermore viral promotion is only effective when coupled with the ease of availability and availability of purchase. Impulse buys can only be done if there is high availability of the product. Artists have to make their product available in as many sites as possible, because if the product is only available on selected sites, the chances of reaching niche markets is limited proportionally (Owsinski, 2009:57). In order to achieve an optimal distribution and a big fan base, it's better to supply the fans with constant releases of new material, rather than one big collection within the span of a year or more, as in the case of albums. Besides, each song will be re-distributed virally, and individually, which means that the artist will gain more exposure through each individual song rather than a one time exposure through the album (Owsinski, 2009:68).

2.4 Echoing winds of change: how the future bands will earn a living

As opposed to prior sales models where the artist would make a living from CD distribution, and tour in an area with high sales to support such CD sales, trends have changed to touring being the main monetization source for the artist with CDs being sold during tours. Touring is a revenue venue that keeps on increasing although CD sales are in decline. 2008 saw a 7% rise in the sector throughout North America. Part of the responsibility for this was the increasing ticket prices (Brae, 2009:22).

Since sales models for major labels are changing, artists are now signed as *brands*, meaning that the label will collect a percentage not only from music sales, but also from touring, merchandise and endorsement deals the artist might acquire (Allen, 2007:118).

When it comes to concerts, both Indies and major artists can avail of event sponsorship. A marketer will provide financial support to finance an event. The marketer

will get targeted cheaper advertisement, delivered via a reliable source that the fans are willing to listen to; the artist, and the artist gains benefits in reduced or nullified costs for printing of merchandise or hiring the venue. Event sponsorship is a win-win situation, and if the marketer likes the results, chances are the artist's events will be sponsored again. Internationally famous companies would sponsor major bands, however, when it comes to Indies, there will always be a local company or store requiring some assistance. Companies have used such methods of cross-promotion for ages. Such an example would be General Motors. It has sponsored scholarship programs and fashion shows although it is a vehicle selling company, proving that many companies are ready to branch into different forms of advertising and cross-promotion. In addition, brand loyalty is reinforced because encountering a brand in such an intimate situation such as a concert promotes positive reinforcement. Statistics are imperative to this sort of sponsorship. No brand or company will bother advertising a superstar unless they can provide the company with some demographics and statistics about the fan base. If a company has enough proof that the fan base and the target audience for the products they sell are similar the chances of an artist being sponsored increase (O'Guinn et al, 2009:607). Another similar option is *co-branding* where the artist sponsors the brand he represents by living up to its image. This includes multiple facets from the artist designing a t-shirt for a clothing brand, to the manufacture of artist edition guitars, drums and pianos (Owsinski, 2009:79).

2.5 VISUAL KEI

Visual Kei was born in the early 90s as a way to lend *Japaneseness* to Western songs. A number of genres fall under this category. Unlike Western bands that tend to stick to one genre, Visual-Kei and J-rock bands tend to use multiple styles through their artistic life (Stevens, 2008:16). Visual-Kei and J-rock will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis because of the multiple bands that have crossed over from one genre to the other. It also common between fans to refer to them interchangeably so I will keep this fashion throughout the thesis. What categorizes Visual-Kei as a genre of it's own is the use of pentatonic scales generally associated to Japanese music, and the extensive use of vibrato

vocalisations from the singers (Stevens, 2008:18). Visual impact was achieved through '... *hair, makeup, and costume'* (Stevens, 2008:56). It also borrows from traditional Japanese Kabuki Theatre, where males impersonated female roles. As a result, gender bending, androgyny and adaptation of female looks is also popular in this genre (Venâncio Monteiro, 2011:13). Some famous bands belonging to the genre include 'X-JAPAN,' 'Buck-Tick' and 'LUNA SEA.' These are all bands that started out with more extreme looks during their Indies days and opted for a more sombre look during their later years. (Stevens, 2008:59). Charismatic and good-looking vocalists (both male and female) attract the attention of female fans, which consist the majority of fans at any Visual-Kei concert (Stevens, 2008:43).

The use of Japanese language in most songs became a barrier when trying to break into foreign markets. As a result, English started being incorporated more and more into songs by Japanese artists to achieve an international fan base (Stevens, 2008:146). Pronunciation of English and other foreign languages is still a detrimental factor where although the song would be in English the lyrics are not clear enough and are dismissed as an unidentifiable language by the listener.

> *'.. the popularisation of music is not merely based on musical merit but is significantly affected by the careful application of business procedures such as marketing, PR and "spin"'* (Stevens, 2008:68).

Another factor in music marketing is the creation and maintenance of a fan community constantly fed information by the band or artist themselves. Visual-kei has already had some tribalism and community subculture interactions through the artists leading the fans. 'Sano Motaharu' and 'The Alfee' both had their websites designed by their fans. Later on, 'The Alfee' decided to hire professionals to take care of their website. The reason behind this was that restrictions in giving information to the fans that were always considered non-staff. A balance between secrecy and exposure of new plans became taxing to control, and the management decided they should be the only ones to issue information via their own portal (Stevens, 2008:116). Whilst fan help and the spread of information is vital to the rise of fame of a band, controlling what kind of

information the fan spreads is always a difficult task so it's better to have an updated official artist website rather then rely solely on fans.

> *'...success in the music business is a social process where audiences make their own decisions but, at the same time, are influenced by other positional actors even before forming their own relationship with the artistic product.'* (Stevens, 2008:99).

Due to the rise in interest about Visual-Kei, competition for concert tickets, both in Japan and abroad, is often high, but fans are willing to pay such prices for the ability to attend a concert. The live experience, with its human imperfections makes the moment unique and precious for the fan (Stevens, 2008:126). Due to its irreplaceable nature, it is easier to market a live tour rather than marketing printed CDs. Besides concerts and music sales, other revenues for famous artists include endorsement deals with guitar, drum, and amplifier companies. ESP guitars constructs custom made models for the artists, supplying the artist with the instrument, and then offers the same model for sale to the fans. The artist gets a share of the retail price of the guitar (Stevens, 2008:127). Furthermore, within Japan, artists obtain revenue from enlisting their songs in karaoke. JASRAC is the agency responsible for most of the royalty collections on behalf of the artist and composes on a contract with the agency. (Stevens, 2008:118). As protection measures on behalf of the artists signed to it, in recent years JASRAC started a battle against illegal availability of songs and other media. In an overnight invasive measure, JASRAC started taking down youtube videos from J-rock fans that had uploaded full songs and promotional videos from their favourite artists. With youtube use growing in importance as a direct measure of actual fame, and with many artists not having an official youtube channel, foreign press was turning to youtube fan videos for viewing numbers in an attempt to express the extent of international fame of a Japanese artist to the readers who most likely had never heard of the Japanese band. With the removal of these fan uploads, JASRAC has destroyed years of fan interest in these bands. This however, is not an isolated example, as many Visual-kei bands are most often unprepared for international audiences and media, as will be explained later on in this thesis.

2.6 An exploration of currently available music promoting platforms.

Below is a list of, description of, and function of, of most of the well known online platforms promoting music distribution, music exposition, or pay-per-use streaming services. The inclusion extends to websites hosting either full songs or partial song samples, since these have been identified as the medium to get the artists showcased with throughout the use of this thesis. Although I haven't yet provided a full explanation of the use of EdoCeleste, I will also point out what these sites are lacking for the best potential use of viral and cross promotion techniques, in regards to the artists and songs represented on their sites.

2.6.1 Myspace

Myspace was one of the first social networking sites to become well known and used worldwide. Artists like 'The Arctic Monkeys' have had their initial success from becoming famous on Myspace. Myspace's use changed when facebook, the currently most used social networking service gained more users than Myspace. Since then users have been in decline. Besides its social use, Myspace is also dedicated to the showcasing of existing and upcoming music artists. As stated by the site itself:

> *'Myspace is also the home of Myspace Music, which offers an ever-growing catalog of freely streamable audio and video content to users and provides major, independent, and unsigned artists alike with the tools to reach new audiences.'* (Myspace, 2012).

As part of their effort to increase the use of Myspace again, the owners have been modifying the site and making targeted efforts to change it into an even more comprehensive music marketing website. Myspace has included the use of a share function through facebook, denoting the decline in the number of users. In regards to music promotion, Myspace allows users to embed songs in their personal pages, and to share artists' playlists online. However in the past some artists decided that their songs

should be removed from personal fan playslists and as a result the number of individuals who are using Myspace to share music is also in decline. There is the option of a single music player having all the songs the artist uploaded on it, but there is no way for a viewer to be redirected to other artists unless they look up the name of the artist themselves. So one cannot be redirected from one artist to another artist of a similar genre. Also, one has to know the artist they want to look for before they look for them, meaning that artists have to have already been discovered before one will go on Myspace to listen to their songs. The aim of EdoCeleste is to use social media to promote the discovery of new music, so the user would discover new music on the site and not through other media first.

Myspace has tried to overcome this through the use of the creation of Myspace Radio. It promises to offer search function by finding similar songs to those previously listened to by the user, by linking to similar artists, and by providing a search option by genre. Myspace Radio is more similar to the EdoCeleste model, however there are still some differences that the EdoCeleste model tried to overcome. For starters, music from the radio cannot be shared, thus hindering the promotion potential of it. Sharing from individual artist pages on other social media only provides a re-direction link to Myspace. Myspace is a company, and like one, they would rather have the users listen to new content on Myspace itself rather than on other social media, however a user which feels more comfortable using other media will not turn to Myspace just to make use of it's radio.

A search bar is provided to find music, but once again, this only applies for artists whom the user already knows or has heard of from other sources. The similar music player is only limited to four songs and there is no option to load other music, as is available on youtube. The artist list provided has only eight artists showing out of the millions available on Myspace, and therefore the user isn't supplied with a huge option when looking for other artists. Different genres can be listened to by clicking on the radio station button, where the user will be redirected to another page looking exactly like the one below, except an artist pertaining to the genre chosen would be displayed first. Selected music can be compiled together for a personal playlist but it still doesn't offer a sharing option.

There also isn't a similar function to Myspace radio for promotional videos. Videos may only be viewed independently on each artist page. EdoCeleste tries to overcome this through the main player on its home page, and through the videos from various artists having been made viewable on its youtube channel.
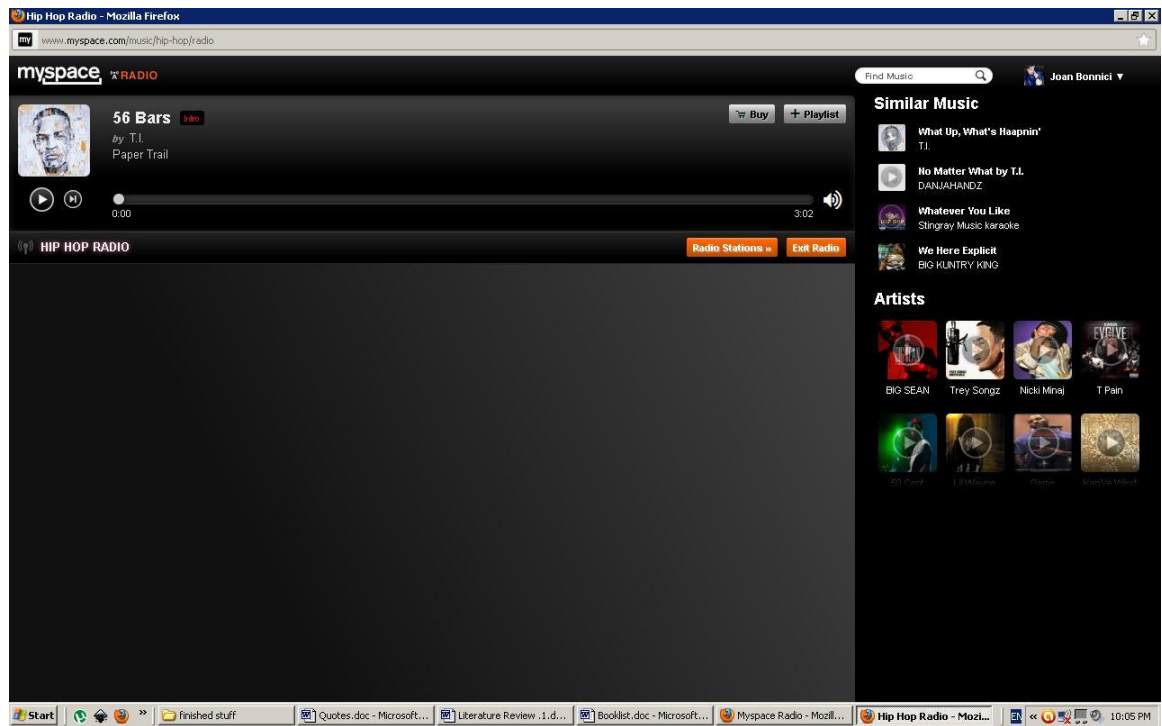
Figure 2.1. Myspace Radio player.

2.6.2 SYNC MUSIC JAPAN

SYNC is a joint effort by the Japan Association of Music Enterprises (JAME), Music Publishers Association of Japan (MPAJ), and The Federation of Music Producers from Japan (FMPJ), (SYNC, 2012). Together they have been enlisting famous Japanese artists internationally to promote all the Japanese musical talent. Although it has only been in existence for a little longer than two years, SYNC boasts a vast category of artists and constantly updated information about them.

SYNC also has some very important aspects that are being used, or planned to be used on EdoCeleste. These include a comprehensive list of all the artists involved, RSS feeds re-directing to all the other social media used besides the main website, and an

upcoming foreign live list. As a Japanese effort, SYNC was worth a mention in this thesis, although it is not a music promoting website in the conventional sense. Unlike EdoCeleste, it does not offer music or promo video showcase, or the option to buy music. Above all, it does not offer share functions throughout the website, meaning that there is no direct sharing button including a share on twitter, facebook or any other social media function. None the less, the articles are easily still re-linkable because of different links showing in the search bar. Another thing SYNC is not making use of is the re-linking of artist to their other pages. SYNC's original platform is hosted on Myspace, where all the artists present on SYNC have their own accounts. Articles offered on SYNC do not re-link to the artist's personal Myspace page, and therefore the user can only read about the artist or band but not hear what they sound like.

2.6.3 Visunavi

Visunavi is a Japanese website dedicated to the promotion of Visual-Kei bands since 2001 (Visunavi, 2012). The information on it is only available in Japanese. Visunavi was an inspiration for the start of this project. It had all the functions that Visual-Kei fans were demanding off a music site, yet it wasn't available in English. It offers an updated artist database list by alphabet of all the Visual-Kei bands that joined it. To join the website, artists do not have to have a number of fans and albums, or to get recruited like they do on SYNC. There is an application form for joining. If the band meets all the requirements and is showcased on the site they should use the contact form to keep on posting updated to the staff so that they can update the site themselves.

There is the possibility to download music against a payment from the website, however this function is only available for Japanese cell phones and not internationally. There are also no song samples from the various artists; however there is a *visu TV* function that allows viewing of some live recordings and promo videos from selected artists. Visunavi functions as a single cell that doesn't make use of other social media. No share functions are available, and its mode of use is catered to a Japanese public, not to an international one. Specific information pertaining to an artist can be found on an artist page, including contact links, official site, live schedule and release information and

biographies. Due to its size it also makes use of heavy advertising that EdoCeleste has been avoiding making use of. Since the site has to make use of advertisements on the main page, paying artists can attract more viewings, however, those who cannot afford to pay will not be advertised and their chances or being viewed or discovered become smaller.

2.6.4 ReverbNation

ReverbNation's main page greets the user with the message *'Home to over 2.31 million musicians, venues, labels, and industry professionals.',* (ReverbNation, 2012a). Therefore, it is not only a music promoting website, but a website dedicated to showing which artists are in most demand at the moment, whilst creating opportunities for artists, venue and professionals from the music industry alike. The 'about' section of ReverbNation explains how the creators believe that the best promotion comes from active fans who make use of social media to share and promote the artists they like. The whole site is dedicated to this mission (ReverbNation, 2012b). It makes use of it's own music player, yet it allows the possibility to share the individual song on other social media. There is also a free download function for those bands that upload their songs to be shared for free. There are also other options such as viewing the lyrics to the song. On the right hand side of any artist profile there are stats showing how many views and song downloads and listens the band has had. This is very useful for labels that can see how popular a band is. There are also ReverbNation charts showing what's popular amongst its users at the moment. To view the complete information regarding live shows and location, biography or the full song list, the user has to click links leading to different pages from the main website.

ReverbNation is probably the best music promotion website available yet. It's constructed in a way to make great use of social media like facebook, twitter, and google+. Unfortunately it does not cater for artist discovery by the user. There is no comprehensive artist list, so new artists can be discovered either by viewing what's popular in the rankings, and therefore, what other people have already discovered and are listening to, by performing a search for a specific genre, and by linking from the

favourites on an artist's profile. ReverbNation makes use solely of its media player in preference to a youtube player. This includes viewing both videos and songs from the artist. As a result, all shared links will be redirected to the ReverbNation player, which doesn't provide the user with more song samples from the same or other artists. EdoCeleste uses artists to make a joint effort at promoting the websites joining in the project, and not providing further songs, or other artists to listen to the user feels like a loss.

2.6.5 Spotify

Spotify is an Internet radio service which is free at the start, and goes on to the requirement of a paid membership after a certain amount of use. Paid usage also makes use of no advertisement and a higher bit rate for streaming of music. Spotify requires the use and download of software by the same name. Once the user downloads the application, they can connect to other users on social media like facebook and twitter. Here they will see what these other users have been listening to and what's on their playlist. Songs are shared via the application only, either by direct sharing between user to user by sending songs through the inbox option, or by sharing on facebook. This service hinders optimal viral promotion because all those wishing to listen to a song must have the Spotify software program otherwise they wouldn't be able to use it (Spotify, 2012).

The songs listened to on Spotify would be available even when offline, however if the user does not join a paid account, the songs will be deleted after automatically after a sampling period. This is also against the purpose of Economics of Free where users are given some songs for free in order to attract them to listen to more of the artists' music. It is also very dependent on android phones and other technology such as the iPad. The users who do not have a smartphone, or who do not wish to use Interent on their cell phones wouldn't be able to make full use of the service. Although it hosts a number of artists, its search for new artists is limited to genre and suggestions from friends, and there is no complete list of artists available.

2.6.6 CD Baby

CD Baby was started in 1998 with the aim of connecting fans to the artist, whilst showcasing new talent. Every sale from CD Baby is a sale directly from the artist, so fans know that when buying CDs from this site they are supporting their favourite artists. The site claims over 300,000 artists under its belt. It offers a new way to look up artists through the use of their *'sounds like'* search under the explore music search bar (CD Baby, 2012).

CD Baby is mainly directed at music sales, so it does not have an artist listing, but the search by genre, and the *'sounds like'* option allow for searching for new artists and listening to their music samples before buying. On each artist's page there are also recommendations for similar sounding artists together with a search tab, which allows searching over multiple platforms. Although there isn't the ability to share individual songs, the artist's page is shared over social media. It doesn't make use of other social media like facebook, or more intensive attempts at sharing their artists pool. However this is understandable because whilst EdoCeleste is about giving away music for free to attract fans, and then gain revenue through live shows and endorsements, CD Baby is still all about selling music from the artist directly to the fans, so pushing their artists through viral promotion is not their main aim.

2.6.7 iTunes

Opened in 2001, iTunes was the first service to prove that monetization can be made through online sales of music. The iTunes store offers millions of songs available for download against a payment of 99 cents. Some artists have signed contracts for their songs to be sold at slightly higher and slightly lower rates. The main difference between sales through iTunes and sales of a physical CD is that the consumer can now chose to pay for the songs he likes, and not for the whole album which would have fillers; songs that are just placed on a CD to fill in the standard time of an album which is 50 to 60 minutes.

iTunes has diversified to the sale of other forms of entertainment such as movies and TV series. As a sales platform, iTunes is not designed for the discovery of music, or for the promotion of new bands. The typical user who logs into the iTunes store to buy music will target the artist or songs they were there for, and might end up buying songs off the charts as an impulse buy. iTunes does however allow for sharing of music samples on the platforms twitter and facebook, and offers the sales of music playlists compiled by the users themselves. iTunes makes use of a downloadable platform to function, so in order to access the service one must have both the program and an Internet connection. Whilst it doesn't serve as a music discovery platform, iTunes was the first program to cater for sales of digital music, creating a new era of profitability for music (iTunes, 2012).

2.6.8 4chan & 2chan

'4chan is a simple image-based bulletin board where anyone can post comments and share images.', (4chan, 2012). The majority of the content is dedicated to Japanese culture and media. The content is available in English. Similarly a Japanese version of this site, under the name 2chan exists (2chan, 2012).

Whilst these sites are useful in researching information about Japanese culture, a quick search indicates that currently there is no Visual-Kei post on 4chan (4chan, 2012). However, the difference between 4chan and EdoCeleste would be that the latter strives to work with the artists to provide official information and therefore, no rumours, and no comments from the fans. 2chan does feature multiple posts regarding Visual-kei and various Visual-Kei bands, however similarly to 4chan the posts are done unofficially by fans, and tend to be dedicated towards rumours from fans, with fan discussions raging from where band artists were sighted, to what they were wearing (2chan, 2012). This information is surely highly entertaining for fans, yet it is rarely obtained from official channels and most often altered during the course of conversations. Although there might be benefits for the fans using these communities it is also hard to do cross-promotion between various bands, because fans tend to create different communities for individual

bands. In addition information would be sparse, haphazard and dispersed, but the aim of EdoCeleste is to group official information in a comprehensive site.

2.7 Summary

Although Internet has aided in globalisation for a number of years, it keeps on being demonised for the loss of sales that have struck the music industry lately. Whilst most major labels seem to be content with their ongoing battle against Internet and piracy, other individual promoters and artists have learnt how to make a better use of Internet through the use of social media together with viral and cross promotion methods. Internet it just the latest stage in the stages of music sales evolution, however it seems that those who control the music industry are trying to avoid using it at their best potential so far.

It was relatively easy to find information regarding new promotion techniques and recent adaptations of them, however it was not as easy to find information regarding the situation of Japanese Visual-Kei. Due to my inability to access books written in Japanese I made use of books and academic papers written in English. In the short chapter dedicated to Visual-Kei the author tried to define Visual-Kei so that the reader might understand better why this genre was chosen for this research as explained in later chapters.

The second section of this literature review was an overview of existing music promoting platforms. It is important to note that most of these platforms require a form of payment, or prefer to make use of their own media players, in preference to more popular ones already in existence online for free, and therefore more easily accessible. EdoCeleste is aimed to being a free service. Other distinctions between these existing services and EdoCeleste were also made, and will be further clarified in the next chapters.

Chapter 3

Fieldwork

As shown in the previous chapter, there are a number of websites dedicated to the promotion and showcase of Japanese Visual-Kei music, however there is little data available in regards to online promotion techniques, site traffic, and use for these websites in regards to Visual-Kei. As a basis for the implementation of EdoCeleste, the data from the previous installation of this project called Renaissance Rouge was analysed, and once the correlations were noticed, the idea behind EdoCeleste was formed. Some interviews were conducted with those working in the Visual-Kei promoting industry and with fans, in order to better understand the demands from the fan point of view.

3.1 An analysis of Renaissance Rouge

Work for the creation of Renaissance Rouge started in November 2010, and the site was fully launched around January 2011. On February 11th 2011, site analytics were implemented in the site and maintained until August 21st of the same year. The data collected included the number of visitors, and new visitors to the site. The site analytics used at this stage logged the IP addresses of the visitors so that new visitors and repeat visitors were counted separately. During that time the website wasn't advertised extensively yet it still received a number of visitors from different countries. Below is a pie chart depicting the number of new visitors to the portal during the six months when site analytics when used. Out of the 241 first time visitors to the site, the top five visiting countries were, Japan, Singapore, Malta, USA, and France respectively. Whilst efforts were being made for a constant upload of up to date information to the site, and use of advertising through social media like facebook and twitter, analysis of the statistics obtained revealed that site traffic was peaking during the days when new information was added to the site. The statistics also showed that following this there would be a second lower peak of visitors the next day after the first peak. This was due to the musicians

blogging about news about them having been uploaded to the website, which resulted in more fans visiting Renaissance Rouge. Visitors were attracted from 29 different countries with Japanese and English speaking countries being the most predominant respectively.
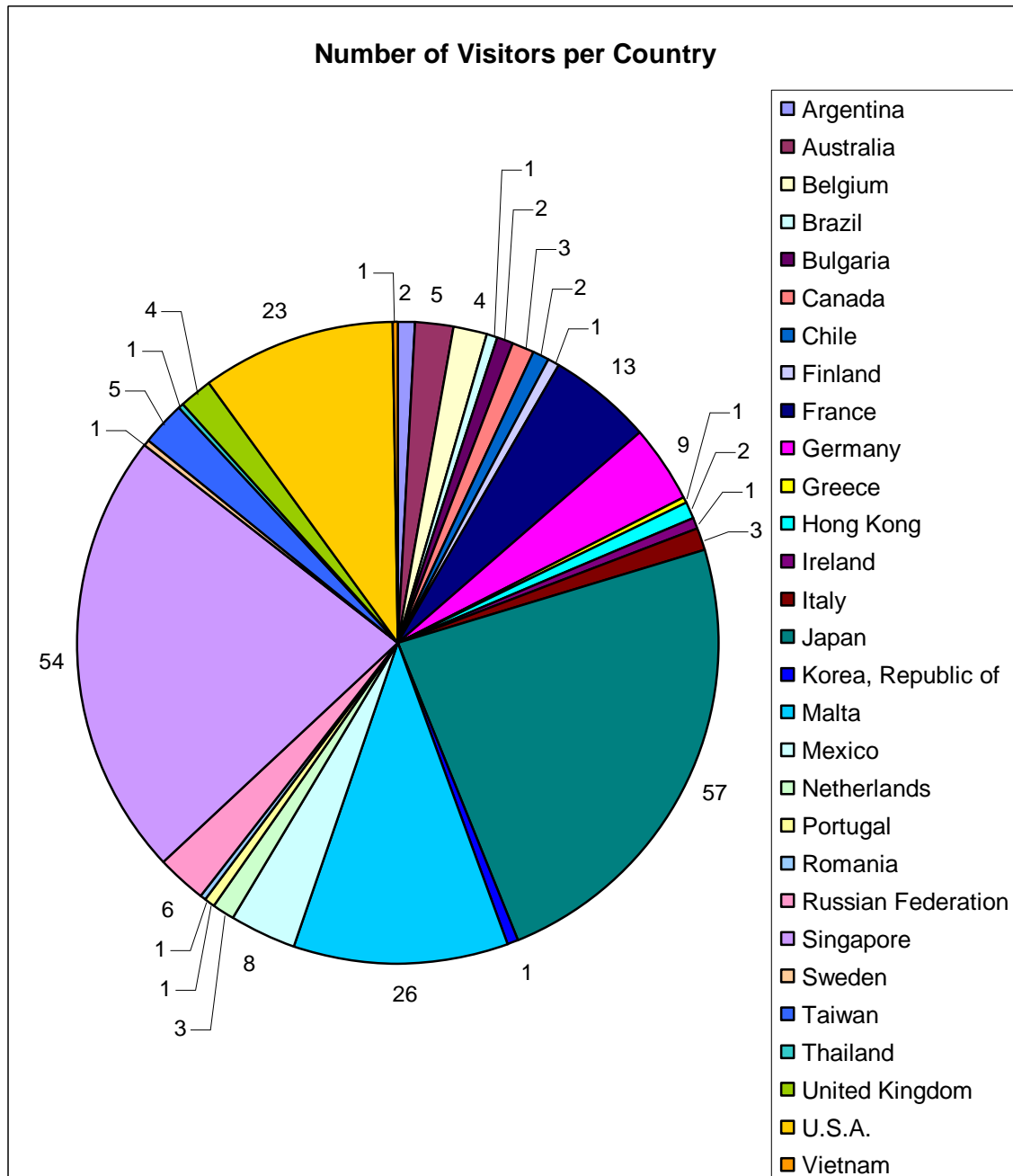
Figure 3.1. Number of visitors per country for the website Renaissance Rouge.

Another re-direction source to Renaissance Rouge was youtube. Promotional videos from the bands showcased on Renaissance Rouge were uploaded to the channel with the same name, and links to the main website were made available. During that time the youtube videos gained a following of about 3,000 persons. Although there is no data revealing the demographics of the visitors on youtube, there is data showing that the entrance site to Renaissance Rouge was achieved through youtube in some cases. The combined voluntary power between the website, the artists' sites, and social media, together with the use of *Economics of Free*, created a scenario where promotion for all sites and the artists was being maximised. New visitors were being attracted to the site constantly, so if supplied with the means to share information regarding these artists, the site visitors could cater for the promotion of the website in a continuous manner. Thus, the idea behind the conversion of Renaissance Rouge, a website dedicated to an online pay per view live streaming project, to EdoCeleste was conceived. The newly uploaded information would attract new visitors, which would be likely to view other artists, and by clicking on the name of any other artist they would be re-directed to a page containing information pertaining only to this artist. This is similar to information bombardment, but the design of EdoCeleste was simplified in a way to include as most information as possible without cluttering the site with information, making it user friendly and easy to navigate. Also, if a fan visits the site to find information about one artist, but ends up clicking the page of another artist, the viral promotion through *Economics of Free* that was used to attract the fan to the site, also catered for cross-promotion of the other bands hosted on the website. Therefore, an increased potential promotion value is achieved, and even though the tools powering the site are not new, their new use ensures a better potential for promotion that others have not attempted to use.

3.2 Interviews

Two sets of interviews were made and they both followed different structures. Interviews with those working in the industry followed an unstructured questionnaire, while the interviews with fans used the online survey made available on the website as a base, but were also conducted in an unstructured manner. A copy of this survey, a copy of the

questions used for the individuals working in the industry, and the interview transcripts are available in Appendices A.1, A.2, A.3, and A.4 respectively. The interviews were conducted online via skype in order to overcome geographic constraints and to allow participants to chose their best time availability for the interview. Besides the generation of their interest in Visual-Kei, respondents were also asked about the kind of promotion they would like to see from Visual-Kei bands, and what an ideal Visual-Kei promoting website should look like. From the industry point of view, Leela McMullen, who has worked for the website JAME and is the editor of Rokkyuu Magazine (an online magazine which covers only Visual-Kei bands), and Sarah Dworken who has worked with purple SKY, J-rock Revolution and EINSOF, were interviewed.

In cities like Osaka where major labels are not present, the Indies scene thrives more easily, and those who use social media like Ameblo and twitter are the ones who gain the most success (Dworken, personal communication, April 22, 2012). Bands who maintain a healthy relationship with their *kankeisha* (press) do also tend to be more successful (McMullen, personal communication, April 20, 2012). Even though it is dramatically advanced in technology, Japan has been very hesitant about Internet use. For instance, even though sales are being reduced, many bands refuse to adapt to the changing markets and are suffering as a result. *'Music will always be there, and it has to adapt to whatever is going on in the world today.'*, (Dworken, personal communication, April 22, 2012). The real competition, and product value lies in the live experience, which can be seen at it's highest potential in large venues such as Yokohama Arena and Tokyo Dome (Dworken, personal communication, April 22, 2012). International touring and international sales distribution might not be greatly profitable for artists because foreign distributors exploited these artists in the past. Since more minor bands have become interested in this sort of venture, these distributors need to lower their cut off percentage and become more viable for Indies bands. Therefore it shows the importance of being able to have a proven strong fan base in order to explain to the distributor that the risk they would be taking by paying money upfront to book venue and pay for flight tickets would be a calculated risk, and it would be paid back for (Dworken, personal communication, April 22, 2012). In order to achieve a fan base some labels decided to opt for video streaming channels, having partial clips instead of full clips, as an option to

pirating. Many fans, particularly those who found out about Visual-Kei first, and started sharing it with their friends abroad, would not have managed to find out about it had they not encountered Visual-Kei bands through then pirated music (Dworken, personal communication, April 22, 2012; McMullen, personal communication, April 20, 2012). Although there might be some information on youtube, most fans still don't know where to find accurate information about the band, like the biography, and some more details about their history, either because their information is written in Japanese and no one translated it, or because the information is simply not available. This reason was central into creating McMullen's Rokkyuu Magazine to supply these fans with information (McMullen, personal communication, April 20, 2012). Aside from straightforward information, the platform presented on must be one, which is easy to navigate, such as a blog, because websites with access of information make it hard for one to find information and discourages the fan from returning to the site in the future (Dworken, personal communication, April 22, 2012).

The fans also agreed that what they really want is updated information about the bands they like, with sharing functions. All of them also said that they make more use of un-official sites, like fan sites, and CD sales sites rather than the official website because Japanese bands, even when major, tend to have the information only in Japanese, or most of the information is provided first only to the fan club, and it's impossible to join the fan club unless one has an address in Japan (Abela, personal communication, April 20, 2012; Saliba, personal communication, May 22, 2012, Anonymous, personal communication, May 29, 2012). They also agreed that before even listening to a band they would have received information about them from some friends, or read about them elsewhere, and that their favourite medium for research was youtube (Abela, personal communication, April 20, 2012; Saliba, personal communication, May 22, 2012, Anonymous, personal communication, May 29, 2012). Extra information such as 'sightings' and knowing what the artists do in their daily life is an added interest for the fans (Abela, personal communication, April 20, 2012). Collaborations, or being seen with other artist, also help in the generation of interest for both artist, and from both fan groups (Abela, personal communication, April 20, 2012). Fans would also like more attention by their favourite bands, for example through follow up emails giving the fan the complete list of tour

dates, instead of expecting the fan to go on the website for more information (Anonymous, personal communication, May 29, 2012). Fans also understand that the artist cannot give away a whole album for free, but they'd like to have the ability to listen to one full song sample, instead of 30 to 45 seconds from five different songs (Abela, personal communication, April 20, 2012; Saliba, personal communication, May 22, 2012, Anonymous, personal communication, May 29, 2012). Whilst non-Asians seem to like to buy CDs for collection purposes, because they are a rarity and therefore more valued, the Asian fan said that iTunes Japan is inaccessible in Asia and therefore when presented between the option of paying expensive shipping for a band they're not huge fans of, or with free downloads, they'd rather go with the free downloads (Abela, personal communication, April 20, 2012; Saliba, personal communication, May 22, 2012, Anonymous, personal communication, May 29, 2012).

3.3 Summary of Fieldwork

Professionals from the promotion industry and fans alike agree that there is the need for the availability of information regarding Visual-Kei bands, in a format that allows for reading about, listening to, and official links for music sales to the bands. The preferred medium for discovery and listening to music seems to be youtube, with the main initial interest generated first through friends or interest in Japanese culture, which eventually led to discovery of local music scenes. As shown above, Renaissance Rouge gained a following from various countries, proving that the interest for Visual-Kei is indeed extended worldwide, yet Japan has been hesitant about easying purchasing and involvement abilities for foreign fans, so that sometimes fans can't even be told about tour dates unless they're in a fan club.

Promotion professionals agree that most bands take good care of their press and expect the press to give information to the band's fans. Indies bands will tend to be less covered by online magazines and press magazines, and the magazines that do cover Indies seem to get few followers, part of it being due to the lack of other information about these bands, such as the difficulty in finding audio and video samples of the band, or of finding other information about them. Artist and their management need to take a

definite stand as to whether they want to have official videos and full audio samples made available to the fans or not, because upload and removal by the label itself, within a number of days, confuses the fans.

Fans who have friends to share their passion with, and therefore feel involved in the tribe tend to be more active in purchases, and easy availability of purchases makes it easier for the fan to buy CDs or merchandise. The ideal medium for discovery is youtube because it allows the fans to discover the new band and listen to them at the same time. Fans also notice collaborations and cross-promotions between bands and it helps to generate interest in the other artists.

Regarding website use, both professional and fans agreed that an easy to navigate, non-cluttered site, along with sharing abilities is essential for artist discovery. Original content such as interviews from the fans or studio recording given only to the site would help to generate interest in such a website.

3.4 Motivation for study

It is now easier to tape, edit and produce a song than it ever was before. It is also less costly, and requires less manpower. At the start of the recording industry, the artist would have to make use of professional musicians who would produce and master a track. It is now possible for a person to record music and edit a song in one's own house. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of recording artists, the amount of music tracks available, and also in the number of consumers of music. The situation now is one where there is a lot of music available, and a lot of individuals who want to succeed through their music finding themselves incapable of having the media notice them. In most cases, artists who are already famous will be given preference over these new Indies artists, especially if they decide not to sign a distribution deal with any label. Thus, there is good quality music, but there are few sites willing to give these newer bands a chance at being heard, as a result, all advertising efforts fall solely on the band itself. However, if ten Indies bands with a hundred fans each are grouped together to provide constant buzz about each other, then each band will have acquired a 1000 potential fans. Not all of them will like the band and become a fan, but the band would have gained some more

followers, which they would not have been able to obtain through their own efforts. To the average individual it seems that there's only the artists who get signed to recording labels and show up on MTV and popular magazines. The truth is that for every band that succeeds there are another thousand who will never make it past their first album. This is a situation that is starting to change because of the current technologies. Technology has also changed the way we look for new music. Whilst before one would have to sit in front of a computer with an internet connection to download or listen to new music, today's android cell phones make it much easier for one to look up new music while travelling on their way to work.

Therefore it has also become easier for a band to be advertised internationally. Whilst some bands are very good at directing their own advertising strategy, most will get lost and won't know what to add or not add to their site, or how to begin writing an email to send to their fans. Another idea for EdoCeleste was having a guideline for the bands to follow so that their information is displayed in a readable manner. The aim of the artist is to attract fans first, but some might need to attract foreign distributors to be able to have a solid reach in other countries, so an accurate display of information is always important. Trends for music sales have also been changing. Money is being made through concerts first and CD sales second, so most bands will need to make contact with someone in anther country who would help them get all the documents and preparations they need in order to host an event abroad.

I've been helping Maltese bands for about seven years. This helped me to better understand the areas that a local band trying to go international needs help with. These bands gave away their music for free on their website, so fans attending a show for a new album would already know the songs and enjoy them more. Yet CD sales at the lives were still fairly good. For an event with 150 people attending, CD sales would be around 80 to a 100 copies. I believe that fans understand that one needs to support the band in order for them to continue doing their music. What I want to achieve with this project is the demonstration that Indies bands, as well as popular bands need to change their approach to music promotion, in order for both of them to succeed through bigger followings and an increase in sales.

Chapter 4

Design of EdoCeleste

EdoCeleste is a sub-project under the Pop Power Real Project in the Graduate School of Media Design, Keio University, Japan. It follows a design centric approach. Since the main aim of this project is global promotion of it's Visual artists, the project makes use of an online portal that enables knowledge of, promotion, and distribution, of the artists' music. The current protoype by the name of EdoCeleste, was co-designed between myself and Cheng Kok Pao, Cheryl. Together we discussed the functions this project would require, and then we proceeded to design the website and it's features. The programming and initial set-up was done by Cheng Kok Pao, whilst I contacted a number of Visual artists who might have been interested in the project and made arrangements for their involvement, collected information and prepared the information for upload onto our website. After Cheng Kok Pao's graduation, I took full responsibility of the project, and the maintenance of the site and it's social media. The website was updated with fully inclusive site analytics to obtain more data regarding the users and the visited areas in the site. As required by this new prototype full song samples instead of partial ones where uploaded when possible. The use of social media was also intensified and used in a better-adjusted way to cater for an increase in viral promotion. In the following sections, there is a list of features which would ideally be implemented to the prototype in order for it to be fully functioning at it's best potential. The final section deals with the explanation for a revenue model for this project.

4.1 Vision and Concept

Japanese Visual-Kei has been rising in popularity through the increased consumption of anime and manga. Demand for participation of Visual-Kei bands at anime conventions has also been increasing, and as a result the number of bands touring outside of Japan on their album tours has been on the rise. These opportunities have not only been made available for Indies bands like 'The Fool,' 'BLOOD,' 'The Candy Spooky Theatre,' but

also for more well known bands like 'L'Arc-en-ciel,' 'X-JAPAN,' and 'dir en grey,' who have toured outside Japan in the last year. As a means to improve international promotion for Visual-Kei bands, the development of an online portal is required. Besides promoting and showcasing the genre collectively, the website would also allow for buying options, and sharing options, so that information regarding the artist, and music samples might be shared through social media on multiple platforms. Fans however are still having various difficulties in regards to finding out, exploring and buying music from these artists. Therefore, the concept is to facilitate this transition by overcoming language and cultural barriers that inhibit international fans in their music consumption. To facilitate consumption of their interests, the online platform would enable (a) learning about artists, (b) consumption of music through full-sampling of songs or PVs, (c) direction to official music sales sites, (d) sharing on preferred social media, all within the same website, with the minimum number of re-directions (or clicks) possible. A model for the website is shown below in figure 4. 1.
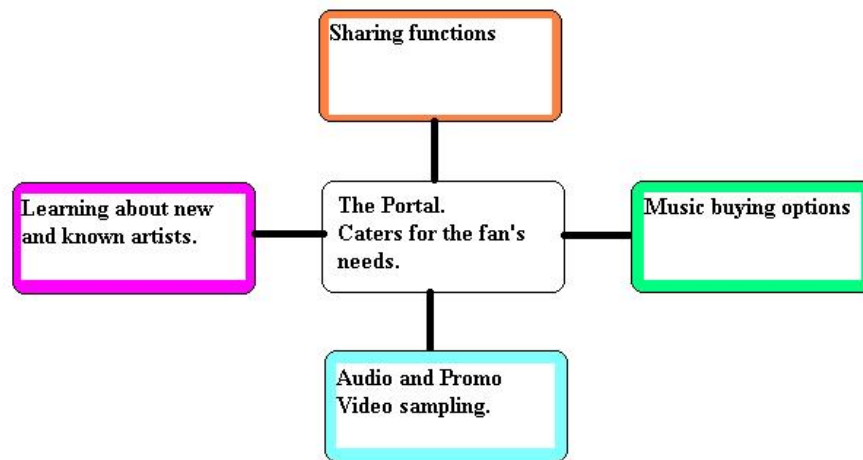
Figure 4.1 Model for the portal catering for various needs of the consumer.

4.2 Target markets

The website is designed to cater for fans worldwide yet it is mainly restricted to predominantly English speaking countries. The main targets include English-speaking

countries in Asia, Europe and North America. These areas already have some distributors for music and merchandise and have helped to bring Visual-Kei musicians to their respective countries for touring. The bands that are co-signed with these distributors have returned to foreign countries repeatedly, demonstrating the demand for these artists is high. Some of these bands include the bands mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, 'Moi Dix Mois,' 'Matenrou Opera,' 'SuG' and 'Miyavi.' The portal makes use of the interest generated in already popular artists, to generate interests for less known artists. Indies bands would gain more exposure to potential fans, and major artists would thrive through continuous buzz generation and support of their fans through tribalism. As discussed above, fans that are active members of a community tend to stay fans for longer periods and are more involved through concert attendance and purchase or merchandise.

Together this generates an extensive cross-promotion system which, supplied with viral marketing tools; namely the sharing options through social media, can reach a clientele far beyond the reach of the website, and therefore would help all those involved in the generation of more fans.

4.3 Competition

The competitors for the model of EdoCeleste can be distinguished on various levels. On the digital platform level EdoCeleste is the only one catering solely for the Visual-Kei genre through it's extensive use of sharing functions, and through the use of social media, such as youtube, that can be implemented within the site experience itself. Other competitors who might have been thought of as similar, such as Myspace, limit their sharing functions for playlists and their radio, or media player related to the site, and do not use popular media like youtube, which is easier to access and share. In addition EdoCeleste gives equal coverage to both Indies and major musicians, and therefore both have an equal chance at success, whereas on other sites, such as those mentioned in chapter 2, most of the focus tends to be on major signed artists. It also allows for purchase of music through multiple platforms and therefore one is not restricted to using the sales option of one particular site.

4.4 Prototype for EdoCeleste

The main aim for this project is to increase the amount of music consumption internationally, through increased buzz generation for the artists represented by EdoCeleste. To achieve this buzz, the website makes use of social media, such as facebook and twitter together with other platforms of youtube, to (a) facilitate the sharing options for all information regarding the artist, (b) prove to the artist that the transition between the current CD first sales model can be countered through the concept of 'Economics of Free' that generates increased interest and achieves monetization through different venues.

Facilitated access to the requests of fans, also aids in increasing sales figures. The portal aids Visual-Kei fans by providing information in English, allowing learning information about the artist, allowing for sampling of music and promo videos, allowing for a reliable purchase of the media, and sharing this information on their preferred social media. Thus the prototype for EdoCeleste caters for 360-degree needs for the fans, thus aiding the artist at getting better known. The ease of access of information allows for discovery of new bands, and therefore fans would be more inclined to look up, and listen to other bands because the experience is made easier for them, rather than when they have to rely on multiple fan sites with un-official and sometimes contradictory information. In addition, it would enable the fans to collect data regarding fan demographics and interest, and their e-mail addresses.

Below is an explanation of the structure of EdoCeleste and the relations between its inter-components. The following section deals with the explanation of the aspects that are necessary for the build-up of a fully functional model for EdoCeleste including; (a) an artist database, (b) schedules for upcoming releases and lives, (c) media player functions, (d) RSS feeds and sharing options via various social media, (e) data collection and market research.
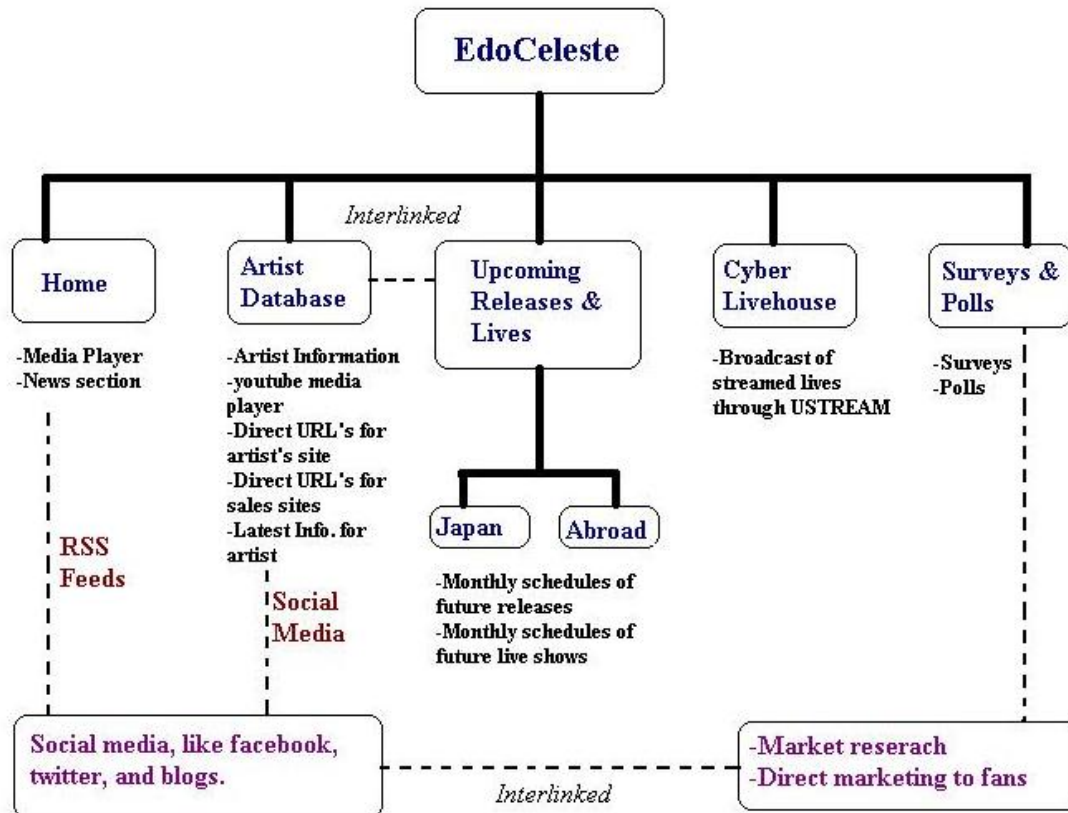
Figure 4.2: Structure of the EdoCeleste prototype.

4.4.1 Artist Database

An artist database is essential for the startup of a music promoting website. Unlike most other websites, this database is left visible on the home page, so that fans might be able to view the names of unknown bands, and therefore discover them. An artist database allows present and future fans an adequate systematic way of searching information about the bands included. Both bands currently recording, and bands on a periodical hiatus, or permanent disbandment are included. This is due to various reasons, namely, because even though these bands are disbanded, they still contributed to the genre with their own recordings and CDs. Other reasons include artists moving from one band to another, or doing collaborations with various artists. Updated information on an artist's current and prior projects generates interest for the fan who can get information regarding the whole transitional career of the artist, and it also allows the artist monetization from sales of media from prior projects. Such information is even more important to Indies bands

because the chances the new fan knows nothing at all about the band is high, and therefore information such as a band biography would be helpful.

Each artist database is also connected to a youtube media player for the showcase of songs or promo videos from the artist. For this reason, the audio and video samples uploaded on the channel mostly include full song samples. In other cases, the full sample was not made available for the media, and thus the artist's wishes for the divulgation of partial samples only were respected. Furthermore each page has direct links to the artist's official site, other sites authorized by the artist for sales of their merchandise, and a stream of updated information regarding the artist or band.

The artist database listing is constructed in numerical order first, followed by alphabetical order. To cater for an increase in the number of artists, a search bar and two drop down menus would be made available on the home page. The search bar would allow for direct searching in case the name is known. The two, drop down menus would include (a) a list of the bands in alphabetical order, (b) a listing of the bands by genre. Visual-Kei in itself represents various other genres, and distinction would make it easier for the fans to search artists within their tastes. A suggested artists or similar artists link would be present on each artist's page, and presented as an option when an artist's name is typed in the search bar.

The current choice of online stores mentioned on the site includes CdBaby, Amazon, iTunes, and personal artist's sales sites. The iTunes store seems to be the preferred medium for digital audio sales. Another favored site is CdBaby, which enables the customer to request the purchase of a CD single, or album directly from the artist. Moreover, the international availability of these sites reaches the target markets for EdoCeleste; North America, Europe and English speaking countries in Asia. Artists that include their full repertoire on such online sales sites, allow the fans greater purchase options, and therefore profitability chances increase. Whilst, a percentage of the total is transferred to the hosting service for payment, a bigger percentage of revenue from online sales goes directly to the artists, when compared to physical CD sales through distributors, thus, profitability for the artist is also increased.

4.4.2 Schedules for upcoming releases and lives

In conjunction with each artist database, information regarding upcoming CD or other media releases, and future lives is included. Information is listed both on the artist's page and on calendars made available for the upcoming releases and upcoming lives sections respectively.

Furthermore, the information is sub-categorized into Japan releases and Abroad releases. This is due to some artists choosing to make CDs available first in Japan, and on an international scale at a later date, and to divide tour dates between local Japanese ones and international shows. The calendars are available by month and date. The minimalist version of the calendar includes data from the current month and the following two months, yet, should it be required, schedules for a whole year, and therefore a full calendar can be included. Interlinking allows fans to click on the name of an artist live or release listings, to be re-directed to the artist's page.

4.4.3 Media player functions

As mentioned above each artist page has it's own youtube media player incorporated in the page. Ideally there would be two media players incorporated on each artist's page. One would enable for re-direction on EdoCeleste's youtube channel, and the second would allow re-direction for the artist's personal channel. In addition, each video would have a list of sites in its information section. EdoCeleste's player would have URLs to the site itself, and to the artist's URLs, and the artist's channel would have redirections to the artist page on EdoCeleste an their own URL. youtbe is the preferred medium because it's already available for free, it doesn't require the download and installation of a specific player, it can be embedded within the site whilst allowing viewing of other videos on the same channel, and it's easily accessible from android phones as well. It also has sharing options already included thus enabling sharing, which is a vital part of viral promotion and buzz generation.

A cyber livehouse section is also included for online-streamed live performances on channels such as USTREAM. Ideally this would be extended to the inclusion of a previously streamed lives archive that could be accessed by the fan on demand.

4.4.4   RSS feeds and other sharing options

RSS feeds would be included on the main page to allow the fan to view if any information is uploaded on other social media, and to allow the fan to subscribe to information from the site on other social media. Whilst traffic to the site would increase the following of users for the site, the main aim is to generate interests in the artists and not to generate interests in the site. Sharing on various media can also be tracked, so the number of times information is shared and where it is shared is also available, and that is important for statistical purposes. Moreover subscription to RSS feeds would allow for collection of e-mail address or preferred social media, such that bands may either mail information to the fans directly, or encourage them to subscribe to their relevant fields on their preferred media. The website would make use of a 'login with' function to allow logging in through the preferred social media before being able to subscribe to the preferred RSS feed, in the process collecting preferential data regarding the readers.

4.4.5   Data collection and market research

The last section, dedicated to surveys and polls allows for gathering data regarding more specific questions in target market research. Surveys and polls in this section would also have a share function, and participation would be encouraged through a prize give away from some of the artists represented in the site. E-mail collection can also be made through these.

Website analytical tools are also included and available for artists, promoters and distributors upon request. Location of a viewer, time spent on a specific page, entry points, exit points, and pages viewed can all be measured. Promoters and distributors could then measure the possibility of success for the introduction of an artist in a specific

country. Artists may also gather the data for presentation to labels and distributors for a showcase of the international number of fans they have.

4.5   Marketing of the site and the artists represented on it

To maximize profitability form the website, the minimum possible amounts of payment would go towards advertising, with free advertisements being prioritized instead. Such marketing would make heavy use of social media. In regards to paid advertising, use of online advertisement on google, youtube, and such, would be made use of. Furthermore, due to the site being targeted to the Japan specific relatively unknown genre of Visual-Kei, advertisements on sites catering to Visual-Kei would be appropriate. Free marketing is also possible on sites where fans gather, such as Livejournal communities, anime and manga fan-sites, and sites dedicated to the appreciation of Japanese Music.

Instead of making use of traditional advertising methods for the artists, namely ones where an artist pays to have their banner at the top of the home page, artist advertisement would be relevant to buzz generation. This is achieved by giving advertising priority to bands doing recordings, which supply information for upcoming live tours and releases. The combined efforts of all the bands are used to maintain an ongoing buzz about the site and all of the artists. The media player on the home page would advertise new information, such as a commercial for a new CD release, or tour. Therefore, since bands release their materials during different times, fans would be attracted to the site frequently in order to view release information regarding different bands, and bands would gain from continuous cross-promotion efforts that they wouldn't be able to gain as their isolated selves.

4.6   Revenue model

It is possible to maintain the website and it's content through the efforts of a single person. Therefore, the website is expected to make enough profitability amounting to the yearly paycheck of a single person. To attain this, the website would allow advertising on related media, such as advertisements on youtube. The artists making use of the site

would agree to supply the site with periodic original content in exchange for being enlisted on the site, and being advertised together with the site. Original content may include interviews, or recording of unplugged sessions or v-logs from the artists themselves. The main area of monetization would be endorsement deals.

Thus, the business model for this project caters for monetization for the site owner. There are monetization opportunities for the artists making use of the site as well, however these would require co-branding agreements, and the adaptation from the artists' side in finding new methods of monetization through viral promotion. As stated repeatedly throughout this thesis, Japanese artists need to adapt to new technologies and change their methods of doing business in order to become more successful. EdoCeleste is the platform intended to make these artists internationally well known. There are monetization attempts for the artists through sales of music and band merchandise through online retail stores. However, most of the new model's monetization schemes lie in intensifying the live concert experience and contact with the fans, since these are the customers for the items the artist is supplying. Therefore the site is intended as a bridge to create new opportunities for these artists who have failed to adapt to new marketing models.

The purpose of the site is to advertise various bands equally, and therefore no band is advertised in favor of another. In the same manner, if a band passes the requirements for enlisting on the site, they would be allowed to join for free. A band would then send press-package emails whenever new releases are planned. Use of website statistics would allow potential advertisers to see the use of co-branding their product with some of the artists. EdoCeleste would manage the contact between artists and investors, keeping a percentage of 5% or less as a commission charge. In cases where the demographics for the fans of a particular band match those of an investor, the latter would be willing to undergo co-branding, for example through inclusion of the sponsor's name on an artist's tour shirt or other merchandise. Thus, printing of merchandise would be cheaper for the artist, the sponsor gains advertisements for it's target market with relatively lower cost, and through a trusted source (the artist), and the site gains a commission for bringing both parties together.

Chapter 5

Implementation

The existing prototype model for EdoCeleste can be accessed online at http://www.edoceleste.com. The project is still in development at the time of writing, however some aspects have already been incorporated and functioning. These include (a) the online platform of EdoCeleste, (b) an artist database, (c) release and live schedules for the artists, (d) media players on each artist page. The site is also available over social media including facbeook, youtube and twitter. These are viewable on the portal via the 'links' section.

The platform is made available online for digital distribution. Here users can discover information about bands they know or bands they might be interested in, whilst consuming the music, both through viewing the samples and buying the merchandise.

The artist database re-links to individual artist pages from the home page. Each artist page has information regarding the artist, such as genre identification, a biography, related URL's for the artist's site and online retail sites, a media player, live and release schedules, and a discography.

Updated release and live schedules for the artists are also made available. Each one is categorized in a separate section respectively. There are further sub-categorizations for local Japanese markets and international markets, so that it is made easier for fans to know when tours are going to be made outside Japan, and when Japanese releases will be made available internationally. The search function is displayed in a calendar version where the user can chose a month and a specific date to view the updates. Dates on the calendar having updates are marked in a different colour so they are easier to spot.

Media players hosted on youtube are embedded in each artist page enable the user music sampling. In addition the users are allowed to view the looks of the artists as well. This player is updated with new song release samples whenever new material is made available to the press for review.

All the content viewable on the site has been provided and used with the consent of the artists concerned. The images, songs, and information uploaded belong to the

respective artists and their labels. Thus, EdoCeleste does not own any right pertaining to the copying and re-distribution of the content provided, and permission for use of the content was received prior to update on the site.

For it's start up, emails were sent to about 800 Indies Visual-Kei artists that might be interested in the project. Information regarding the project, it's function, and relation to a Real Project was explained. The artists who showed interest were sent a media rights release form and a terms of use contract to allow the use of their information and song samples made available to the general press. A copy of the terms of use contract and media rights release form can be viewed in Appendices B.1 and B.2. Artists were asked to supply the site with updated band images, individual artist images, song samples, PV samples, live performance samples, their full discography, and live show and future release schedules. In addition they were asked to supply links to online retail stores that carry their music. In cases where the artists did not have accounts with online retail stores such as youtube we offered to help the artist in setting it up.

Communication with the artists was very difficult. Some artists took around two weeks to reply to our emails, and some other cases took five to six weeks to reply to our emails. It would have been possible for the members of the project to supply the contracts, and talk to band members directly, yet, in Visual-Kei, the artist are usually unwilling to be seen by media or fans without their usual get-up, which in most cases requires hours of preparation. For convenience of the artists, the project members offered to show up at live shows for which band members would have had to be fully made up. However, the backstage for these live shows tends to be crowded with other bands getting ready, and artists do not want to be seen talking to the media outside the live house or outside the backstage area. This occurs for various reasons, including fan elitism, where fans might think that other fans are being given preferential treatment, and also because, if a band member is seen talking to someone for some time, fans expect the same treatment and will view the band member unfavourably if they do not talk to the fans in the same manner. In addition, the backstage areas, and public areas of live houses tend to be very noisy so it is difficult to carry a conversation in these places. Thus, our only method of communication with the artists remained through emails with the label owner, the band manager, or the artist who was in charge of media.

Artists were very hesitant to sign the terms of use contract and the media rights release form. Even though it was stated that the site would make no profit out of the materials supplied, and that artists can chose to stop being part of the project at any moment, artists were still unwilling to sign these contracts. In an effort to make this process easier, we asked the artist to send an email confirming their interest in joining the project as written proof of consent, and therefore no contract signing was required. Reasons for which artists might have been hesitant to sign these contracts might vary, yet the suspicion is that the artists perceive these contracts as a give away of their rights, and are therefore afraid of signing them. Bands were unwilling to supply data regarding sales per album and participation at lives as well. This is most likely due to the competitive nature of the music industry. The number of people each live house can accommodate is generally known, however it is easier for viewers to assume that the live house was almost full, rather than that the band only had a participation covering half of the area. Agreeing to divulge the numbers for either fan attendance would be an uncomfortable action for the artists and therefore no data was required in exchange for their advertisement on the site.

To ensure timely updates for new releases and live schedules, bands send press package emails to the administrator of the project. Following this updates about new information were made available on the site within two to three days. Below is an explanation of the implemented information and media on the site. It can be mirrored to the site map viewable in figure 4.2.

5.1 The online platform of EdoCeleste

The website was created through the use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). Site analytics are included through the implementation of a JAVA script code. Previous members of the project and myself did the artwork design. The website is design is kept simple to ensure quick identification of all the components and one click reach of all sub-sections within the site. The home page hosts a list of all artists participating in the project; the viewable artist database, an information bar through which other sections can be accessed, a main media player hosted on youtube,

and a news section displaying artists for which latest updates have been done. The youtube player advertises bands that are about to release new material or have just done so. Pages catering for upcoming lives, upcoming releases, a cyber livehouse, and surveys and polls can also be accessed directly. Future developments of the site would include RSS Feeds over various social media on the right hand side, and a search bar and share function icons, both included on the upper information bar viewable in the home page.
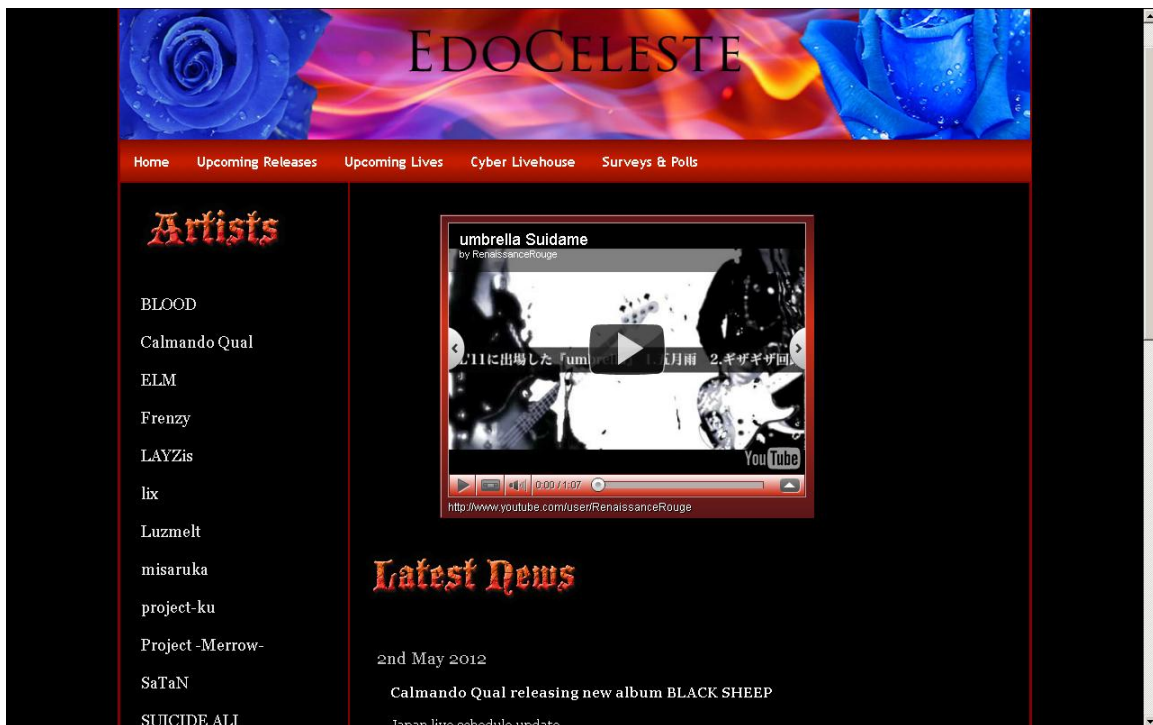
Figure 5.1: EdoCeleste platform home page.

5.2 Artist Database

Currently the artist database hosts 18 artists, with each name linking to an individual artist page in the database. This database is displayed on the website as highlighted in figure 5.2 below. Artist's information is categorized in two sections, the first displaying the band name, group picture, genre, part of the biography, media player, URLs and the live and release schedule. Viewers check this first section more frequently as opposed to the second section; therefore this information is displayed first. The second section can be accessed through the 'read more' link on the main artist page. It hosts individual band

member information complete with pictures and a band or artist biography. The reasons behind this information being placed on a second page are (1) not to clutter the main artist page and, (2) because band biographies change at a much slower pace than release schedules fans tend to check them only rarely.

The basic information for the artist remains predominantly fixed, so updates for live and release schedules are the most frequent. Updates to the artist photography are done whenever the band issues a new look, and biography updates are also made whenever a band reaches a new milestone, such as a foreign tour in a new country or new album release. Music releases are also mirrored by a youtube player update, to showcase the samples to the artist's fans as shown below.
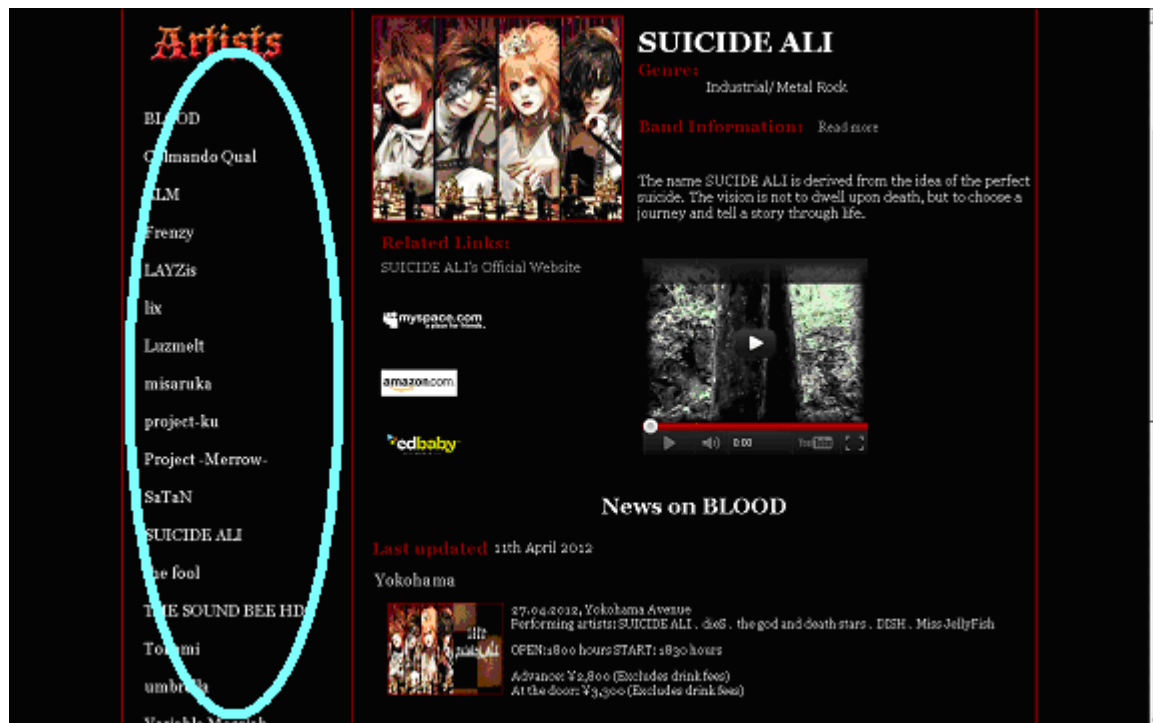
Figure 5.2: Artist page on EdoCeleste.

5.3 Live and release schedules

Live schedules and release schedules are accessible from the information bar on the main page. Scrolling over either of the options presents the viewer for a Japan market or foreign market view of the schedules. This is aimed to make things easier for the foreign

fan because in some occasions, release dates for Japanese and foreign markets differ. Live schedule dates are different for both Japan and Abroad sections. On the Japanese live schedule updates, the city of Japan in which the live show will be performed is always indicated. Abroad schedules are maintained collectively due to the low number of shows, therefore categorization by country would just make this schedule harder to view. On each update the country, city, and venue of performance are listed.

Information for each section is viewed through the choice of a calendar month. Viewers can be more specific in their choice and view a specific date. Dates with updates are always shown as highlighted in the calendar. The name of each artist in the updated schedules is interlinked to the artist page, allowing the user easy redirection.

Figure 5.3: Live Shows in Japan page.

5.4 Cyber Livehouse and Media Players

The Cyber Livehouse section is dedicated to bringing the live concert experience to foreign fans that cannot go to concerts. It makes use of USTREAM live podcasts. The USTREAM system is so that it's media player can be embedded on other sites. This

section is updated whenever USTREAM hosts a live show for Visual-Kei or special interview sessions with the artists. Below is an example of what the page looks like when content is about to be shown. In this case the program about to be shown was a live interview session with the Japanese Visual-Kei band 'ViViD.' In addition USTREAM hosts pay per view concerts with a better viewable quality. Such concerts are also embedded on the cyber livehouse page whenever available. The main aim of the Cyber Livehouse section was to reach an agreement with USTREAM and the artists represented on EdoCeleste in order to showcase their concerts. Another aim was to host an archive of past Visual-Kei shows so that new artists would be able to access them easily and view them against a payment. There were multiple attempts to contact USTREAM personnel, however none were successful. In addition communication with the bands was always slow so that it might have been difficult to arrange and agreement between USTREAM and these artists.

The media player mainly used throughout the design of this site is youtube. It has been used to embed song and promo video samples in all the artist pages, and on the main page. The player for the main page is updated with full songs when only one artist is doing a release in a specific period, and with multiple song samples when various artists are doing updates together. There is also a youtube channel for EdoCeleste that goes by the name of Renaissance Rouge as it was carried over from the project with the same name. There are various benefits for using youtube. The service is free, easily accessible, and it is not necessary to download the program for use. The user can enter EdoCeleste's youtube channel within one click, to view updates on the other artists as well. In addition, it allows viewers to see a list of other song samples from the same or different artists once the first video is viewed. Access on the youtube channel platform allows the user to see related videos on the right hand side, allowing fans to try out new artists from the selection provided.

In future improvements, more songs and promo videos would be uploaded on the youtube channel for each artist. Furthermore, each artist page could also be updated with their personal youtube player, yet at the time or writing, most artists do not have their own youtube player. In addition youtube has proven very useful as an entry point for the

website itself. During the first installation of the project where the site had gained 241 original visitors, the site's youtube channel had gained over 3,000 hits.

Figure 5.4: Cyber Livehouse.

5.5 Surveys, polls, and marketing options

Surveys and polls from the site and from the artists are made available in this section. Figure 5.5 is an example of a survey being displayed to the site users. Polls and surveys for bands that need a bigger response would be made available within this section against a payment. This possibility would also be made available to third parties that might be interested in reaching a crowd of Visual-Kei fans for retrieval of information.

In addition, information about the users of the site and their navigation preferences are being collected through the implementation of site analytics. Examples of visitor reports may be seen in figure 5.6. Other information gathered includes the user location by postcode and country, length of visits per page, and entry and exit points. Such information would be made available to the third parties mentioned above to

provide further monetization options for the site. The interested would include foreign distribution labels, concert promoters and organizers, and foreign labels.
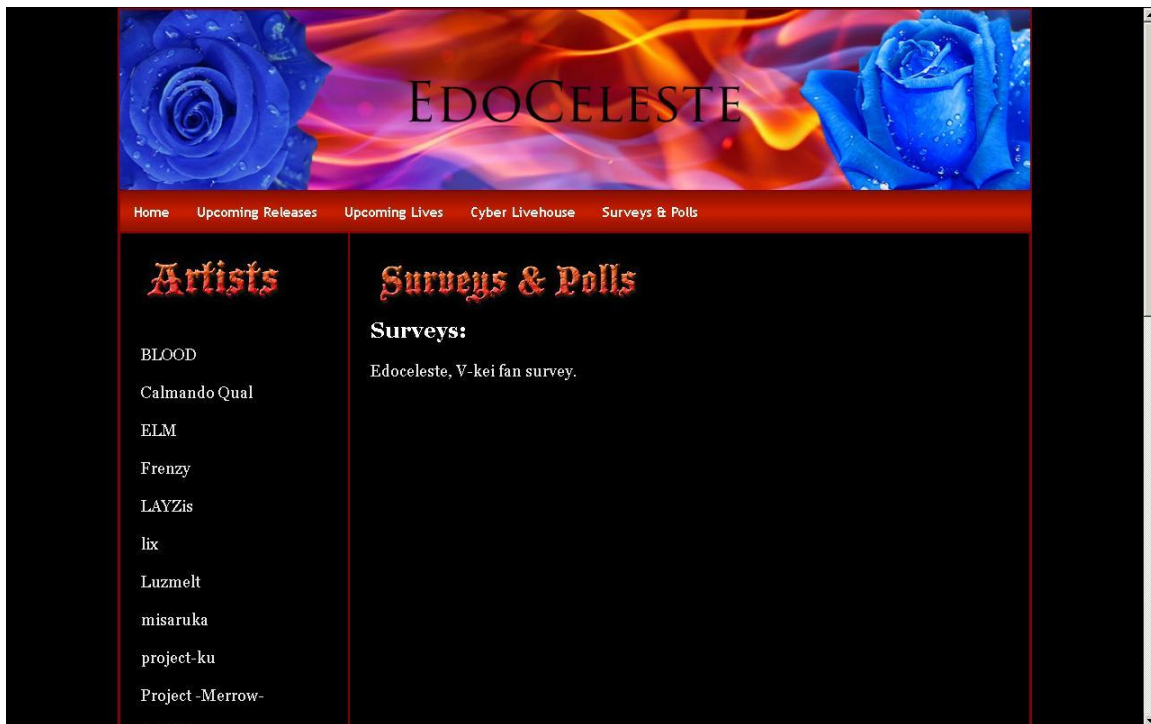
Figure 5.5: Surveys and Polls page.
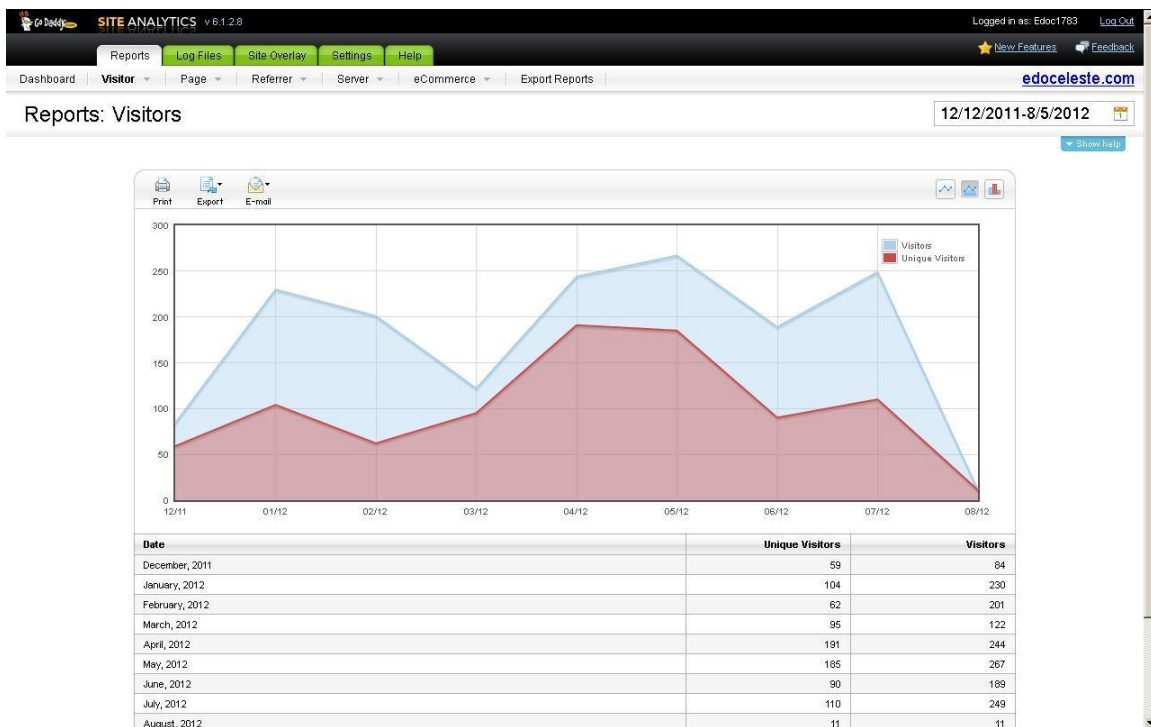
Figure 5.6 Site Analytics page for www.edoceleste.com

5.6 Social Media

Updates from the EdoCeleste platform have been made available on social media including facbeook, twitter and youtube. They are viewable in the links section of the main portal. Future implementation for such social media includes embedding on the home page in more viewable areas, together with RSS feeds. The latter would be made available both as feeds from EdoCeleste's social media on the main portal, and available as blog updates for those who would prefer to view updates from the site on their blog reader. Updates on the main site are always followed by social media messages on these platforms in order to inform the respective followers of updates. Besides attracting a number of individuals to the site, social media also serve as a viral promotion platform. Information from the site is linked on them, and viewers are allowed to share the linked information on their own pages and other preferred social media.

In addition, once original content such as video blog interviews from the artists would be made available, social media would be used as a login requirement to view the content. This would enable a collection of usernames that would be used for promotions.
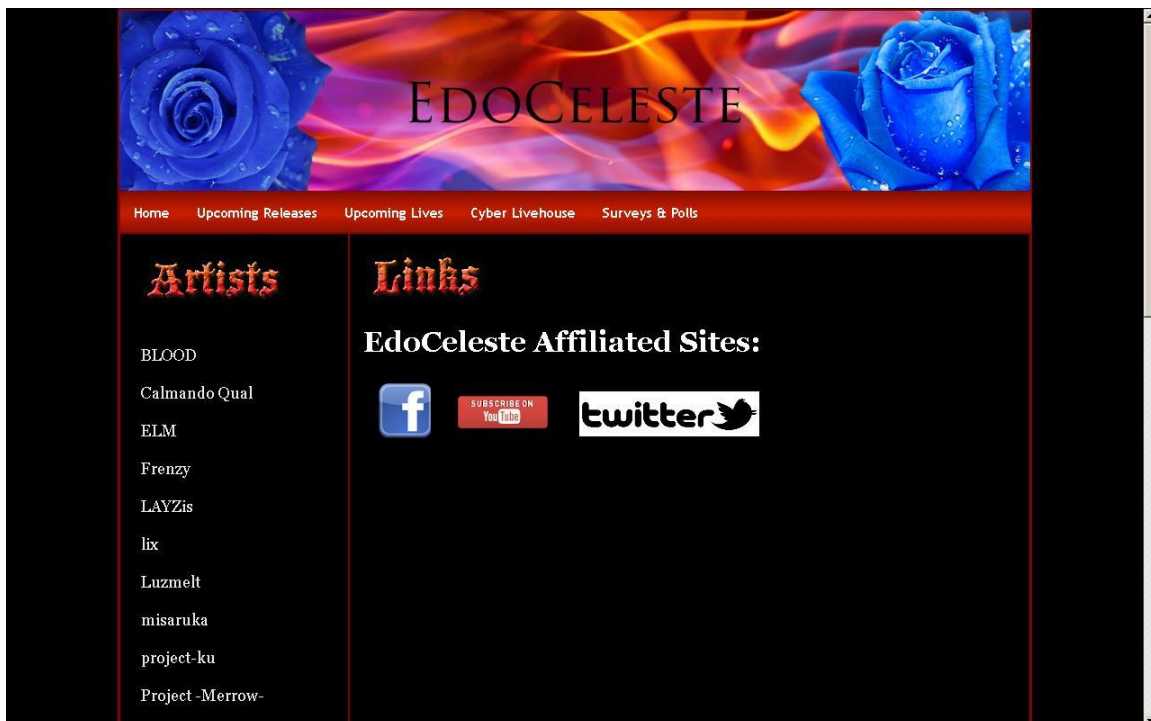
Figure 5.7: Social Media.

Chapter 6

Evaluation

EdoCeleste is aimed at promoting the Indies genre of Visual-Kei. Whilst the genre has been gaining popularity outside of Japan for many years, the bands that have tried to tour abroad and cater for the needs of their foreign fans are very few. Therefore EdoCeleste attempts to demonstrate the strength of this foreign market, with particular attention to favoured consumption trends and artist discovery trends, as both of these are expected to become even more competitive, leading to a change in artist marketing strategies. This is achieved through the implementation of features such as a main media player through youtube, viewable lists of Visual-Kei artists, and full song sample availability.

However artists seem hesitant in comprehending this model and applying principles such as giving away full song samples in order to attract a bigger fan base. They fail to realise that this music is most likely already available for download and that they have to tend to their foreign fan base, and support these fans in order to make a profit out of it. Below is a discussion of the approaches and data gathering methods, used together as an effort to demonstrate the concepts behind such a comprehensive model.

6.1 Framework used for evaluation

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis were made use of for the analysis of the suggested model of EdoCeleste. Quantitative data was collected through the use of site analytics for the online portal of EdoCeleste from December 2011, through June 2012. Data from this seven month analysis displays entry and exit points from the website, as well as periods of increased traffic, which was notable during periods when new content was uploaded.

Secondly, an online survey was made available for the users of the EdoCeleste portal. Results gained from this survey are both qualitative and quantitative depending on the nature of the question as both open-ended and close-ended methods of questioning were used. The survey analysed the preferred methods of music consumption both

through purchases and song sampling, preferred methods for discovery of new bands, and the preferred use of media for both. As a second part of the data collection process in-depth interviews were conducted with some of the participants in order to provide a more objective cross-examination of the results. This was done so as to analyse any differences between the survey results obtained and the results obtained in the interviews, as the survey results have not been explained through traditional equations of statistical significance.

6.2 Evaluation of performance

Although only the prototype model for EdoCeleste has been made available online, a number of original visitors has been attracted through December 2011 till June 2012. As opposed to the prior Renaissance Rouge prototype mentioned in Chapter 3, this model has attracted three times the number of unique visitors and an increased number of repeat visitors. The peaks viewed in figure 6.1 represent the introduction of new data to the site. Table 6.1 displays the total number of visitors and unique visitors who accessed the site until the time of writing.
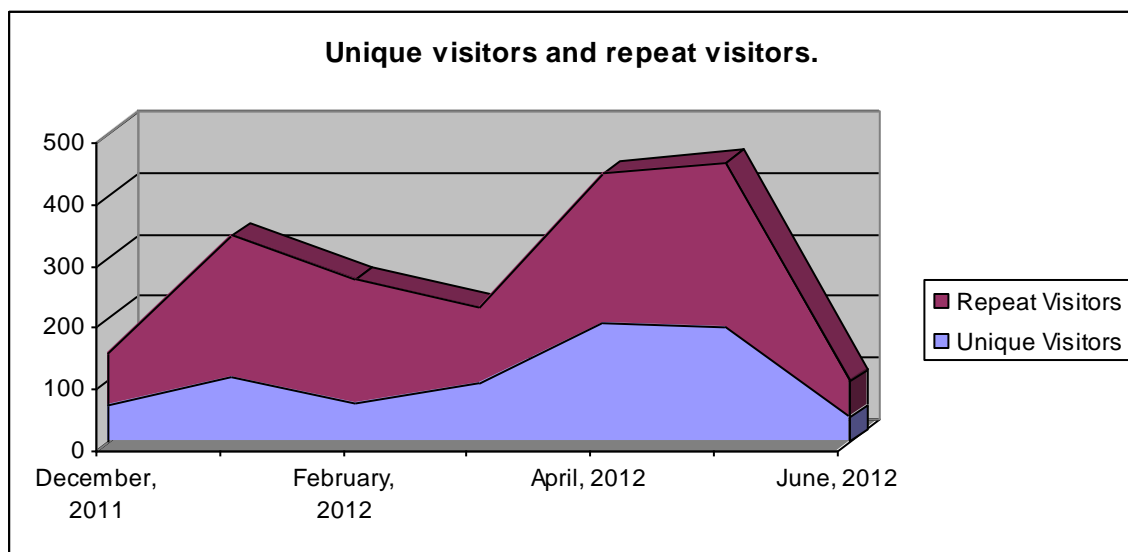
Figure 6.1: A display of unique and repeat visitors for EdoCeleste.

Table 6.1: Data for unique and repeat visitors.

Date	Unique Visitors	Visitors
December, 2011	59	84
January, 2012	104	230
February, 2012	62	201
March, 2012	95	122
April, 2012	191	244
May, 2012	185	267
June, 2012	40	57
Total	**736**	**1,205**

Visitors were namely from target markets, yet countries where English is a non-native language were also responsible for a great percentage of the visiting countries. Although there were no opportunities to have in-depth interviews with anyone from Russia or China there are reasons to believe the content was still viewed in English. This is due to the content being relatively simple so that anyone with minor knowledge of English could still travel through the site without a requirement of online translators. Also, the increased percentage of Russian users might be due to advertising on Japanese culture communities on the site livejournal.com. A Russian company bought Livejournal a few years ago and as a result usage by Russian individuals has increased. However the online communities used for advertising were still all viewable in English, so it is more likely that the viewers from non-native English speaking countries had some knowledge of English.

The United States had 352 visitors accounting for 29.21% of the total number of visitors, followed by Russia with 329 visitors accounting for 27.30% of the total number of visitors. 175 visitors from Singapore represented 14.52% of the total visits, 157 visitors, making up 13.03% of the visits were from China, and the fifth most visiting country was Japan with 48 visitors accounting for 3.98% of the total visitors. Thus, the top two visiting countries, U.S.A. and Russia accounted for almost 60% of the visits by themselves. A pie chart depicting the percentage of visitors per country can be viewed below in Figure 6.2. Results from EdoCeleste varied greatly from Renaissance Rouge (as seen in Figure 3.1) where Japan was a predominant country in regards to the number of

views, indicating that the editing and marketing of EdoCeleste to appeal to foreign markets was more successful.

The peak in visitors was achieved during the month of May 2012, when three new bands were added to the website due to the record label featured on EdoCeleste adding these artists to their catalogue. The highest peak had 267 visitors with 185 unique visitors, demonstrating how the constant addition of new information is vital for traffic maintenance that also plays a part in cross-promotion of the bands represented on the portal.

Entry points for the site varied, however facebook was a major access point, as well as blogs from bands advertising their showcase on EdoCeleste. Figure 6.2 displays one such example. Whilst facebook contributes to an ongoing interest in the site, blogs by the artists represented coincide with the dates new data is uploaded on the site and therefore contribute to the peaks in number of visitors.

Data for exit points such as youtube is not available due to the technical issues, however statistics for exit points for the URLs listed were available. These are made viewable in Appendix C.2. A number of viewers have been re-directed to either the official artist website, or online retail stores like iTunes, Amazon, and CdBaby.

Figure 6.2: Artists featured on EdoCeleste blogging about their releases being on the site.

Visitors per country

- UNITED STATES
- RUSSIAN FEDERATION
- SINGAPORE
- CHINA
- JAPAN
- MALTA
- Unknown
- GERMANY
- UNITED KINGDOM
- NETHERLANDS
- POLAND
- CANADA
- FRANCE
- FINLAND
- SPAIN
- SWEDEN
- MEXICO
- BRAZIL
- INDONESIA
- REUNION
- CHILE
- AUSTRALIA
- PORTUGAL
- SLOVAKIA
- SLOVENIA
- AUSTRIA
- UKRAINE
- CROATIA
- BELGIUM
- MOLDOVA, REPUBLIC OF
- BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
- HUNGARY
- HONG KONG
- CZECH REPUBLIC
- SAUDI ARABIA
- ISRAEL
- SERBIA

Figure 6.3: Percentage of visitors per country.

Although EdoCeleste represents only a fraction of the available Visual-Kei bands, fans of the genre still seem very interested in finding out information about new and upcoming bands. The markets reached varied extensively beyond the target market of North America, Europe and parts of Asia, indicating the high interest and market possibilities for Visual-Kei.

6.3 Survey

A survey was created and made available online both through the website, and on social media. Participation was that of 101 respondents from the 736 unique visitors for the website. As per the code of ethics, names and emails were not collected, and respondents were allowed not to answer questions in cases they did not wish to. The survey was focused on questions regarding band discovery, music consumption, and site use of EdoCeleste. The questions used in the survey where:

1. Age
2. Country of residence
3. Do you consider yourself a fan of Visual-Kei music?
4. If yes, what other genres of music do you like?
5. Do you buy music from artists you like?
6. If you answered yes above, which format do you prefer and why?
7. What factors hinder you from buying music and merchandise?
8. Where do you find out about Visual-Kei bands?
9. Did you ever notice that some bands take pictures with other bands or blog about them?
10. If you answered Yes above, did you ever try out these other bands?
11. Did you ever INTENTIONALLY try to look up new bands on your own?
12. If yes, where do you look them up? Please select all that apply.
13. Have you ever come across new bands, without intentionally looking for them?
14. If you answered Yes above, where did you find out about these bands?
15. Would you like it if looking up visual kei bands you don't know of was made easier for you?

16. What would make it easier for you to find out about these new bands?

17. Do you think that bands should give away some of their music for free in order to attract more fans and allow you to hear exactly what they sound like? I'm talking about whole songs and promo videos not 20 second clips.

18. Would you still buy items from the band, or consider buying items from the band if they gave away more items for free? Explain why.

19. Viral promotion is aimed at spreading information and music from a band everywhere to try to increase their popularity and increase their fan base. Hopefully increasing the number of people who pay for their music in the process. What do you think of viral promotion?

20. On EdoCelste.com we are trying to include direct links to buy music from your favorite artists, their full discography, samples of their music and/or videos and pictures together with links to youtube. How easy does this make it to discover new bands and what they sound and look like?

21. Therefore do you think something like EdoCeleste.com, on a larger scale, would make it easier to discover bands? Please discuss why in either case.

22. Do you have any suggestions regarding the design, function, or future works of EdoCeleste.com?

The data was analyzed and categorized for different themes for better understanding. A transcript of all the answers received to the survey is available in Appendix C.3. The results are discussed below. In an attempt to offer a better understanding of the survey results, results are cross-examined with a second set of in-depth interview, viewable in Appendix C.4 and collected once the survey was closed.

A second survey was made available for the bands participating in the project. As mentioned above bands have shown hesitation about divulging sales information. The survey did not ask for any of this information. A copy of it may be viewed in Appendix C.1 None of the copies sent to the artists and label owners were returned. Furthermore, bands that were active in their email replies started taking longer time for their replies following the email where the survey was sent.

Interviews were also done for cross analysis. This consisted of a set of four interviews. Two participants, Kate and Yumi also work in the Visual-Kei related

industry, while the other two participants, Neko Hako, and Rosa M. have been fans for a number of years. Interviews were conducted over skype due to time and geographical constraints.

6.3.1 Methods of music consumption

Ages for the survey respondents were from 14 to 43 years old, with the majority of the respondents belonging to the 19 to 23 year category, followed by the 24 to 28 year old category. This might be explained in terms of consumption where it is easier for someone who is working or gaining an income to consume Visual-Kei music through magazines, CDs and DVDs. 33% of the respondents were from U.S.A., followed by another 33% of those who answered being from European countries, thus as expected from a website using English most of the viewers are from English speaking countries.

93.07% of the respondents felt that they were Visual-Kei fans, and 6.93% felt they were not fans of Visual-Kei. 96.04% bought music from the artists they liked, whereas the remaining 3.96% did not. This latter value was accounted for by four respondents, two out of which had answered that they do not consider themselves Visual-Kei fans, demonstrating that fan participation and tribalism plays an important role in music consumption through sales. Even if one considers themselves to be a true fan there are other factors that effect sales. These include the intensity of touring, pricing, and the amount of money that a fan can put towards purchasing items from the band, including tour tickets (Barnes, 2011). As explained by Neko Hako, *'I can't really afford to go to every show… I'd go to every show if I could afford it!'* (Neko Hako, personal communication, July 29, 2012).

Visual-Kei also encompasses many styles within itself. Besides this, it is also an Indies genre, typical only to Japan. Therefore, Visual-Kei was used as a representative model for global Indies genres, particular to specific non-English speaking countries. Results from the respondents indicate that users listen to a great number of styles in addition to Visual-Kei. 21.29% also listened to rock music, 17.33% listened to metal music, 16.83% listened to pop rock, and followed by 11.14 % that listened to pop. The rest listened to further varied styles of music including, Goth, hip-hop, rap-rock, Death-

Metal, Indie, Techno, Classic and Opera to mention a few. This indicates that the assumption by all music websites that listeners are only looking for music in their related genre of interest might be wrong. Listeners are willing to entertain themselves with other genres of music, and better-known music websites like Myspace do not cater for such choices. Listeners can search through other genres for artists they might be interested in, but there isn't a radio player catering for varied genres, instead media player options available only allow for a showcase of those in a related genre, or those who sound like the artist being listened to. This is a new market, which EdoCeleste aims to cater for in the fully functional model.

As mentioned above, those who consider themselves fans of Visual-Kei tend to be active in their consumptions through purchases. Their preferred method of purchase is through CDs. Reasons notably given for this are due to possession and physical collection purposes. Moreover, fans appreciate the work put behind the creation of CD cases from Japanese Visual artists. Most often these include jewel cases and special designs for the booklet and the CD, thus increasing the value attributed to them by fans. Some of the respondents also made use of digital downloads, however only 2 respondents said they purchased digital downloads only. The reasons given for preference of use of digital downloads included the more affordable prices, the ease of use, instantaneous availability, and the ease to move it to other media such as an ipod. Therefore Indies genres that produce high quality products might be an area major labels should target more in the future if they wish to increase their CD sales. It was also brought up that digital downloads through iTunes are not available through iTunes Asia, since iTunes Japan and iTunes Asia make use of two different stores, and there are different distribution rights for each. Whilst the reasons behind this might be due to label distribution, shipping to Asia is still expensive, and shipping times are still lengthy since the items would be leaving Japan. It is important for distributors to release rights to these areas in order to increase their digital download revenue. Interviewees also agreed that there needs to be better distribution deals in order for fans to be able to have the options of paying for their favorite artist's music (Yumi, personal communication, July 29, 2012; Rosa M., personal communication, July 29, 2012; Kate, personal communication, July 30, 2012, Neko Hako, personal communication, July 29, 2012). This is even more

detrimental in the cases of bands such as 'Versailles Philarmonic Quintent' who have been experimenting with digital only distribution (Versailles, 2012).

When asked about factors that hinder them from purchasing music, respondents claimed that the unavailability of items in their local stores was a major detrimental factor, followed by the expense of shipping, and the expensive prices of the CDs themselves. The last economical crisis increased the price of Japanese CDs compared to other countries, and this seems to have affected purchasing trends by consumers. Additional customs fees in many countries increase the actual price per item when shipped from Japan, or from any foreign country. Respondents also marked how it is relatively easy to download music without paying for it, yet this was not the main hindering factor for them not purchasing merchandise. This reveals that the music sales venture in Japan might still have many other options to rely on, and one of them is an increased distribution in foreign markets. Even though it is easier to download music for free, fans are still willing to pay for music, yet if merchandise is not made more easily available for them as per Chris Anderson's Long Tail Theory, the maximum potential for sales would not be reached (Anderson in Owsinski, 2009:55). An interviewed fan also sustained that high prices make them be more careful with their buying options, which become limited to must have items like an anniversary single (Rosa M., personal communication, July 29, 2012).

6.3.2 Music and artist discovery

Respondents were asked to identify the sources that they use for discovery of music. In case of Visual-Kei, use of websites showcasing various artists was the preferred method of research at 29.6%, together with use of blogs at 19.56%. 21.45% find out about new artists through their friends. Anime reached the 4th position for discovery of new music and bands at 9.46%, closely followed by magazines at 9.15%. Another reason for this might be because countries like Italy that chose to dub anime often change the introduction and end songs for anime, which are sometimes made by Visual-Kei bands. Furthermore due to an increase of interest in Japanese culture, there are a number of

existent magazine publications, such as the German Orkus Magazine, which talk about Visual-Kei bands in their publications.

Fans also noticed bands taking pictures with each other, or blogging about each other. 83.16% of the respondents chose to look up these bands, proving that cross-promotion between bands, through cross-promotion of pictures and blogs about each other, and collaborations is useful in the case of Visual-Kei.

youtube was the preferred medium for new music discovery both when respondents willingly looking for music, and through chance findings. 24.56% of the users look up music on youtube intentionally. 17.08% of fans look through the music of bands belonging to the same label, 16.37% look up other artists in related genres as suggested to them by the sites they use, and 13.88% and 12.10% use visunavi and other websites respectively for looking through lists of Visual-Kei bands for artist discovery. Collectively this adds up to 25.98% implying that having easily viewable lists of the artists is as effective for promotion as the use of youtube. Interviewed fan and ROKKYUU magazine contributor Kate agrees that with youtube one does not only get to see material from known bands but is also presented with suggestions of new bands, aiding fans with new artist discovery (Kate, personal communication, July 30, 2012).

98.02% of the respondents admitted that they do come across new bands without intentionally looking for these bands. Once again, youtube was the medium of major responsibility for this at 25.72%. In this case, websites listing their full lists of artists were more useful for unintentional discovery of new artists. Visunavi accounted for 9.78% and other websites accounted for 17.03% of this, amounting collectively to 26.81%. Visunavi and other websites having viewable lists of their artists were listed down as separate options in the survey because Visunavi is the only site completely in Japanese dedicated to Visual-Kei artists, and whilst most of Visual-Kei fans know about it, only those able to read Japanese use it as navigation is in Japanese and most bands names are listed in hiragana or kanji. Even in this case, websites having a full list of artists were accountable for more a greater percentage of artists discovery as compared to youtube video use. Respondent number 12514445 idealizes the intention behind this as replied for question no.15, *'Sometimes I find other bands in the midst of looking up info on a different band.'* Fans are more willing to look up new bands they do not yet know of

if viewing this information is made easier for them. The aim of promotion is to provide opportunities to the bands that they wouldn't have been able to obtain on their own. The music fan will ultimately decide whether they like the music or not, yet, in either case, the band gains exposure which is vital for artist success.

6.3.3 Viral Promotion

Viral and cross-promotion techniques are a main stress on the finalized model of the site yet at the time of writing they are only partially implemented in the project. Thus, users were asked for their thoughts about such methods of promotion. 83.84% of fans admitted that they wanted the process of band discovery to be made easier for them. In order for this to be facilitated fans would like the availability of more full song samples 19.64%, and the availability of more full PV samples 17.86%. 17.09% of fans would like all of this to be available on the official artist's site, and 12.76% of the respondents would like this to be made available on other websites. It is observable from these results that fans believe that ease of access to music, both in audio and video form is necessary for artist discovery.

Furthermore interviewees pointed out that with the current culture of free, fans expect to be able to get a certain amount of items from the band for free. Restriction of circulation of free items, not only hinders these artists from creating new fans, but also discourages overseas buyers from purchasing music. In addition giving away some music for free would help create a connection with the fans (Kate, personal communication, July 30, 2012). The belief is that Japan views the Internet as a brooding spot for pirating and are therefore very hesitant about what is provided online for free, because they're fearsome of copyright infringement and of their rights being abused. (Neko Hako, personal communication, July 29, 2012). Free items from these bands are already officially unavailable so now it is up to the bands to compete with the existing viral promotion market by legalizing viral digital distribution on their official channels. As explained by Rosa M. *'Either way, people are going to get it illegally so may as well provide them with a legal source.'* (Rosa M., personal communication, July 29, 2012).

82% of fans surveyed would like artists to give away more music for free. Amongst reasons for disagreement, the rest of these 18% of fans cited their fears of items being given away as a sample CD at a live, and therefore they wouldn't be able to acquire the music, and fear that other fans might not buy music if it's available for free. Those who would like an increase in the number of media made freely available explain that due to the expensive nature of the items added to shipping and customs costs, they would like to have more than a 45 second sample from two or three songs of an album before putting an order through. Fans that are ensured that what they will buy will be of high quality also stated that they would be more willing to purchase items from the artist. Fans also believe that this is a way for the artist to show respect for the fan, and to show appreciation for the support received from the fans. In case a whole album is made available for free, fans would be willing to spend the same money on merchandise. Above all, respondents noted that they had to listen to the music before they became fans. Although they know which other sources to use to get the music for free, they buy CDs and merchandise because they want to support the artists. Respondents also said how they don't necessarily want free downloads to be made available, but free songs via existing media, for example with the band having an official youtube channel. Thus the positive replies from the respondents can be represented by a response to question no. 19 saying:

'1. If they invested money in me recording a song and giving it away for free, I would feel a need to give them something from myself, so that they can keep on offering free music without any loss for them. 2. Easier access to music means more time to think do I like this band enough to buy something from them. Shipping costs are horrendous; therefore I can't afford buying things I don't really need.'

Respondents agreed that an ideal use of viral promotion through legal online availability of songs and promo videos, and fewer restrictions on channels such as youtube through the creation of official channels by the artists, and the non-removal of unofficial videos, would be a useful source of promotion for the bands. They agree that marketing of targeted strategized viral promotion is necessary for the continuous

attraction of new fans. It is however important that viral promotion is allowed to follow a natural progression through sharing by fans, rather than having the artists themselves attempting to do viral promotion in an aggressive way such as guerilla marketing used by major artist who put up advertisements on billboards, trucks, and TV commercials. This is consistent with Dentsu's AISAS system (Sugiyama et al., 2011:80). Respondents cautioned about the overuse of viral distribution through making all songs from a single or album available for free. Fans require the songs for sampling, first, because as admitted, they found out about the band because they listened to their songs through illegal downloads or friends, and secondly, because fans feel the need to know what they are buying, otherwise they are unwilling to spend a substantial amount of money of a CD.

6.3.4 User evaluation of EdoCeleste

In order to identify the use experience of EdoCelsete, fans were asked to rate the website with 1 through 10 starts (question no. 21). The results obtained were as follows:

Table 6.2: Number of stars given by users and relative percentage value.

No. of stars	Percentage
10	17.84
9	10.03
8	22.3
7	4.68
6	5.35
5	31.22
4	3.57
3	3.68
2	0.45
1	0.89

The average rating for the website and it's use was 69.51%. However, when asked if EdoCeleste would make artist discovery easy, 82.76% of the respondents answered positively. Those who answered negatively explained that their reasons for not liking the website were mostly content centered. Even though 18 artists are showcased on the

online portal, 16 of these belong to the same label that already makes use of some online promotional tools and is known for touring abroad. Thus most Visual-Kei fans would already have heard about most of these bands, leaving the other two bands showcased, 'LAZYis,' and 'elm' as relatively unknown bands. In addition even though bands were willing to participate in the project they only allowed the use of song samples or already available promo videos for showcase on the website, therefore most of the fans were likely to have already sampled the same song through the official artist's blog.

All of the interview respondents agreed that they expect this project to be successful, and said they find it useful, particularly in the area of artist discovery for international fans (Kate, personal communication, July 30, 2012; Rosa M., personal communication, July 29, 2012; Neko Hako, personal communication, July 29, 2012; Yumi personal communication, July 29, 2012). Fans in Japan are presented with the opportunity of an audiovisual discovery of new artists during live shows where multiple acts perform together. As Kate noted the site offers a similar artist discovery option for fans outside of Japan (Kate, personal communication, July 30, 2012). There was also a common consensus that the site needs to grow in number of artists, and that original content such as original artist messages are necessary in order to attract users to the site and gain exposure. The inclusion of various artists creating a one-stop portal catering for fan's needs was found very attractive, particularly when presented with the opportunity of viewing full samples, as officially allowed by the artists concerned (Kate, personal communication, July 30, 2012; Rosa M., personal communication, July 29, 2012; Neko Hako, personal communication, July 29, 2012; Yumi personal communication, July 29, 2012). Other suggestions include a bulletin board for fans to come together (Yumi, personal communication, July 29, 2012). The lack of '*drama and fangirling'* viewable on most fan comminutes aids in creating a better experience for the site users and Visual-Kei fans (Neko Hako, personal communication, July 29, 2012).

For the in-depth interviews, further questions about the artist database were asked. In regards to the artist database it was acknowledged that it enables easily available information regarding bands. The availability of disbanded bands also helps with acquiring information and music concerning bands that formed from previously disbanded bands. Concerns about it included the requirement of availability of grouping

by genre. The fact that individual artist pages have viewable artist images was also considered an asset since some fans look at the aesthetics of a band before deciding to read further about them (Kate, personal communication, July 30, 2012; Rosa M., personal communication, July 29, 2012; Neko Hako, personal communication, July 29, 2012; Yumi personal communication, July 29, 2012).

Fans acknowledged that they like the ease of navigation through the information of a band, and simplicity is the key. It offers a summarized, straight to the point version of what fans want to know, all in one place, making it very useful. It is also facilitating in the artist discovery process because most often users do not know where to start when they want to look up new bands, and therefore a place where information is collected and displayed easily would be of great aid. In their opinion, if the website were to grow through the number of artists showcased and thus rise in popularity, the portal might be of a guidance value towards the showcase of new bands. Users also stated that they like band discovery being available on other sites besides record label's official sites. This way they can discover artists from different labels without having to navigate through a number of different sites. Similarly, most often fan sites display only selected sources of information, such as the discography only, or the biography only, and fans would usually have to visit different websites in order to find information pertaining to one artist. Users also appreciated the availability of links to authorized sales sites because obtaining artist material is sometimes hard. A user who also speaks and reads Japanese also explained how such a site would have made Visual-Kei discovery easier in their beginner days, even more necessary for the non-Japanese speaker.

Participants were also asked what other features they would like to see implemented in the site. Besides a larger artist database, users would like the implementation of a search bar and classifications of the artists by genre, increasingly in depth biography reviews, related genres and similar bands tagging, original content such as a video blog from some artists, contests for the users, and the inclusion of shopping guide reviews for different sales sites comparing their prices and ease of use. Suggestions about the artistic design included the inverted use of a black font over a white background, and a more professional build-up for the site. Some of the artists included

are making use of the iTunes store in Japanese only and they would prefer if the international store would also be made use of both for language and purchase purposes.

6.4 Summary of evaluation

The functional prototype for EdoCeleste has managed to attract users in its target market of North America, Europe and other English-speaking countries, with about 50 per cent of the visitors being repeat visitors. User peaks coincided with the upload of new content to the online portal and blog posts about the uploaded content by the related artists.

Data gathered from the user survey and from interviews is similar to the data gathered for fieldwork analysis. Visual-Kei fans are a group of music consumers willing to purchase music from the artists they like, mostly via the tangible form of a CD for collection purposes. Their initial phases of discovery happened either by word of mouth through friends or by chance discovery. Those who developed an interest for the Visual-Kei scene fulfilled their interest by searching for other artists and information regarding the scene. Their preferred media for discovery is youtube, with other websites having an extensive artist database taking second place. Fans who purchase music from their preferred artists would like the ability to sample some of the music from the artists before buying an album. This does not necessarily mean that they want to listen to the full album prior to buying it, but listening to songs from the same band, helps in the decision of whether the fan enjoys the music from the band at such a level to proceed with a purchase. Chance findings are an important part in artist discovery.

Genre identification in Visual-Kei is also redeemed as important, and whilst Visual-Kei denotes the aesthetics for most bands, genre identification varies greatly within the scene. Fans find tags identifying the genre for a band important, yet their particular choice of Visual-Kei proves that aid for band discovery should go beyond the related genre tag to include different bands. This allows the user freedom of choice in their discovery that might generate interest in a new and completely different genre of music.

Respondents are inclined to have free full sample giveaways by their favourite artists, however most of the participants hope that this and other methods of viral

promotion are specifically targeted and not used in guerrilla advertising strategies, which would turn promotion efforts into the usually discarded bombardment of information.

Users of the online portal seem to like the simplicity of the design including most of the information required for the divulgation of news about upcoming artists on a comprehensive website. Fans seemed particularly responsive to the availability of youtube media player having song samples from the bands. In addition the categorization of foreign lives, and the inclusion of URLs for online purchase of music were also appreciated. Thus the design accomplishes its aim of including the information requested by the fans, in a simple yet comprehensive format. Song sampling and discovery is greatly aided by the inclusion of youtube as a media player, and the inclusion and use of social media for viral promotion strategies would be more successful when the website is improved through the inclusion of a larger artist database and thus the inclusion of more content.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

EdoCeleste is an online portal designed to aid the genre of Japanese Visual-Kei, its artists, and it's labels, into finding effective online marketing solutions for their international customers. The website acts as a secondary player who helps various artists come together to promote each other in unison. This combined action enables fans to discover more artists on a comprehensive website that allows for samplings of music, reading of information and purchasing music as well.

As a model for foreign fans that have no direct methods of music consumption, like attending a live show to discover a band, EdoCeleste insists on the availability of some full music samples per artist, in order to showcase their music to potential fans. Since most of the bands represented so far are Indies bands, the number of visitors they can attract by themselves is very limited. However, the combined effort at promotion gained through all these artists located in one site, ensures a greater inflow of traffic. Original target markets included U.S.A., Europe and other predominantly English speaking countries. Final results indicated that the extent of the website reached its target market and beyond, to include countries such as Russia and Singapore.

Results were obtained through the use of the functioning prototype model for the site. The ideal model includes an artists database, live and release schedules for Japan and abroad, a cyber livehouse for the showcase of live show recordings and streamed shows, URLs leading to the official sites of the artists, media players allowing song sampling for the fans, artist biographies and discographies, music buying options and sharing functions via various social media. There would be two media players, the first one including song samples from the artist and other artists, for cross-promotion techniques, and the second being a media player belonging to the artist only, so that fans might selectively target that artist only if they wish to do so. Database searches are done through a search bar and through drop down menu listings in alphabetical order and in genre order. Furthermore on each artist's page there are suggestions for similar and different artists. Fans would be

asked to log in with their preferred social media in order to share information regarding the artists or songs, and their log in information would be used for marketing techniques.

With the current implementations and the number of artists represented, the number of visitors attracted was nonetheless high and more varied. It was already noted that Russia had an extensive interest in Visual-Kei due to famous artists touring there, however the number of visitors obtained from Russia was not expected due to language limitations. This might signify that the website has a potential to attract furthermore fans that the ones originally targeted.

Visitors seemed to approve of the design of the site, yet they would like to see more content, both in terms of new material, and in the number of artists represented on the site. The negative feedback regarding the artists was mostly due to most of the artists represented having already toured abroad in many countries, and been covered by some magazines and other sites. Whilst not having the means to sell music through the site directly, EdoCeleste tried to include URLs to leading sales sites such as the iTunes store, Amazon and CdBaby. Surprisingly most of the fans that responded to the survey said they would rather buy CDs than make use of the iTunes store in order to purchase music. CDs have a collectible value and additional features like exclusive jacket designs and posters given with them for free, whilst with a download one only gets the download. Fans who purchase music from their favourite artists are most likely to have heard music from their favourite artists, or from the CD they are purchasing, through illegal downloads before attempting to buy the CD. Reasons for this include the unavailability of merchandise in their respective countries which forces fans to purchases via online retailers. Besides the expensive costs of CD due to the increased strength of the yen, there are also shipping and customs charges to consider. One can notice how a CD might become twice as expensive by the time it reaches the customer, so those purchasing would like to be sure of the quality before committing to buy anything.

Thus, many fans responded favourably to the suggestion of artists giving away free full music samples. Fans suggested it would allow them to find out about music through direct artists channels instead of illegal channels, and it would represent a show of respect from the artist towards the fan. Fans also affirmed they would not stop

purchasing music from their favourite artist in such a case, and also that this might encourage them to purchase more.

Respondents also showed that their preferred method of artist discovery is through the use of youtube, and when using websites, a viewable artist database is their second most used method for artist discovery. Furthermore the statistics obtained for this research were obtained for both indirect and direct methods of artist and music discovery. This indicates that in either case, a media player that allows for sharing functions and various suggestions both during and after the sampling of the song is very important for music discovery. In addition, a viewable artist database ensure that artists might get visitors to their sites just because they are new or unknown additions, and fans are willing to read about them and give them a chance by listing to them.

In this era of guerrilla marketing, users are being bombarded with constant useless advertisement. Thus, it is important to reach the fans with personal marketing. In addition, fans that feel a sense of belonging in the fandom of an artist tend to stay fans for longer periods of time and purchase more merchandise. Therefore supporting the fans with free music samples has great retributive repercussions.

Furthermore fans suggested that monthly competitions for the users, like artist giveaways or original content like special messages from the artists would be an incentive to visit the site and participate in its sharing and discovery functions.

The idea behind EdoCeleste in its function as a one stop portal which provides (a) an artist database, (b) music sampling options, (c) music purchase options, and (d) the ability to learn about the artists showcased is viable provided there is a constant inflow of new information, and original information.

Finally it is important to note that this is a school project and therefore the artists who allowed us to use information agreed as long as no commercial use of their materials was done. In the even of commercialisation it is important to obtain written consent from all the parties involved.

7.1 Limitations

The proposed model for EdoCeleste has proved that with the appropriate marketing efforts an increasing number of Visual-Kei fans might be reached. However, as the model entails, artists and their labels should agree to stop attacking illegal downloads and make the best use of it by giving full song samples away to the fans. In the works of EdoCeleste the greatest limitation was trust and willingness to participate in the project, combined with artists not being willing to give away full songs for sampling options. Visual-Kei artists and labels tend to follow the traditional Japanese ways of using methods that have been tried and tested by all those before them, so emerging bands tend to stick to whatever older bands did in order to get famous. Due to the great revenue chances in the Japanese market itself, few artists have tried to monetize out of their growing foreign fanbase. In the competitive Japanese market where the demand might be larger than the supply, it is important to turn to other venues for profitability. Internet is one such option that allows artists to profit from a foreign fan base while constructing it to be as strong as their local fanbase. Nonetheless, as discussed previously, future monetization models will focus on the sale of concert tickets and merchandise, not on the sales of CDs and music as a main effort. This means that Japanese artists have to be ready to face foreign markets if they really want to survive.

Hesitation to supply full song samples for promotional purchases is understandable. With an artist database that hosted 15 artists initially and increased only by 3 more artists within the run of the project, artists are not willing to give away their songs and lose profitability. This would definitely have been easier had the site had more followers and bigger names in terms of artists. As for artists, it is also understandable from an artist point of view why they would not be willing to join a university project, even though they might opt out at any moment, and there are only visibility options to gain. A fully functional model would require great relaxation in the rights of the artists and this would entail sign contracts. It is also custom in Japan to have trusted contacts when participating in such ventures, and because it was impossible to even meet with the managers and label owners, or to receive any sort of feedback from them, it is also understandable why few artists were willing to join the project.

The biggest limitation however, was the author's lack of knowledge of website scripts, and thus the inability to implement in the prototype more functions that would have been viewable in the final ideal model.

7.2 Future Works

Besides an increase in the artist database and content available in the construction of the final model, it would be useful if EdoCeleste would be able to provide more opportunities for the global marketing of Visual-Kei. On the same note, as marketing methods are ever evolving it would be useful to research the area of band discovery as well.

As mentioned above, artists are going to have to start touring abroad if they really want to profit from their foreign fanbase. Ideally EdoCeleste would be able to become an active contributor in making this possible through the introduction of Japanese artists to foreign distributors and tour promoters. Additionally this model could be used for the creation and customisation of marketing strategies. It is more profitable for a band to sell digital downloads rather than CDs, however there is more profitability to be made out of CDs. For instance such marketing strategies would consist of the raise in price of CDs, catered for with a worldwide availability of digital downloads of music.

Another suggestion would be to pursue the same model as the proposed model of EdoCeleste for other music subcultures worldwide. Whilst viral marketing and cross-promotion might be vital in the thriving of the Visual-Kei industry, other promotional methods might be more effective in the case of other specific genres of music. A combined knowledge of functioning marketing strategies for different music could be used for the creation of a site with a similar purpose of EdoCeleste, but targeted for the distribution of a greater number of music genres.

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Appendices

A.1 Questions used as a base for the unstructured questionnaire with Industry Professionals

Industry Questionnaire

1. Name:

2. Current Position:

3. Time spent in Position:

4. Previous Position if any:

5. Time spent in previous position:

6. For how long have you been a fan of visual-kei?

7. Is it hard to promote visual-kei online?

8. Language as a barrier?

9. How do you promote bands in your magazine?

10. Do you cater only for direct promotion?

11. Are you familiar with viral promotion?

12. And viral-promotion by third parties?

13. What do you think about Edoceleste and the service it's offering?

14. What would you change or add to it?

A.2 Transcripts of Interviews with Professionals working in the Visual-Kei promotion industry.

McMullen Leela. April 20th 2012.

Joan Bonnici: So how long have you been a fan of vk for?

Leela McMullen: lol Four years this June.

Leela McMullen: Short, huh?

Joan Bonnici: yeah it's kind of a shock, i expected you to have been into it way longer than myself

Leela McMullen: lol Yeah... I get hooked fast.

Joan Bonnici: same here, it started with one band and look how it ended

Leela McMullen: Of course, I liked Gackt since being an anime otaku made me watch Vanilla and I was exposed to Dir En Grey a while back, too.

Leela McMullen: But officially, since June 2008.

Joan Bonnici: June 2005 here

Joan Bonnici: just before dir toured in Europe for the first time

Leela McMullen: Actually, I had been avoiding visual kei because I suspected I would get hooked but I was already too busy with all my other hobbies (which fade in comparison these days.)

Joan Bonnici: yeah I know the feeling, somehow going to lives takes up most of our free time

Joan Bonnici: it's fun stuff too

Leela McMullen: I just tend to have a bit of a onetrack mind once I get into sometihng.

Joan Bonnici: How important are anime and manga in introducing VK?

Leela McMullen: Actually, I think four years is a record for me.

Leela McMullen: Do you mean in introducing people to VK?

Joan Bonnici: Yes, sorry.

Leela McMullen: No worries.

Leela McMullen: Well now that I look back, I realize that the drawing style and characters in my favorite manga are all 100% VK based! The author used to write a column in the back, too and she talked about how one of the characters was based on the vocalist of a band which I now understand must have been L'arc or another older VK band.

Leela McMullen: Anime on the other hand, a lot of people get into the music they hear as theme songs and because the bands themselves often love anime, it gives the fans something in common with them which builds interest.

Leela McMullen: That was one of the things that intrigued me about bandmen at first. They're all so pretty but such interminable geeks.

Leela McMullen: Just like me.

Leela McMullen: I mean, the geek part, of course.

Joan Bonnici: Having something in common with the fans is important in marketing yourself as a band, but isn't it also important to elevate yourself above the fans, to make yourself look unreachable and untouchable, just like most of the famous rock stars?

Leela McMullen: Well it depends on the goals and images of the bands.

Of course the biggest bands have that, but even they are surprisingly willing to bring themselves down into the fans' reach. Look at YOSHIKI on twitter. Of course, it's possible he doesn't always write his own twitter, but knowing YOSHIKI, all those posts about chocolate and nurses and the innumerable replies to the fans... He just wants to love them loving him.

Leela McMullen: also, the many instore events etc. give fans a chance to learn about what kind of people the band members are. In a normal genre that would probably be detrimental, but in visual kei, it tends to increase the number of fans who like a certain member which in turn increases the number of fans of the band.

Leela McMullen: Sometimes fans like a band just for their members, music or not. Maybe that's sad, especially when there are VK bands out there with incredible music, but if it helps the genre to stay afloat then by all means they should encourage that sense of closeness.

Joan Bonnici: How do you use the same closeness Japanese fans manage to experience to the foreign audiences though?

Leela McMullen: I think that can be more dangerous. Japanese fans generally have a clear limit. They won't touch a band member unless it's invited for example, whereas the second time Dio played in Finland they apparently had to make a pre-show announcement not to go sticking hands inside the members' pants.

Leela McMullen: Also, foreign fans tend to take it more personally than the Japanese fans. 'eigyou' as a business technique is understood by Japanese fans even if they turn a blind eye but to foreign fans, there's no such concept and they might mistake a bandman talking to them as an advance rather than encouragement to continue supporting the band.

Joan Bonnici: Which in turn gives a negative impression of foreign fans to Japanese fans, and shocks the band members themselves into staying away from dangerous fans right?

Leela McMullen: Well, I think some bands actually enjoy the sense of freedom overseas, though. Maybe no so much in the face to face dealings, but definitely during concerts.

Leela McMullen: I think that's the image they tend to focus on rather than that of foreign fans crossing the line.

Joan Bonnici: Do you think ignoring such behaviors is also good for promotion? The things that work for generating a buzz about the artist in Japan are different than those that work abroad. So if the fans here that a fan managed to get close to a band member that will generate a lot of talk about the band, mostly fan girlish and positive I'm afraid. The same thing in Japan would be viewed very differently no?

Leela McMullen: Well jealousy can be a big issue, more so in the Indies scene than when a band gets bigger. In the Indies scene, many fans enjoy the delusion (or sometimes reality) that they might be able to get close to the band but the bigger a band gets, the more innocent that delusion becomes. It changes from "I want to get him alone so I can give him presents that will entice him off to a love hotel" to "I want to shake his hand and tell him how much his smile makes me melt because that will make him happy." So, of course, if fans who are in the near vicinity and thus 'in the running' learn that someone else has gotten in before them, that's going to instantly damage not only the band's reputation but also their fanbase.

Leela McMullen: In the minor/Indies scene of course.

Joan Bonnici: But in the major scene no one really cares?

Leela McMullen: Well I think many people are resigned to the fact that major artists are likely to meet some gorgeous successful Gravia model and make beautiful talented children together.

Leela McMullen: At least, that's the image.

Joan Bonnici: When Indies manage to tour abroad, it gives them some of that 'moving towards fame image.' How hard is it for vk bands to tour abroad?

Leela McMullen: Well almost every band wants to go abroad but they simply may not have the opportunity. First the have to catch the eye of a promoter and these days there are fewer of them than there were with the world economy not doing so hot. Currently, Europe is a much more viable market than America, though and the conventions give bands a chance to show their faces but a tour means they have to either have enough fans in different countries to justify hiring the hall and the travel costs, or have enough fans willing to follow them from country to country - even from Japan.

Joan Bonnici: What about distribution of their goods abroad?

Leela McMullen: Well there are companies such as Cool Japan who will take care of that for a fee. Of course, the company managing that business expects to make a profit so the band is better off to focus on distribution in Japan where they have better control.

Joan Bonnici: But, Cool Japan is sponsored by the Japanese government itself in order to promote Japanese music. What about foreign distributors like CLJ records? What makes them decide to pick a band and distribute their merchandise or help them tour abroad?

Leela McMullen: The official answer? Or the truthful one? lol Officially, it's the numbers a band brings in. However, they will often look at the numbers in Japan which they can obtain far more easily than information on how popular a band already is overseas. The truthful answer? In many cases, someone within the company likes the band or knows the band and wants to help them out. Visual kei is a labor of love.

Joan Bonnici: So basically it means that the band that is nicest to their fans and has somewhat of a good relationship with them, will manage to get a foreign tour?

Leela McMullen: Not necessarily. Some bands are assholes to their fans but that just makes people love them more. lol Keep in mind that there is a huge goth/emo market within the VK genre. Some girls are just gluttons for punishment.

Leela McMullen: However, the bands that take care of their 'kankeisha' do tend to succeed.

Joan Bonnici: ok, so it just means the band with the hottest members will manage to tour abroad?

Leela McMullen: Well if you look at the statistics... That's more accurate.

Joan Bonnici: haha I see. So how actually important is the quality of music in VK? Fan wise, and band success wise.

Leela McMullen: Well it's more important these days than it used to be. Less musically painful bands are rising in the scene and those who are good are beginning to get recognized. However, you can really see the past influence of looks when you look at who stands at the top of the official VK scene these days (official being 21st century VK rather than 90s bands like X and LUNA SEA etc.)

Leela McMullen: The two bands to make it to Tokyo Dome from this era are two of the prettiest in the scene however they would never have made it that far in this climate unless their music was also widely appreciated.

Leela McMullen: While I don't personally enjoy their music (I find it mostly boring and uninventive or otherwise too inventive aside from a few songs) they are definitely talented musicians.

Joan Bonnici: Funnily enough the bands that made it to Tokyo Dome are the ones who seem to have given up touring abroad though.

Joan Bonnici: (we're talking about gaze right? who are the others?)

Leela McMullen: SiD.

Joan Bonnici: thanks

Leela McMullen: Well it is true that neither of those two bands have toured abroad, but at the same time, they're such a small percentile to begin with that it's not really an accurate judge.

Leela McMullen: Other extremely popular bands such as MUCC have given time to the overseas market.

Joan Bonnici: gaze toured in europe a couple of years back, but they did a short tour in the same venues dir had toured, and never went back since.

Leela McMullen: I didn't know that.

Joan Bonnici: it's ok, everyone expected them to be back over and over.

Leela McMullen: Some bands like to try it out just once and sometimes they love it and go again and again but for some it's just not their cup of tea.

Leela McMullen: And then of course there's schedules. When a band is extremely busy in Japan they don't have time to split their interests, or need for that matter.

Joan Bonnici: They did sell out at the venues they played though, however I suspect they didn't go back cause it ended up being too costly for them, considering all the extra help they hired as compared to Dir.

Leela McMullen: Why focus on the foreign market when the Japanese market is raking in $$$ all by itself?

Joan Bonnici: So you think it's more profitable for the bands to focus all their energy in Japan and abandon foreign markets?

Leela McMullen: Only if the band is already a roaring success in Japan.

Leela McMullen: sometimes the foreign market may actually be more lucrative for a band as in the case of the now disbanded Dio Distraught Overlord, and sometimes performing overseas ads to a band's biography and heightens their reputation in Japan.

Joan Bonnici: Music sales in Japan have been going down statistically. So even the major bands are having problems selling CDs and music to their fanbase. Touring of course, is much more profitable in Japan than when having to go abroad and pay for many more expenses. However shouldn't bands put more efforts in global distribution of their music? For example, by having websites in English, and making their songs available on iTunes.

Leela McMullen: They should, but they don't know how to go about it profitably because they haven't 'had' to do it before. Until now it was like a bonus so they have to learn to do this without getting ripped off and the companies that are in control who are ripping them off need to back down or else distributing overseas is no more viable than the declining sales in Japan.

Joan Bonnici: How long is it going to take these bands and their managers to catch up and realize what's happening though? The longer it takes the more potential music sales they lose, because if their CDs or digital downloads aren't available at all, fans will just download the songs and videos for free.

Leela McMullen: That depends how much assistance they get from people who do understand the foreign market.

Leela McMullen: It all comes down to contacts.

Joan Bonnici: I agree that for Indies the situation is very hard, but for bands that are popular, especially those who have distribution deals with giants like Sony or Warner should be able to have the contact necessary.

Leela McMullen: They should. Unfortunately, a lack of action in that department is a mystery beyond my knowledge.

Joan Bonnici: That's ok

Leela McMullen: Well aside from the fact that large companies put VK on the backburner and try to focus more on pop artists etc.

Joan Bonnici: However VK has more of a following abroad than Japanese pop, at least in Europe and U.S. doesn't it?

Leela McMullen: But the pop bands have a larger budget and seem more marketable to large company reps.

Joan Bonnici: and more people ready to do all the translations for them. How much does the language barrier affect foreign promotion?

Leela McMullen: Well actually, not only the bands themselves but also their managers are showing a remarkable 'interest' in increasing their English ability whether that interest results in action or not

Leela McMullen: Big bands of course have foreign representatives but even smaller band in the major scene and high up in the Indies scene are making an effort.

Joan Bonnici: However they still prefer to be interviewed in Japanese rather than English right?

Joan Bonnici: that would make things easier

Leela McMullen: Well if their English level is high enough to undergo an interview in English, some are actually quite boyishly excited about it. It's more a lack of confidence in their own skill than a lack or will. Of course, from the perspective of a writer, even those who are nearly fluent are more likely to give the answer they intend in their native language rather than forcing words into line in English.

Joan Bonnici: That makes sense, especially when it comes to more complex terms.

Joan Bonnici: How about you tell us a little about Rokkyuu?

Leela McMullen: Well I constantly get asked why we don't cover non VK bands and can't we cover this or that band? I think most people just assume it's a personal preference but there are band outside of VK I would love to cover. However, there is no other publication focusing ONLY on VK doing interviews, reviews, and live reports in both Japan and overseas as well as covering VK related fashion. I want to give coverage to the smaller bands foreign fans love the few songs they found on Youtube of but can't seem to find any other English information on. I want to give coverage to the bands that no foreigners know about because hardly anyone in Japan knows who they are yet they have great potential to make it into the foreign market. And I want to give high quality coverage of the bigger bands that gives fans a detailed perspective of what they really are like live rather than a rundown of the set list and general description of a concert that most sites seem to think constitutes a live report.

Leela McMullen: I want the world to see that there's more to VK than faces and costumes, but that there's music you can't find anywhere else, an original style that not only rivals but sometimes eclipses less blended genres of music.

Joan Bonnici: That's a great motivation. Can you tell us more about how you work with VK bands, if it's hard or very simple, if they look forward to being interviewed and covered etc?

Leela McMullen: Well in our beta version we found it almost impossible to score live reports and interviews. Japanese are very strict in their impressions and if they don't know you or you have nothing to show for yourself they will assume you're not good enough for them. Luckily we were able to make contacts in a natural progression that has opened many windows. Now, even if we don't have a contact, many bands will respond to us after viewing the site (and the bands featured on it.)

Joan Bonnici: How do your readers and fans respond to Rokkyuu?

Leela McMullen: Well our numbers compared to long running sites are still quite low but the response is another story. Where 'certain sites' only receive minimal 'likes' 'tweets' and comments (usually criticizing) we have not only fans but artists and other well known industry professionals retweeting our articles, sharing them on facebook and commenting, often to thank us for the detail of articles and to say that reading made them

feel like they witnessed the event. Of course, not every article gets comments, but the statistics, especially when considering our lower percentage of readers, are extremely encouraging. Even though our numbers can't compare to other sites yet, the percentage of people actually reading and enjoying our articles rather than glancing at the blurb and the photo is another story entirely.

Leela McMullen: People seem to recognize and appreciate that the work we put into the site is for their benefit rather than for our own.

Joan Bonnici: It's great that they can behave like adults and do that.

Joan Bonnici: Moving on, are you familiar with viral marketing?

Joan Bonnici: Basically in the case of Rokkyuu it's having your articles shared and retweeted all over. The bands get more coverage, their fans have more new information to read about them, and in the process you get more known and read as well.

Leela McMullen: lol I thought so.

Joan Bonnici: In the case of www.edoceleste.com what we are doing is pretty much the same. We're also trying to control this traffic in order to use the more famous bands to promote less famous bands.

Leela McMullen: Another concept I'm familiar with.

Joan Bonnici: And to have a constant generation of buzz about the artists involved. Basically because bands have very slow release dates, we also use one release to cover all the bands, irrelevant to who released the new item.

Joan Bonnici: Always keeping them active

Joan Bonnici: We also use social media like facebook and youtube to attract more fans, and bring them back to the site. Artists also share us around on twitter and their blogs.

Joan Bonnici: In short, we're trying to make sure they're all over the place.

Joan Bonnici: What do you think of this idea?

Leela McMullen: Well basically we're doing the same thing, so I think it's pretty brilliant.

Leela McMullen: However, we have certain restrictions to deal with. Management don't like to see too much get away from them for free.

Joan Bonnici: In fact another thing we're trying to do is to encourage the bands to give away some music samples for free in order to be able to attract more potential fans. If

fans, especially foreign ones can't get an idea of what they sound like, there's less chances they'll become interested in the band.

Joan Bonnici: Do you think more bands should be doing that? Instead of the latest uprise from JASRAC taking down a bunch of youtube videos.

Leela McMullen: Well management like to be able to control samples, for example, putting up shortened clips on Youtube or myspace which allows people to sample their work without letting them spread full versions they and other might otherwise buy accross the internet for free. Unfortunately, simply having more fans doesn't help a band if the fans are getting everything for free. For every foreigner downloading (and loving) their music, the band is still getting five times as much patronage from a Japanese girl buying 20 copies of the same CD so she can go to 20 different events and receive all four or five photo cards. Promotion doesn't help a band if it doesn't result in $$$.

Joan Bonnici: I agree that the management should have some control over what is distributed for free to control their artists' image. It also brings us back to most of the promotion being targeted for Japan only, and most of the distribution being only in Japan as well. That doesn't give foreign fans equal options for consumption.

Leela McMullen: No it doesn't but Japanese will stick to what they know. They don't like taking risks.

Joan Bonnici: What would you change about the current promotion systems of Japanese management?

Leela McMullen: Well they could definitely do with taking a few more risks and consulting with more people who are knowledgeable about the foreign market.

Joan Bonnici: Therefore do you see sites like ours which in favour of the spread of information about vk succeeding and increasing in numbers and content in the future?

Leela McMullen: As long as Japanese bands don'T give up ont he foreign market, that's a given.

Joan Bonnici: Ok that's all.

Leela McMullen: Services will pop up where they are needed.

Dworken Sarah, 22nd April 2012.

Joan Bonnici: can you give me a background of who you wrote for and how long you did that for?

Sarah D.: I started with purple SKY when we were a print magazine. I think I started with the second issue, so about 2006. We took a hiatus as we transitioned to web-content only in 2008, and in that time I worked for Jrock Revolution writing for them, and EINSOF doing marketing. That was less for a year.

Sarah D.: THEN I went back to purple SKY toward the end of '08 and I've been doing content for them exclusively since

Joan Bonnici: Wow that makes it six years of working with V-Kei.

Sarah D.: Yeah, just about. Of course not JUST vk, but I usually end up with that

Joan Bonnici: So my thesis is mostly focused on understanding promotion in Japan as it is now, and the promotion they are doing worldwide as well. Can you tell me more about how bands do their promotion in Japan? All from your experience of course.

Joan Bonnici: (and yeah I know a lot of magazines try to cater for more Japanese music but somehow they end up having a lot of demand for v-kei as compared to other genres right?)

Sarah D.: You mean what physical methods?

Sarah D.: Like print etc?

Sarah D.: (yeah, that's right)

Joan Bonnici: Yep, like physical methods and strategies, whatever seems to work and attract most fans.

Sarah D.: Well, it depends on the size of the band

Sarah D.: Smaller bands do the old fashioned way, it seems. Handing out fliers.

Sarah D.: Bands that are more popular seem to rely more on social media. Facebook, twitter, etc

Joan Bonnici: So they have a way of talking to the fans directly.

Sarah D.: Which seems to be the reverse of what it should be, since fliering is annoying and costly

Sarah D.: Yeah

Sarah D.: So a lot of larger bands are getting facebook accounts. More computer savvy small bands use FB and Ameblo, but they seem to be lagging in that department

Sarah D.: Japan in general is behind with that compared to North American and Western Europe, but the bigger labels realize that and basically hire people for social networking on behalf of the band

Sarah D.: I know a guy who used to do that for bands like D'espairs Ray

Sarah D.: He'd update "as the band", under the band's twitter account

Joan Bonnici: I guess they also need that sort of help since few of them can write or read in English. It just sucks cos they have less of a direct bridge to the fans that way.

Sarah D.: Yeah exactly. This guy I knew who worked for DR was American. The guy who updates other bands' fb/twitter speaks English very well

Sarah D.: Then of course there are the labels that seem to have no desire to reach out to fans overseas, so they pretty much keep everything contained and in Japanese

Joan Bonnici: Why do you think they're not interested in foreign markets? On the other hand, why would a band who doesn't tour abroad much keep on trying to keep a foreign fanbase updated?

Sarah D.: The first question has a long answer and a short answer XD

Sarah D.: The short answer is that it's expensive to branch out overseas. They have to find a CD distributor overseas, which is difficult because no one wants to take risks on new or foreign artists when CDs simply just don't sell

Sarah D.: For concerts, that's also a huge risk for the label/distributor because they have to put a ton of money forward

Sarah D.: and labels have realized they're not getting any returns

Sarah D.: So actually, my editor (Kathy Chee) and I were talking about this when I was back in New York last month seeing L'Arc-en-Ciel's show in Madison Square Garden

Sarah D.: I have no idea what the cost of the venue is, and we were trying to guess if Ki/oon and Maverick (distributor and label for L'Arc) lost or made money on it since it wasn't sold out

Sarah D.: That concert of course is an extreme example, but other bands have been in the red after going overseas

Sarah D.: So mostly, it's a financial issue. As cold as that sounds

Sarah D.: We want to hear, "THEY HATE FOREIGN FANS!"

Sarah D.: No, most of them would LOVE to go play overseas. It's just super expensive

Joan Bonnici: L'Arc have been putting a huge emphasis on foreign touring though. They've been at it for years and are going into more countries where other j-rock bands haven't been. Travelling the distance and attracting the fans of the area. So I guess their tours must be paying.

Sarah D.: yes, L'Arc is a special case though

Sarah D.: L'Arc is a cash cow

Joan Bonnici: They also have been major for a number of years

Sarah D.: They generate huge sales for Ki/oon

Sarah D.: They sell out in minutes

Sarah D.: They also sell out on merchandise as well

Sarah D.: They're still huge in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Korea, so yeah L'Arc is the moneymaker

Joan Bonnici: And most other bands have problems filling venues over a 1000 people when they can sell out 5000 seaters in a matter of minutes in Japan.

Sarah D.: Yes, that's preventing most bands from going overseas

Sarah D.: As for your second question up there

Sarah D.: Why still reach out to foreign fans

Sarah D.: A lot of those bands sell albums etc on itunes internationally

Sarah D.: And there seems to be enough sales volume to justify hiring someone who can contact people in English. And to justify inviting foreign press (such as myself) to cover shows

Sarah D.: I recently got invited to the show for the band La'Mule, which perplexed me because they're not even still together and they don't seem to sell anything overseas

Joan Bonnici: at least inviting the press is free, but it's true they have to pay for someone to take care of their social media

Joan Bonnici: Could it be they like having international fame

Sarah D.: Yeah, foreign press is free

Joan Bonnici: even though they don't exploit it?

Sarah D.: I'm sure a bit of it is the wish to simply get more fans

Sarah D.: A lot of bands choose to record in Los Angeles, London or New York simply to have that label put on their package

Sarah D.: like, "Oh we recorded this in LONDON in the same studio as [insert famous dead Brit band here]."

Joan Bonnici: It's also hard to monetize out of it when they don't have their songs on sale online or an easy method for fans to buy their CDs

Sarah D.: Yeah that's true

Joan Bonnici: So it's an attempt to look more popular with the Japanese fans?

Sarah D.: It could be

Sarah D.: It used to be more impressive, I think

Sarah D.: Nowadays there's this underlining Japanese nationalism that's come back in to style

Sarah D.: so staying domestic can be a bit of a pride thing

Sarah D.: (This is a much deeper socio-political issue that has a bit to do with Chinese economic dominance and the effects of the earthquake as well, but I'm no knowledgable enough to go into that)

Joan Bonnici: It's ok politics is just beyond me as well!

Joan Bonnici: but that was an interesting perspective thanks!

Joan Bonnici: Another thing you mentioned is how major bands are putting their songs online, but shouldn't minor bands try to do that even more than the major ones?

Sarah D.: They should, I agree with that

Sarah D.: Some of them do

Sarah D.: If they have the right distributor

Sarah D.: JapanFiles used to do that for a lot of bands

Joan Bonnici: Social media enables bands to survive without a distributor though, sometimes even without a label, but most bands don't seem to have realized that

Sarah D.: I mean, I think they still do.

Sarah D.: Yeah, it's hard for Japanese bands to do that

Sarah D.: that's why the Indie scene is thriving more in cities like Osaka, where the major distributors don't dominate the industry

Sarah D.: It's just too expensive for bands to promote themselves and do shows and sell CDs in Tokyo

Sarah D.: Not to mention renting out studio time

Sarah D.: When some places are like 30,000 yen an hour

Sarah D.: What 18 year old kid can afford that?

Joan Bonnici: Yeah it's true, not to mention they don't have their own garages where to practice so they end up hiring places like studio noah for their weekly practices

Joan Bonnici: so they keep on spending money on every little thing they do

Sarah D.: Yeah. I just couldn't imagine starting a band here

Sarah D.: I'd move out to the inaka, get a house

Sarah D.: XDDDD

Joan Bonnici: Pretty much beats other countries where starting a band is way cheaper and you can start making profits earlier as well.

Sarah D.: Yup

Sarah D.: Plus the venue system works a bit different here from the US

Sarah D.: I'm not sure how it is in Europe

Sarah D.: So like you know in the US, a venue will take a risk on you and they'll pay you if you sell like... 50 tickets or something

Joan Bonnici: that depends on the country really

Sarah D.: In Japan, the band has to pay the money up front

Joan Bonnici: yeah, besides they want you to play there so they'll have people and they'll buy drinks

Sarah D.: and you have to make the money back in ticket sales

Sarah D.: So if you don't sell enough in the US, then hey you didn't lose any money. The venue might not book you again, but it was still an experience

Sarah D.: But in Japan, you just automatically lose money

Joan Bonnici: Could it be because of the drinking age in Japan, and the underage fan base?

Sarah D.: I don't think it has much to do with that

Sarah D.: It seems that when a band attracts younger kids, they don't make them buy a drink ticket

Sarah D.: otherwise of course they do

Joan Bonnici: I don't see a lot of people drinking at indie lives either. In another country everyone would be drunk before the show even starts.

Sarah D.: ahahahah

Joan Bonnici: In a smaller venue of course, not the big ones.

Sarah D.: Yeah that happens in the US, but it depends on the band

Joan Bonnici: True.

Joan Bonnici: Another thing that struck me is how major bands having Jasrac taking care of their copyright have been taking down fan videos and sometimes sites as well. I remember foreign magazines like UK Kerrang! being impressed at the quantity and hits on each of these videos, but even after reading reviews like that, the bands took most of these videos down.

Joan Bonnici: Any opinions on that?

Sarah D.: Oh it's kind of funny

Sarah D.: Ok so it depends on the distributor and band. I think the first Japanese distributor to get strict on it was Avex

Sarah D.: others followed, and they started to get their own official channels, but a lot of them were only available in Japan

Sarah D.: Some distributors seemed to realize that would only encourage more "pirating" (it's not really pirating if it's a streaming video), so they made international channels

Sarah D.: but still stuff gets uploaded, taken down, uploaded somewhere different

Sarah D.: And the funny thing is, there seems to be this miscommunication between the distributor and the label in terms of linking stuff on social media

Sarah D.: So I'll use L'Arc again as an example because I check their fb page regularly

Sarah D.: They will often link fan-uploaded videos, which will then get taken down a few weeks later

Sarah D.: Sometimes it's stuff that's obviously recorded with a camera off the TV

Joan Bonnici: which is very weird cos the Manager of l'Arc is on the board of SYNC Music Japan, and they've been trying to use all sorts of social media to promote the bands involved.

Sarah D.: Yup

Sarah D.: SYNC has been doing good with that

Joan Bonnici: Are you familiar with viral promotion?

Sarah D.: Yeah, like the label secretly putting something up on the web so it will spread from fan to fan?

Joan Bonnici: more or less. Even when they aren't so secretive about it, it's still viral

Joan Bonnici: the attempt to spread from fan to fan I mean.

Sarah D.: Yeah hahah

Sarah D.: I know they do that for movies a lot

Joan Bonnici: They might do it for music too but a lot of them just do it outright. Bands seem to prefer leaking song samples only. They usually complain when a whole album leaks weeks before the official release no?

Sarah D.: Yessss

Sarah D.: Of course a whole album getting linked should mean it'll affect sales

Sarah D.: but I think I've read it has the opposite effect. People who download pirated content tend to spend more money on music, usually through concerts

Sarah D.: and I have to admit, there would be no way I would have been able to access Japanese bands when I was a dumb high school student without those pirates

Joan Bonnici: yeah there is some evidence to prove that, it even boosts sales in most cases, but Japan doesn't seem to realize that and instead keep on trying to be secretive and charging for every itty bitty thing including photos

Joan Bonnici: as is the case of most people living away from Asia. They would never have heard about it all otherwise.

Sarah D.: There are very few people overseas who started their vk obsession with "I bought this CD...."

Joan Bonnici: So over all why do you think Japanese bands and agencies tend to be so strict about sharing their content?

Sarah D.: A part of it seems to be that they don't understand the psychology behind viral marketing

Sarah D.: Japanese business, though it's gotten better, is still very conservative

Sarah D.: And they tend to think "It's worked for this man years, so it should ALWAYS work."

Sarah D.: This goes for 99% of business policies in general

Joan Bonnici: which is pretty funny from a country that has this technologically advanced facade, then everyone seems to like sticking with what they already know and not testing out the new stuff.

Sarah D.: Yup!

Sarah D.: Japan is very ahead in CERTAIN technologies. Robots for example

Sarah D.: but for internet, Japan is super behind

Sarah D.: Not music related, but look at the English version of the Japanese Immigration Bureau's site

Sarah D.: http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/

Sarah D.: It's like from 1997!

Joan Bonnici: Yeah I know! Had to use it a couple of days ago. Wasn't fun, same goes for city wards!

Sarah D.: Exactly!

Joan Bonnici: You'd expect this whole country to be futuristic about everything.

Sarah D.: Governments are bad with this in general, but you look at bands' sites and they don't look much better

Joan Bonnici: so they keep on losing sales but they don't do anything about it.

Sarah D.: I think now that smart phones are the mainstream cell phone, they'll get better with sites

Sarah D.: Indie bands are usually pretty bad

Joan Bonnici: they want to be serious but they're very disorganized. It's like breaking all the rules in the guidebook to become a major band.

Sarah D.: Yeah

Joan Bonnici: What I'm trying to do on my site www.edoceleste.com is use viral promotion to market the bands involved even more. Do you think that Japan will embrace viral marketing any time soon?

Sarah D.: I hope they will

Sarah D.: And I think they don't really have a choice

Sarah D.: The old cliché is sink or swim

Sarah D.: Right now, bands are sinking. They need to adapt and change to keep up with the market

Sarah D.: because one thing is true: There wil ALWAYS be a market for music.

Sarah D.: This isn't like Sony or Panasonic panicking about low TV sales figures

Sarah D.: TV will eventually be obsolete and no one will ever buy a TV again

Sarah D.: but music will always be there, and it has to adapt to whatever is going on in the world today

Sarah D.: So you know in the days before recorded music, of course there were the Mozarts and the Chopins etc etc who if you had enough money you'd go see live

Sarah D.: but people don't realize that the "mainstream" was simple piano sheet music

Sarah D.: Most of that stuff is forgotten because it was always on a very small scale

Sarah D.: But with the advent of radio and recorded music, suddenly you could sell these music pieces that would otherwise NOT have been remembered

Sarah D.: And what happened to the face of music?

Sarah D.: How has music changed in the last 120 or so years?

Sarah D.: It's completely indistinguishable from what it used to be

Joan Bonnici: All you're saying is very true and very right. The funny or sad part about it, is that the Japanese were the ones to include the recording button on a radio, and the ones to invent the CD

Sarah D.: Yes!!

Joan Bonnici: so they were responsible for so many musical advancements, yet they're resisting change right now

Sarah D.: Japan still does that, though not so much on a revolutionary scale

Sarah D.: I still think their production quality is much better

Sarah D.: Even for less financially viable bands

Sarah D.: they still get the VIP treatment with production

Joan Bonnici: It's true, they do tend to do better quality music

Sarah D.: Yeah and you know I'm talking about sound quality of course

Joan Bonnici: Yeah I do

Sarah D.: There used to be this saying about how the US invented jazz and Japan perfected it

Joan Bonnici: I used to buy CDs just to hear all the songs in better detail. You don't get the same kind of quality on western CDs.

Sarah D.: I think one of Japan's weaknesses is that they don't have a genre of popular music to REALLY call their own

Sarah D.: Yeah, something about western CDs is a little flat

Joan Bonnici: That's true, but they seem to have perfected the art of making everything else sound better

Sarah D.: oh re genre: except enka XD

Joan Bonnici: yeah, but they do need something a bit more modern and less traditional to sell on a global market level

Sarah D.: But even enka is Japan's answer to 1950s crooners

Sarah D.: Oh back to production value, things like stage shows have a high production value as well

Sarah D.: I don't know if you go to a lot of major band's shows in large venues like Yokohama Arena or Tokyo Dome and stuff

Joan Bonnici: a couple yeah

Sarah D.: but I've noticed a HUGE change in the quality of the visuals and sound at these shows over the years

Sarah D.: Now THAT is something that distributors should be promoting

Sarah D.: The live experience

Sarah D.: that's the only thing they internet cannot replace

Joan Bonnici: exactly

Joan Bonnici: infact old music sales models used to be

Joan Bonnici: do a live show after you've had a lot of sales in that area

Sarah D.: Yeah!

Joan Bonnici: the new models are, give them away everything for free

Sarah D.: YUP!

Joan Bonnici: profit from the merch and ticket sales

Sarah D.: And actually, this makes me much more excited about music

Sarah D.: because suddenly you're getting these artists that HAVE to be charismatic

Sarah D.: they HAVE to be good live

Joan Bonnici: they also have to be good at playing their own music, and be real artists as opposed to the old model where you would hire someone pretty to be the face for your music

Sarah D.: they can't rely on autotune (in the old sense of the term, as in automatically tuning a voice like what they do with most pop artists)

Sarah D.: YES

Sarah D.: One great example is Miyavi

Sarah D.: I don't like his music, but when I saw him live, it was really obvious that he is a performer

Sarah D.: He uses the whole stage, he engages the audience

Sarah D.: You can't just stand up there and look pretty anymore

Joan Bonnici: true, which is why it's all better for music, cos now you get the people who are good. Anyone who lacks in any department won't reach international fame anymore

Joan Bonnici: and before it used to be those people who became famous first

Sarah D.: Yup, very true

Joan Bonnici: there's also no resale value with concerts

Joan Bonnici: cos it can only happen once, so the fans want to attend one because it's an experience that cannot be replaced.

Sarah D.: which has its downside

Sarah D.: But it's all that word of mouth thing

Sarah D.: If 1000 people attend a show, they're going to tell... let's say 4 friends

Sarah D.: and then those people go to the next show, tell more friends

Sarah D.: and on and on

Sarah D.: And I think that's the way to do music now

Sarah D.: But with these bands going overseas,

Sarah D.: So like when Dir en grey first started touring Europe and NA, people were like, "Oh hey they're going to come back a ton!"

Sarah D.: And they did....

Sarah D.: then other bands would go overseas, and people thought the same thing

Sarah D.: except MOST of them didn't

Sarah D.: So they lost that word of mouth thing

Joan Bonnici: true. Funnily enough most of these bands played in exactly the same venues and sold the same number of tickets though

Joan Bonnici: so it was weird that they didn't.

Sarah D.: It's lame

Sarah D.: I know the problem in the US now has a bit to do with obtaining an artist's visa

Joan Bonnici: can you think of any other reasons why these foreign fans didn't share their love for these bands?

Sarah D.: it's tough to say

Sarah D.: VK is very niche

Sarah D.: the sound, the look, there's a limited market for it

Sarah D.: Glam rock and hair metal were fads in the 70s and 80s, and especially in the US, the visual aspect is a turn off

Joan Bonnici: I was thinking of the possessiveness of the fans as well. It was one of those things that fascinated foreign media.

Sarah D.: Plus the language works against them

Sarah D.: Oh the elitism

Sarah D.: It depends on the band

Sarah D.: There is a competition between fans, for sure

Joan Bonnici: Yeah, some foreign fans tend to think the band is their own

Joan Bonnici: and they don't want to share it with anyone

Sarah D.: Yeah

Sarah D.: I think that has a bit to do with personality type as well

Sarah D.: what kinds of people are attracted to VK

Sarah D.: Mostly teenage girls right?

Joan Bonnici: yes unfortunately

Sarah D.: When I was 18, I was at the tail end of liking Gackt

Sarah D.: On LJ, someone had posted the question, "Will Gackt ever play overseas?"

Sarah D.: And I tried to be intelligent, from what little knowledge I had then, I said yeah probably some day

Sarah D.: and I got chewed up by a few fans

Sarah D.: Viciously

Joan Bonnici: You'd expect old successful bands to be able to re-attract a bunch of the old fans.

Sarah D.: But then you see bands like Luna Sea coming back from the dead and they're selling out Tokyo Dome for 3 nights in a row

Sarah D.: It probably has something to do with marketing

Sarah D.: Like making these reunion shows seem like huge events

Sarah D.: X Japan did that as well

Sarah D.: Like, "OMG YOUR LAST CHANCE EVER!!!!"

Sarah D.: "...but maybe we'll release something new. MAYBE."

Joan Bonnici: yeah, yoshiki is funny when he does that

Sarah D.: Yoshiki is the worst

Joan Bonnici: always telling people he's gonna do a new tour, maybe.

Joan Bonnici: or a new album

Joan Bonnici: maybe

Sarah D.: MAAAAYBE

Sarah D.: I went to one of the hide club psyence events last year

Sarah D.: and they had one really fat guy lip synching X

Sarah D.: then an even fatter, shirtless guy in blonde wig came on

Sarah D.: he had an oversized, fake neck brace on

Joan Bonnici: haha!

Sarah D.: and he sat on a drum stool and started playing air drums

Sarah D.: the audience was dying of laughter

Joan Bonnici: golden bomber did that impersonation too once

Sarah D.: Then at the end, he stood up and very dramatically fainted

Joan Bonnici: its always hilarious

Sarah D.: ahaaha Golden Bomber is interesting

Sarah D.: I think they're follwing the Tenacious D model of "Well, we're not good enough to be a REAL band, so let's be a PARODY band."

Joan Bonnici: and they're being very successful at it

Sarah D.: Well GB is a good example of a band that will NOT translate overseas

Joan Bonnici: yeah, unless the fans are completely obsessed with knowing everything about older bands

Joan Bonnici: which the gaze generation doesn't

Sarah D.: Yeah

Joan Bonnici: they dont even know X ever exsisted really

Joan Bonnici: they wouldnt understand a thing

Sarah D.: ugh really??

Joan Bonnici: most of them don't

Joan Bonnici: it was very sad

Sarah D.: I'm a big Buck-Tick fan, and I know a lot of them don't know who they are

Joan Bonnici: maybe it changed a little after all the involvement in hide's yearly event on his 10 year anniversary

Sarah D.: and B-T was really a huge influence on most of the current VK bands

Joan Bonnici: but i doubt

Sarah D.: more so than X really

Joan Bonnici: yeah they don't know about BT either, which is so sad

Sarah D.: anyway sorry back to your questions

Joan Bonnici: kyo from dir has mentioned bt as an inspiration many times too

Joan Bonnici: Oh yeah, regarding visas, sucks even more when a band can't explain why they're trying to enter a country cos they don't know english.

Sarah D.: The major labels have to hire English speakers to do that

Joan Bonnici: So unlike other bands from us, they have to have a distributor or something preparing all the papers for them

Sarah D.: So I have some friends in the international music department of Sony Music Entertainment

Sarah D.: and they have to be bilingual, but visa stuff is complicated even if you're good at English

Joan Bonnici: and they still can not let you in the country in the end

Sarah D.: It's a pain

Joan Bonnici: so another part of the design of www.edoceleste.com

Joan Bonnici: is to promote viral marketing and easy link everyone to sales and info and stuff

Joan Bonnici: info in english of course

Joan Bonnici: meaning that besides promoting viral promotion, we're also trying to promote a format

Sarah D.: That's a great idea

Joan Bonnici: for band cross-promotions and sales to occur at the same time

Joan Bonnici: most of it relies on using youtube and redirecting to the main site as well

Joan Bonnici: it was cool cos some bands start mentioning us in their blogs when we updated the site

Joan Bonnici: so yeah, any opinions on the design, and any suggestions?

Joan Bonnici: I'd like to get more of an opinion from people working on promotions, cos like I said earlier, changes are the bands involved won't give me their opinion.

Sarah D.: I'd say the layout as it is is easy to navigate

Sarah D.: I'm not much of a behind the scenes web savvy kind of person

Sarah D.: but It looks good so far

Sarah D.: Keeping it simple is the key

Sarah D.: so you know Music Japan Plus?

Joan Bonnici: It's ok, just trying to get opinions from people

Joan Bonnici: yeah i do

Joan Bonnici: and yep, trying to keep it simple

Sarah D.: That's the opposite of what you want

Joan Bonnici: yeah...

Sarah D.: They're way too complicated

Joan Bonnici: most sites tend to be overcrowded

Joan Bonnici: and they don't let you jump from one band to the next

Sarah D.: That's why we tried to do something as a blog

Joan Bonnici: which is what i want to create

Sarah D.: it's just straight forward. no frills

Joan Bonnici: yep, it's the way it all has to become

Sarah D.: And I think as you get bigger, add a search function

Joan Bonnici: yeah, I'll include that

Joan Bonnici: or a listing like visunavi has really

Joan Bonnici: by alphabet

Sarah D.: Yeah

Joan Bonnici: both really

Joan Bonnici: cos i hate how most sites dont let you randomly pick up a band

Joan Bonnici: unless you know their name

Joan Bonnici: it beats the whole function

A.3 A copy of the survey uploaded online

Fan Questionnaire:

AGE
Location

1. Are you a fan of visual-kei music?
Yes
No

2. What genres of music do you like? (check as appropriate)
Pop
Pop-rock
Rock
Goth
Hip-hop
Rap-rock
Metal
Death Metal

3. How do you find out about visual-kei bands?
Friends
Websites
Magazines
Blogs
Flyers

4. Did you ever notice that some bands take pictures with other bands or blog about them?
Yes
No

4.1 If yes, did you ever check any of these bands out?
Yes
No

5. Did you ever try to look up new bands intentionally on your own?
Yes
No

5.1 If yes, how do you look up these new bands? (check as appropriate)
- I go through lists of band names on websites like visunavi and I try out the ones that seem interesting.
- I check the related videos on youtube
- I try out bands with a similar genre as suggested by the music sites I use (for example last.fm)

- I look for bands with different genres on the same website
- I go through websites listing visual-kei bands and the songs created by such bands.
- I try out bands from the same label.

6. Have you ever come across new bands on your own without intentionally looking for them? (check as appropriate)
- Noticing a new band in related youtube videos
- Checking out similar bands on last.fm and similar sites
- Noticing a new band on visunavi or similar sites
- Looking up bands suggested to me by the bands I like already (for example on last.fm suggestions, or by looking up bands my favourite artists mention in interviews)
- Websites listing visual-kei bands and information about them.
- Bands from the same label.

7. Would you like it if looking up visual kei bands you don't know of was made easier?
Yes
No

8. What would make it easier to look up such new bands? (mark 1 to – starting from the most important)
- Updated lists of existing and past bands
- Greater availability of songs from such bands
- Greater availability of videos from such bands
- Greater availability of interviews from such bands
- Greater availability of pictures from such bands
- Easier access to music and videos directly from the band's website
- Easier access to music and videos directly form music related websites.

9. On EdoCelste.com we are trying to include direct links to buy music from your favourite artists, their full discography, samples of their music and/or videos and pictures together with links to youtube. On a scale from 1 to 10, how easy does this make it to discover new bands and what they sound and look like?

10. Therefore do you think something like EdoCeleste.com on a larger scale would make it easier to discover bands?
Yes
No

11. Please feel free to write down any further comments here.

A.4 Transcripts of Interviews with Visual-Kei fans.

Abela Samantha, 20th April 2012.

Joan Bonnici: How long have you been a fan of visual kei for?

Samantha: Approximately since 2006

Joan Bonnici: Can you name some of your favorite bands?

Samantha: I particularly like the group Versailles

Samantha: then I like the singer Gackt

Samantha: but not as part of a group

Joan Bonnici: Are there any other musical genres that you like?

Samantha: yes

Samantha: I like J-Rock and at the moment I'm listening a lot to K-Pop

Joan Bonnici: How did your interest in these genres start? For example through a friend, site or random site...

Samantha: I also like the 'western' commercial too

Samantha: Yes mostly through a friend

Samantha: I started watching some anime in Japanese

Samantha: then I started looking up their OSTs so I discovered J-Rock

Samantha: than a friend of mine (which is a friend in common) introduced me to Gackt and to J-Rock

Samantha: I started looking up some other artists on you-tube

Samantha: I actually got to know about Versailles about 2 years ago when I've put up a status on FB about period clothing

Samantha: and someone left me a link to one of their videos

Joan Bonnici: That's great so you discover the music both through friends and on your own. Do you ever go deeper than youtube and try to check the artist's official page or a site on which they're featured?

Samantha: yes

Samantha: usually I start a general google search

Samantha: and read on from Wikipedia

Samantha: than I see what other fan sites say etc...

Samantha: I did check their official website, however most of them are in Japanese

Samantha: or the English version isn't that good

Samantha: Fan-sites tend to have more juicer information

Joan Bonnici: Do the fansites and translated sites ever conflict in information?

Joan Bonnici: & what kind of jucier information?

Samantha: So lets take the 'Versailles' example here.

Samantha: If I remember correctly, one of their members had died

Samantha: I read about it through a you-tube comment

Joan Bonnici: yes that's right

Samantha: then I looked it up

Samantha: some dates were a bit conflicting between the original website, wikipedia and the fansite

Samantha: also fansites tend to be updated more recently

Samantha: because they have the 'gossip' information

Samantha: while the official website have only the approved 'news'

Samantha: On fan sites you also find trivia

Joan Bonnici: Aren't you ever afraid they're just making up the info?

Samantha: yes of course

Samantha: Fans in Japan, I've learnt, tend to exaggerate a lot

Samantha: (same if not worse happens in Korea)

Samantha: so they might spice up the article with fake information or unreliable sources

Samantha: Any 'sighting' for them of the artist would constitute as news as well

Samantha: Well you read them just so you get an idea

Samantha: at least that's what I do

Joan Bonnici: it's fun to hear about the sightings, how they reacted, and what they were wearing though no?

Samantha: yes it is

Samantha: you realize that the artist has a 'life' outside

Samantha: outside the 'performing' world

Samantha: you also notice whether an artist conforms with his stage image all the time or not

Samantha: and if they're into fashion

Joan Bonnici: So it makes you understand if it's just a persona or if they're the real deal

Samantha: you get tips on how you can wear their trends in your day-to-day life as well

Joan Bonnici: So it makes you understand if it's just a persona or if they're the real deal

Samantha: Yes, 'sightings' aided with photos helps to make up your opinion about the artist / group

Samantha: whether they are really that into the 'visual kei' trend or not

Samantha: or whether it's just for show

Joan Bonnici: Do you ever notice if they hang out with other artists, or if they're touring with some particular artists?

Samantha: yes

Samantha: well you know with whom they are friends or with whom they have musical connections

Joan Bonnici: So I take it you tried listening to these other bands as well?

Samantha: yes'

Samantha: for example when it comes to gackt i tried to listen to the songs he has with other artists

Samantha: even those that aren't

Samantha: "extraordinary" 'visual kei'

Samantha: that is their style is not so much extreme

Samantha: however in that case, I still prefer his solo songs

Joan Bonnici: How important do you think it is for bands to promote each other like this?

Samantha: A lot

Samantha: For example 'Western fans' like me that might not be into the scene all the time, they find these 'sightings' or 'collaborations' as a means to get to know about other artists and groups

Samantha: then you get curious and you start to listen to those groups as well

Samantha: or at least you check them out

Samantha: besides I think that some artists make collaboration pieces just to re=launch their image

Joan Bonnici: That's very true.

Samantha: or get more attention from a wider audience

Joan Bonnici: Another thing you mentioned is youtube. Some artists have been taking fan made videos down. This would be part of a promotion method called viral promotion. A simple explanation would be that the band makes their music and other materials very easily available online, in order to attract a lot of fans. What do you think of this idea?

Samantha: so let me try to understand... they've been removing them from you-tube the fan-made videos

Joan Bonnici: yeah some artists have been doing that, minor bands tend to upload their own low quality videos. Major bands tend to have high end PVs and songs which they only want to sell, so when a fan uploads them outside of their official youtube channel they take it down, they take down songs as well, and in most cases they only want samples of their songs and PVs uploaded, not the full thing.

Samantha: I see

Samantha: Well I have a mixed feeling about this.

Samantha: I understand the artist's concern about the copyright

Samantha: especially since now we can download songs directly from you-tube into mp3s

Samantha: and this means less sales

Samantha: also western fans might find that buying the original music is too expensive because of shipping

Samantha: however I think that such an attitude might turn a number of fans away from them as well

Samantha: In fact (not sure if its relevant), a Korean group, Big Bang in collaboration with their company YG Entertainment, actually launched a competition in which it encouraged people to make cover version of their songs and videos and upload them

Samantha: thousands participated and their music video views reached 15milion + in 3 days since their release

Joan Bonnici: It's ok any band behavior is relevant, so feel free.

Samantha: so promoting fan made videos and promotion in this case was actually good

Samantha: I personally ended up buying their cd (got it last weekend in the post)

Samantha: if a band started removing the videos I would get frustrated

Samantha: and disappointed

Samantha: already some youtube videos are restricted with 'regions'

Joan Bonnici: which sucks cos you have to look up another version and besides being annoying; you might not be able to find that one in particular.

Samantha: exactly

Joan Bonnici: so when you buy music, which formats do you prefer and why?

Joan Bonnici: between digital and CDs I mean

Joan Bonnici: I'm assuming you're not into Vinyl or tape-recorded cassettes.

Samantha: I used to have tape recorded cassettes

Samantha: I used to record anime songs from the TV and my cousin who is Italian sent me all her Christina d'avena cassettes

Samantha: until about 5 years ago I still played them

Samantha: mum had some vinyls but our player was without a needle and now my uncle took it anyway

Samantha: when it comes to music nowadays... well digital is more easy

Samantha: you can listen to it on the pc etc.. make a playlist or find an already made one

Samantha: however I don't buy digital music

Samantha: I don't have an ipod

Samantha: so I don't buy from itunes

Samantha: and unless I'm on the bus I don't use my psp to listen to songs any more

Samantha: however in my car I don't have an mp3 player

Samantha: because my cigarette lighter fuse is broken because of said mp3 thingy

Samantha: and I have to listen to the radio or to CDs

Samantha: I bought my recent CD for that reason

Joan Bonnici: So you have to stay setting up a whole new system to listen to mp3s in your car. Yeah that's cumbersome.

Joan Bonnici: Then you'd rather opt for the digital downloads rather than the CDs?

Samantha: If I had the system, I think yes

Samantha: I'd have more storage, more variety, less hassle

Samantha: on the other hand a CD is more a collector's item nowadays

Samantha: you buy it to show support and to show that you're an avid fan

Samantha: for 'western fans' owning a CD produced in Asia is still something of an 'awe' when we show them off to non asian-music followers

Joan Bonnici: so besides being a collectible it also has a lot of personal value in being something rare and very hard to find, besides being something unique and exotic.

Samantha: exactly. Also Japanese and even Korean music industries take a lot of care in producing their cds

Samantha: so every cd is packed in a special way

Samantha: the album design and content is unique

Samantha: the photoshoots and promotions as well..

Samantha: the perks like a membership card or code or poster...

Samantha: these are things that the western music industry is forgetting or isn't take care of much anymore

Samantha: at least that's how I see it

Joan Bonnici: which makes you feel that when you're buying a CD, besides getting a collectible, you're also getting all this limited content which you wouldn't obtain through a digital download.

Samantha: exactly

Joan Bonnici: Do you also care about the re-sale value of the CD?

Samantha: not really

Samantha: Personally I get to attached to anything I own

Samantha: so it would never cross my mind to re-sell anything I buy or I get gifted

Joan Bonnici: Therefore you think that promotion and good music is better than stressing about doing international tours?

Samantha: yes

Samantha: these things build for you the fan base you need for the international tour

Samantha: the international tour is more of a 'giving something back to the international fans' rather than promotion

Samantha: Usually sales of tickets aren't a problem as they get sold out pretty fast

Samantha: so the fan base is there already and they did not create it with the tour

Samantha: with sold out tickets before the group arrives to their touring location, new fans wouldn't even have the chance to attend any concerts anyhow

Samantha: the other thing that might increase their popularity is releasing 'English' album versions

Samantha: or an 'English only' album

Joan Bonnici: wouldn't that take away some of their originality?

Samantha: yes and no

Samantha: it's a fact that some of the fans are drawn to these groups because of the language

Samantha: because they don't really understand it without subtitles etc...

Samantha: on the other hand, making a cd in English would enable other people who might not be fascinated by the language but are interested in the music to give them a shot

Samantha: to take these groups seriously

Samantha: I know people that when they listen to a song, they like the music solos

Samantha: when they hear them sing in Japanese they loose interest

Samantha: or they try to listen to it but won't follow up

Samantha: because for them its still too weird to understand

Joan Bonnici: Yeah, I've heard about a lot of cases like that!

Samantha: I mean let me take a Korean bad again - SNSD / Girls Generation

Samantha: as soon as they released an English version song of their Japanese song with snoop dog, in 1 day it was played on Maltese radio stations

Samantha: they were on Letterman etc..

Samantha: and my students at school knew about them

Samantha: show them the Korean and Japanese version and they won't be bothered

Samantha: and it would be the same identical song

Samantha: Also when a friend of mine played Driver's High on a Maltese radio Station (Bastjanizi FM), some listeners phoned to complain

Joan Bonnici: Oh well, they're Maltese, never wanting to experience anything new! The model you mentioned for touring abroad though is only something major bands can do, with building up a fan base before touring, then touring to thank them. It's something minor bands wouldn't be able to do as easily don't you think?

Samantha: Yes minor bands always have that problem

Samantha: but its something worldwide I think

Joan Bonnici: How could they overcome it?

Samantha: that's why having a you-tube channel is a must

Samantha: and they could over come it by doing blogs or rather 'vlogs'

Samantha: make contact with fans

Samantha: stand out with their personality

Samantha: the problems with big bands is that they loose touch with the audience

Samantha: they become to big

Joan Bonnici: very true, in fact it's all things we're trying to push, youtube and blogs I mean

Joan Bonnici: Basically in my project on www.edoceleste.com we're trying to showcase an ideal website design which helps the bands promote themselves, promote the bands in the project, and use youtube and facebook etc, to be redirected to each other all the time, and sort of borrow each other's fans.

Joan Bonnici: What do you think of this idea?

Samantha: its pretty cool :)

Samantha: yeah sharing is key I think

Samantha: in everything

Samantha: a group of small bands can pool in resources even for a tour than eventually

Joan Bonnici: that's true, hopefully they'll be doing that more often.

Samantha: Like MySpace, Through My Space a lot of small artists grew to fame, even in the Maltese scene

Samantha: That's because they uploaded info and shared fans

Joan Bonnici: in a way, instead of the bands linking to other bands they like, or randomly looking up bands, you get a specific list of bands to chose from, so you get the chance of listening to a band just because you like their name

Joan Bonnici: yeah, you always have to make use of all the media available in order to succeed, back when there was only myspace, you had to be on it in order to be heard or seen.

Samantha: having one genre grouped together on a website is very important

Samantha: because netizens are easily distracted

Samantha: lazy

Samantha: and have a short span of attention

Samantha: they jump from 1 thing to another

Joan Bonnici: also very true, which is why everything has to be super simplified in order to get more fans, any complications, they lose interest and they leave!

Samantha: at least they can explore the same genre and keep within the same cyber environment

Samantha: I like the idea of the embedded videos

Samantha: because if you open the video on you-tube you tend to loose focus again

Joan Bonnici: thanks, we wanted fans to be able to see the bands as well

Joan Bonnici: which is why we upload a lot of videos so those that lose focus just end up going through more of our videos

Samantha: good one :)

Joan Bonnici: so you think it would be difficult or disorganized to have the same idea used for multiple genres?

Samantha: no if the idea is good it works for everything

Joan Bonnici: Any other comments or suggestions?

Samantha: hmm

Samantha: maybe obtaining interviews with these groups would be nice

Samantha: so they show that they are interested in fans

Samantha: and being interviewed gives the impression that they are already important

Joan Bonnici: true, it does. If only you knew how funny they are about that

Joan Bonnici: my friend has a website only for interviews and reviews on www.rokkyuu.com

Joan Bonnici: and in the beginning instead of thinking 'yey we're gonna be more famous,' they wouldnt wanna be interviewed.

Joan Bonnici: some of the bigger bands still refuse

Joan Bonnici: and the middle bands

Joan Bonnici: the minor bands love it though

Samantha: its a nice website

Samantha: I think its the mentality

Joan Bonnici: thanks for the suggestion though, it would be great

Samantha: I think that in Asia, they still believe that you should be famous with your own talents

Samantha: not through such 'commercial' ploys sort of

Samantha: they might not want to force fans in liking them

Samantha: they would just want to do their act and respect if people don't like them

Samantha: maybe that's why they are reluctant to do international promo tours and release English cds as well

Samantha: they don't like to put their music 'in your face' the American style

Samantha: which I think is something good and very respectful... they appreciate that people have a choice

Joan Bonnici: It's also a difference in culture; Asians just don't behave the same way. They'd rather get famous at their slow pace, then overnight and go down the next day.

Samantha: yes

Joan Bonnici: One last thing, how old are you?

Joan Bonnici: Forgot to ask at the beginning

Samantha: 22 turning 23 in August

Joan Bonnici: thank you

Anonymous, May 29th 2012.

Joan Bonnici: First question, how long have you been into vk?

Anonymous: Let's see, I would say about 12 years. Didn't even realize it's been that long...

Joan Bonnici: wow, that's long, I know the feeling though!

Joan Bonnici: do you remember how your interest started?

Anonymous: Oh yes, I think mine was rather different from most people though... You see, I took Gothic Literature as a subject in junior college (equivalent of senior high in other countries if I'm not wrong)... Then there was this girlfriend of mine who kept rattling about L'Arc~en~Ciel (I know they're not VK) and went on to LAREINE...

I wasn't really interested at first but the image, well it was like what I studied come to life, simply put...

Joan Bonnici: After that, did you try to discover other bands on your own or did you keep on exploring VK with your friend?

Anonymous: (Continuation to the previous qn) so as I started to like Goth Lit, I started to appreciate VK at about the same time...

I think in the early years, it was more like my friend throwing stuff at me, whatever she lent or gave me :P I listened

Joan Bonnici: haha, been through that myself

Anonymous: I didn't start exploring on my own till after I graduated from university when I had more time.

Joan Bonnici: how did you do that exploring?

Anonymous: Well, I just went to the local music stores like HMV or Tower Records and searched their Japanese music collection. I must say it was very difficult, it's still is 'cause they don't really import much Japanese VK music to begin with...

Joan Bonnici: I see. It still must have been very different, being able to buy CDs directly instead of waiting for weeks for shipping.

Joan Bonnici: what did you do in case you couldn't find CDs from a band you liked?

Joan Bonnici: in stores I mean

Anonymous: Yupz but the choices are way limited compared to shopping online... I don't remember having that problem at all in the beginning 'cause I knew very little about the bands and their music so it was more like looking at the cover of a band I knew... If I liked it enough to risk it, then I would buy it. I used the word "risk" because I would have absolutely no idea what the songs sounded like till I put in it in the CD player and the CDs were, still are very expensive.

Joan Bonnici: but even back then you already knew what the band sounded like more or less no? So it was a calculated risk of sorts. Did you ever buy the CDs without knowing absolutely anything about the band?

Anonymous: Nope, usually it would be from a band that my friend mentioned or something that I actually heard before.

Joan Bonnici: you moved on to online shopping later?

Joan Bonnici: what were the differences between buying at a store? Any problems, and did you take risks still by buying CDs from bands you didn't know so well?

Anonymous: Yupz when I was much older and more specific about the bands and their musical styles.

Anonymous: that's for the 1st qn.

Anonymous: Well, for starters, online shopping definitely offers many more choices. My only grievance is the high shopping costs and sometimes, the wait. And nope, thanks to YouTube, I wouldn't buy an album unless I have heard and actually like all or most of the songs from the album.

Joan Bonnici: so you became more careful when shopping online? Could it also be because you were spending more money at one go since you were buying online?

Anonymous: Umm for me, I think it's more of a case of having some many more choices to pick from and if I bought all those that I remotely fancy, I'll be broke before I know it. Buy yes paying more money does play a part as well, I guess.

Joan Bonnici: didn't you ever consider buying songs through itunes or other similar services?

Anonymous: I've been considering that for the past 5 years but the use of iTunes store is not very popular in my country & especially not for Japanese music of any sort :(So no

matter how much I wanted to make use of it, I just can't which makes it all the more frustrating, sighzzz...

Joan Bonnici: true. They're losing their own customers heh.

Anonymous: precisely I mean they release the digital versions for America and European countries and completely ignore us in Asia

Joan Bonnici: I think some bands with good sites have options to download music from them directly but it's most often in Japanese. Does the language pose any other problems to you?

Joan Bonnici: (which is funny considering most of their efforts are directed at Asian markets really).

Anonymous: The language doesn't pose a problem for me 'cause I know Japanese so I could more or less navigate myself around the site. But most of these downloads are only available in Japan or certain countries & as usual, we are not included on that list.

Joan Bonnici: Let's talk a little about promotion, have you ever noticed or checked out bands touring together or taking pictures together?

Anonymous: Yupz but mostly through the recommended links on YouTube. I search for a certain band and links for other bands of similar style would pop up. If I'm curious enough, I'll start clicking all the related links.

Anonymous: My most recent discovery, Satsuki if I may add

Joan Bonnici: So it pretty much happens randomly and then you keep on searching and discovering stuff about the band.

Anonymous: Yupz usually it's unplanned

Anonymous: Oh Wikipedia can be quite useful in my case too

Joan Bonnici: about the bands and their official sites. Have you noticed that most of them tend not to upload full PVs or song demos for free?

Joan Bonnici: haha yeah wiki can be quite resourceful at times.

Anonymous: Actually this is gonna sound painful but I don't really make use of their official websites... I mean with YouTube & Wikipedia, I could learn so much more and faster about a band. I only visit their sites when I need their tour dates and locations or to check out their concert merchandise.

Joan Bonnici: so you're not familiar with promotion that these bands do? Like magazines, online advertising and stuff?

Anonymous: I do buy magazines if my fave band is on the cover so I get to know some of the promotions through those and sometimes, through the inserts that come with their CDs.

Anonymous: But as far as online advertising is concerned, nope 'cause I'll never benefit from those

Anonymous: not with the region restrictions they put up so why bother?

Joan Bonnici: So asides from having to buy the physical CD or nothing at all, what other problems do you feel you encounter when you're trying to find information about these bands?

Anonymous: So far, I could only think of listening to proper music samples. By "proper", I mean putting up a sample whereby people can actually make sense and get a feel of what the music is like and not just a mere 30 to 45 seconds...

Anonymous: In comparison record companies from America, European countries and Taiwan are doing a much better job

Joan Bonnici: as part of the economics of free concept, bands should put a lot of their stuff available online for free. This would help attract more fans. What do you think about it?

Anonymous: In this time and age, a definite yes. I mean seriously, letting more people listen to your stuff for free is to only way to get their attention and grow your fanbase. With all the competition from other countries and other genres, no one and I mean absolutely no one is going to wait around all day for you to knock on their door. We're not dependent on mass media anymore.

Joan Bonnici: ok, let's move on to the website now.

Joan Bonnici: Most fans seem to want the most simple design possible, with straight to the point information, no cluttering of the pages and audio and video samples of course. What's your take on it all?

Anonymous: Well if you mean that the information is well-organized where they can navigate the site easily, then yes. Some of the pages I saw were so cluttered and disorganized that I didn't even know where to start...

Joan Bonnici: any other suggestions as to what would make a site more interesting or easier to navigate?

Anonymous: Graphics are a must but they are subjected to the individuals. At the end of the day, easy navigation really depends on how you organize the information. More directions on how to use some of the features would help too.

Anonymous: Oh one more thing, use of tiny fonts is a definite no-no.

Joan Bonnici: yeah, it's annoying when you'd have to stay zooming in!

Anonymous: unrelated info on one single page can be quite confusing as well

Joan Bonnici: also, what would make it easier for you to find out about new bands, besides them uploading their stuff all over the internet for free?

Joan Bonnici: like, not taking down fan vids for no reason, not making people take down pics from fan sites etc.

Anonymous: That could be one of them. But more importantly, I think the record companies or the bands have to be more active in providing their information to fans. For example, I bought a CD by Within Temptation that came with "Open Disc" technology or something like that but basically what it did was to get my email registered with their database so whenever they have new tours, singles, albums and PVs, I'll receive the information 1st hand via email.

Joan Bonnici: so it saves you time looking stuff up or having to go through a whole facebook page of updates.

Anonymous: As long as I like the band and it catches my attention, I'll go and see their promotional stuff.

Joan Bonnici: what about offering something extra to the fans? Like signed goods or freebies. Most japanese bands seem only to do it for their local fans.

Anonymous: Yupz and most importantly, it makes me feel valued as a fan

Anonymous: To your qn about receiving freebies:

Anonymous: From an overseas fan's pt of view, it just seems like plain discrimination

Joan Bonnici: they dont exactly aim at attracting these fans do they?

Anonymous: Nope and to make things worse, it seems like we're being penalized sometimes just by being overseas fans. For example, I wanted to buy a photobook of L'Arc~en~Ciel a few years back but it wasn't sold online on Amazon or anyway and I

could only order it via Kinokuniya. In Japan, the photobook would have S$50 after conversion but I ended up paying over a hundred bucks for it.

Joan Bonnici: that's unfair, you end up dishing out way too much cash. And since they're collectibles, if fans in japan sell them back they would make the same money out of it, but you'd probably end up with a loss.

Anonymous: Exactly and so I asked myself, what do I really get out of this really? Discriminated simply 'cause of my location? I mean it wasn't like we liked them any less than Japanese fans?

Joan Bonnici: Possibly Japan's isolation has effected it's music market as well.

Joan Bonnici: also, new marketing models will be moving towards making money from concerts and not from CDs, so bands are expected to tour more frequently and in more locations. If you had the option what would you prefer; buying CDs or putting the money towards concerts, or both?

Anonymous: If I don't really like the album, I'd still go to their concert like I just did recently. Chances are I would end up buying the album anyway if I really enjoyed the live. You know like a spur of the moment thing 'Cause for some fans, they'll buy anything if they feel good. That's what they meant by it's the concerts that sell the CDs and not the other way around I guess.

Joan Bonnici: yeah, and the fact that you can buy the CDs at concerts XD

Joan Bonnici: whereas you can't find them in stores.

Joan Bonnici: any other reason why you'd give priority to the concert over the CD?

Anonymous: In relation to the recent concert I went to, it's a sense of attachment of having liked a band for so long so it's a bit like seeing an old friend. Sorry I'm starting to sound old here, but more importantly, the atmosphere in the concert venue, being on the spot and watching your fave band live, no high quality CD could ever beat that.

Saliba Stacey, 22nd May 2012.

Joan Bonnici: Age?

Stacey: 19 next thur lol

Joan Bonnici: how long have you been a fan of VK for?

Stacey: 5 years

Joan Bonnici: Do you remember how your interest started?

Stacey: through anime

Joan Bonnici: did you discover vk music through anime by yourself or did you have friends that helped you?

Stacey: it was me and another few friends

Joan Bonnici: Did you look things up online, share music, randomly find pictures of bands?

Stacey: the whole lot

Joan Bonnici: can you explain in more detail?

Stacey: we started by looking up music videos online

Joan Bonnici: related to anime songs I take it? and through youtube?

Stacey: mostly yes then form that we ended up sharing music links

Joan Bonnici: Can you mention some of your favourite bands?

Stacey: The Gazette, Dir en grey, LMc, Miyavi, despairs ray

Joan Bonnici: Are there other genres of music you like besides visual kei?

Stacey: other than vk i mostly listen to random songs i like generally they're the rock genre or heavier

Joan Bonnici: where do you usually find information regarding the bands you like?For example, discographies, tour dates, biographies etc?

Stacey: just with the favorite band and id be updated mostly about discographies and tours

Joan Bonnici: so you use their main website?

Stacey: their website yes. We'd also access fan sites, and cd selling sites [such as cdjapan and yesasia].

Joan Bonnici: Is it easier to use the official website or to use fan sites and CD selling sites to find out about new releases?

Stacey: Normally both would be quite in synch but the CD sellers are more often readily available in English than the main website which would sometimes not even be accessible to non-subscribed fans

Joan Bonnici: About sites like CD Japan, does it also encourage you to buy the CD directly since the information would be clear and the item available for sale or pre-ordering?

Stacey: Yes it makes acquiring CD's and merchandise a whole lot easier, sometimes id have a cd pre-ordered weeks in advanced thanks to Cdjapan

Joan Bonnici: Do you ever buy the songs only through sites like iTunes?

Stacey: no they don't really tempt me to either. I prefer having a hard cd copy then simply getting the song via itunes

Joan Bonnici: You still prefer buying the CD even though most songs are easily downloadable online for free?

Stacey: most definitely

Joan Bonnici: why is that?

Stacey: i find it better support for the band, plus I'm a bit of a collector. I like seeing my collections grow nicely on my shelf

Joan Bonnici: Haha I know the feeling. Some other fans have told me how CD prices and especially the shipping prices have been increasing and that has discouraged them from buying the CDs. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Stacey: It is true that some shipping prices have been going up and even the CD's arent that cheap in themselves, but hey, isn't that why I'm working if i see that i cant afford it at the moment id wait a bit logner to buy the CD but in the end i would still prefer getting the cd

Joan Bonnici: If you had to chose between using that money to buy CDs or using that money to attend concerts, which one would you prefer and why?

Stacey: Concerts, ive never been to one so that is already a temptation in itself. plus i can buy merchandise from a concert as well to make up for the CD, the atmosphere of actually seeing the band live would also be euphoric

Joan Bonnici: I agree, it would also make the mementos such as the ticket and the merchandise more personal after the show!

Stacey: eeexactly and going with a friend would make it all the more memorable

Joan Bonnici: When it comes to finding out about new bands, how do you do it and which sites, magazines or friends do you use to do it?

Stacey: most magazines such as Shoxx and Arena prove really helpful, and websites such as music japan plus are fantastic. while shopping for CDS online you also find lots of suggestions for other bands and other CDS

Joan Bonnici: so do you buy these other cds just because of the suggestions, or do you try to read about the band and hear and see what they sound like first?

Stacey: id read up a bit on the band first before actually buyin the CD. but seeing the name would help me to discover the band in the first palce

Joan Bonnici: does seeing names of new bands on other sites like youtube, for example on the side after watching a video, also help?

Stacey: yes those help a lot too. especially when the name comes with a picture or a video

Joan Bonnici: which one do you prefer between suggestions from CD sales sites and youtube?

Stacey: both are good. i think youtube is slightly better as they come with the video and the music as well, so you can just click, sit back, and listen

Joan Bonnici: Did you ever notice that some bands do commentaries or take pictures with other bands?

Stacey: Yes I did and i simply LOVE them.

Joan Bonnici: do you look up those other bands as well?

Stacey: especially if theres also an interview of some sort involved. I would yes

Joan Bonnici: do you think bands should start giving away some of their music away for free? as in giving away a whole song not just a music sample?

Stacey: hmmmmm yes and no

Joan Bonnici: care to explain more?

Stacey: no becuase after all their music is whats keeping the band up and running

Yes because its the best form of advertisement for the band

Music videos on youtube for example are brilliant for the sole reason that people can hear their music and can see them play

that was how i started to listen to visual kei in the first palce

Joan Bonnici: well, most japanese bands don't really give away their promo videos for free, but they try to sell them on dvds it's the fans that upload them for free on youtube.

Stacey: That's true

Joan Bonnici: but yeah it does seem that giving away something attracts more fans. at least they can find out what a band sounds like.

Stacey: exactly. people will not just buy a music cd without knowing what's in it, or without having an idea of what's in it. they will ahve heard the song somewhere whether on the radio, or on an mtv station

Joan Bonnici: So do you think that a website having direct link to youtube videos of the bands, their song samples and discographies etc, would be easier to help discover new bands?

Stacey: yes they would, cause vk bands would link from one band to another and i think people would find them more user friendly

Joan Bonnici: so do you think www.edoceleste.com fulfills this role?

Stacey: Yes it looks pretty well organized and user friendly, and all the artists are listed were easy to see, and include most of what one would need

Joan Bonnici: Thanks. Yeah, we've been trying to find the simplest design possible.

Stacey: the bands and their music!

Joan Bonnici: Let me explain a little more in detail about the project. I'm trying to use Edoceleste as a main platform, with direct links to youtube and to cd sales sites, so to make it easier for fans to discover a band, hear them and know where to buy their music from if they want to. However, CD sales have been going down, so new sales models are moving towards making a profit from live shows and less profit from Cd sales etc. Also, because of piracy a lot of songs are avilable online for free, so most people don't want to pay for them.

Stacey: pff and htey call themselves fans

Joan Bonnici:This model is trying to make use of all that by showing to bands that giving away your music for free, attracts more fans and makes you more famous. So even

though they wouldnt be selling as much CDs they would still be making enough money to survive and be famous through shows.

Yeah, but unfortunately it's what most people are doing. I'm sure that for every person you know that buys CDs you know a couple that don't

Stacey: Visiting Europe would help the business as well *puppy eyeS* and yes thats the truth sadly

Joan Bonnici: yeah I'm pretty sure of that too. Care to tell me what you think about the whole idea behind the project?

Stacey: I think its a great idea, it helps to make all the points meet, showing bands that giving away free music attracts a larger fan base, and helping live shows fill up with more people

Joan Bonnici: and having more live shows

Stacey: while showing the fans that buying cds is another way of supporting the band, and yes more live shows in more countries i hope!!! im getting tired of watchign them touring japan year after year

Joan Bonnici: Yeah, gaze only came here once, and people expected them to come back but they didnt. Any other comments or questions?

Stacey: hmm other then "i hope htey get their asses over here next year"... no i think that is all, and i hope that the project goes well!

Joan Bonnici: Thanks!

B.1 Terms of Use Contract

EdoCeleste
Information release
Terms of use for the website

The artist warrants that he/she is the owner of the work, holder of the copyright thereon, possesses all rights therein, and can rightfully enter into this agreement.

The artist/s warrants themselves to give duly updated information regarding their work (photographs / music-samples / information related to the artist) to EdoCeleste.com by not later than a week after it is released on their main website.

The artist further warrants to allow EdoCeleste.com to use and incorporate a direct link to the iTunes.com account (or relevant online music sales account) of the artist/s. As part of the agreement to be signed hereunder, the artist/s' obliges themselves to give EdoCeleste.com a copy of their monthly 'statement of sales' obtained from iTunes.com.

EdoCeleste.com obliges themselves to use such 'statement of sales' for research, educational, and non-commercial purposes only. Should EdoCeleste.com want to use this data outside of Graduate School of Media Design, Keio University's studies and research, a separate contract will have to be made.

The artist/s also warrants that EdoCeleste.com is in no way whatsoever related to iTunes.com. iTunes.com (or any other music distribution website) will require a percentage payoff from the sales of the artist incurred through iTunes.com. The artist/s further acknowledges that EdoCeleste.com or its representatives will not make payment to any third party (iTunes.com, etc) on the artist/s behalf.

The artist agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless, EdoCeleste.com, and its representative employees from and against any and all claims, damages, liabilities, costs, expenses, negligence, or claim of negligence, including but not limited to attorney's fees, which may be incurred by reason of any breach, or claim of breach, of the within representations and warranties or arising out of any matter contained in this entry.

Should the artist/s fail to supply any of the above mentioned data, EdoCleste.com reserves the right to remove the artist/s' files from the website exhibition.

For the artist/s concerned:

Band name:
Name of Signing Band Representative:

Address:
City: State: Zip:

By submission of this release form and my signature below, I agree to the above stated conditions and warranties.

Signature:_____ Date:_____
Print Name:_____Title:_____

In the event the individual is a legal minor, Parent or Legal Guardian Signature is required:
Parent of Legal Guardian Signature_____
Print Name:_____Relationship:_____

B.2 Media Rights Release Form

EdoCeleste

MEDIA RIGHTS RELEASE FORM

Photography/Digital Rights and Clearance Agreement

The artist warrants that he/she is the owner of the work, holder of the copyright thereon, possesses all rights therein, and can rightfully enter into this agreement.

The artist/s further warrants that all rights, clearances, releases and licenses necessary for promotion of this work have been secured so that website exhibition, and promotion will not obligate any of EdoCeleste.com's representatives to make payment to any third party, and that there will not be any violation or infringement upon any rights of any person, firm, or corporation, including, without limitation, rights to privacy and publicity.

The artist agrees to grant EdoCeleste.com the right to use his/her music samples, photographs and information from any future entry for promotion and website exhibition for non-profit distribution or use.

The artist agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless, EdoCeleste.com, and its representative employees from and against any and all claims, damages, liabilities, costs, expenses, negligence, or claim of negligence, including but not limited to attorney's fees, which may be incurred by reason of any breach, or claim of breach, of the within representations and warranties or arising out of any matter contained in this entry.

For the artist/s concerned:
Band name:

Name of Signing Band Representative:

Address:

City: State: Zip:

By submission of this release form and my signature below, I agree to the above stated conditions and warranties.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Print Name:_____Title:_____

In the event the individual is a legal minor, Parent or Legal Guardian Signature is required:

Parent of Legal Guardian Signature_____

Print Name:_____Relationship:_____

C.1 Artist questionnaire

To whom it may concern,

Following the recent change in the team members of the Renaissance Rouge, the project and website have been transferred to the domain Edo Celeste (www.edoceleste.com) from where we continue to provide our services.

We have been promoting your bands though our website and other media, including youtube, facebook, Amazon, iTunes, CD Baby, and your official website.

Currently we are using Edo Celeste to test the promotion method called third party platform based cross-promotion. Here we use our platform (Edo Celeste) to interact with fans of each band in order to get fans exposed to other bands. The reason behind this is to try to further increase the amount of exposure, and therefore promotion, each band gets.

We would like you to complete this questionnaire in order to know how you feel about this third party platform based cross-promotion and its use, so that the data can be used to further better this system.

Your answers and identity will remain anonymous. Please feel free to not answer any questions should you wish to do so. Completed questionnaires may be returned to joan_bonnici@hotmail.com .

Yours sincerely,
Joan Bonnici.
Edo Celeste Project Leader.

Band Questionnaire:

Terminology:
- Band cross-promotion is when your band is promoted through other bands (example, through mention on a blog or website).

- Cross-promotion through a third party based platform is when another party, in this case Edo Celeste is used to do indirect cross-promotion between bands, meaning without direct mention through a blog or website etc, by the bands concerned. Instead the website and its other links are used to mention to the fans of Band A that there are also Bands B and C on Edo Celeste. This way fans from each band can easily get access to information from other bands.

Please mark with an x where it applies, and write down an answer to any that apply:

      1. Do you use cross-promotion as a means to advertise your band?
Yes
No

1.1 If yes, through how many other bands do you promote yourself?

1-5,
6-10,
11-15,
16-20,
More than 20.

2. Do you consider cross-promotion an effective way to advertise your band?

Yes
No

2.1 Please give a reason for your answer.

3. Have you ever considered doing cross-promotion through a 3rd party platform?

Yes
No

3.1 Please give a reason for your answer.

4. Have you ever done cross-promotion through a 3rd party platform such as Edo Celeste?

Yes
No

4.1 If yes, through whom did you do such 3rd party platform based cross-promotion?

5. Do you think a third party platform based cross-promotion is effective?

Yes
No
Don't know.

5.1 Please give a reason for your answer.

6. Do you think a third-party platform based cross-promotion is more effective than regular cross-promotion?

Yes
No
Don't know.

6.1 Please give a reason for your answer.

7. From your personal experience do you have proof that third party platform based promotion is effective?

Yes

No

       7.1 Please give a reason for your answer.

8. Would you look to see third party platform based cross-promotion implemented in more music-related websites in the future?

Yes
No
Don't know

       8.1 Please give a reason for your answer.

9. Would you like to be involved in more third party platform based cross-promotion in the future?

Yes
No
Don't know

       9.1 Please give a reason for your answer.

10. Do you have any other comments?

Thanks for your time.

C.2 Exit points for EdoCeleste

Exit Links			
Exit Page	Exit Link	Count	Percent
/pages/links.html	1	3	3.95
...cide_ali/suicide_ali_general.html	SUICIDEALIsOfficialWebsite	3	3.95
/artists/layzis/layzis_general.html	...gesweblinkmakerbadge_ituneslrggif	3	3.95
...ists/luzmelt/luzmelt_general.html	LuzmeltsOfficialWebsite	3	3.95
/pages/links.html	1	3	3.95
...ts/the_fool/the_fool_general.html	...gesweblinkmakerbadge_ituneslrggif	2	2.63
/artists/elm/elm_general.html	ELMsOfficialWebsite	2	2.63
...o_qual/calmando_qual_general.html	...edocelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	2	2.63
/artists/satan/satan_general.html	...gesweblinkmakerbadge_ituneslrggif	2	2.63
/pages/links.html	1	2	2.63
...errow/project_merrow_general.html	ProjectMerrowsOfficialWebsite	2	2.63
/artists/frenzy/frenzy_general.html	FrenzysOfficialWebsite	2	2.63
/pages/links.html	1	2	2.63
/pages/links.html	1	2	2.63
...ts/misaruka/misaruka_general.html	misarukasOfficialWebsite	2	2.63
/artists/frenzy/frenzy_general.html	DarkestLabyrinthStarwaveRecords	2	2.63
/artists/satan/satan_general.html	SaTaNsOfficialWebsite	2	2.63
..._hd/the_sound_bee_hd_general.html	...edocelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	1	1.32
..._hd/the_sound_bee_hd_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32
..._hd/the_sound_bee_hd_general.html	THESOUNDBEEHDsOfficialWebsite	1	1.32
...ts/the_fool/the_fool_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32
...ts/the_fool/the_fool_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
...ts/the_fool/the_fool_general.html	thefoolsOfficialWebsite	1	1.32
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...iah/variable_messiah_general.html	...gesweblinkmakerbadge_ituneslrggif	1	1.32
...iah/variable_messiah_general.html	VariableMessiahsOfficialWebsite	1	1.32
...iah/variable_messiah_general.html	...edocelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	1	1.32
...iah/variable_messiah_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
..._hd/the_sound_bee_hd_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
...o_qual/calmando_qual_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32
...ists/luzmelt/luzmelt_general.html	...edocelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	1	1.32
...ists/luzmelt/luzmelt_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
/artists/satan/satan_general.html	...EdoCelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	1	1.32

Exit Page	Exit Link	Count	Percent
...ists/luzmelt/luzmelt_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32
...cide_ali/suicide_ali_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
/pages/links.html	1	1	1.32
...cide_ali/suicide_ali_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32
...cide_ali/suicide_ali_general.html	...edocelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	1	1.32
/artists/satan/satan_general.html	...edocelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	1	1.32
/artists/satan/satan_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32
/artists/lix/lix_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32
/artists/lix/lix_general.html	...edocelestecomimagesamazon_icongif	1	1.32
/artists/lix/lix_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
/artists/lix/lix_general.html	lixsOfficialWebsite	1	1.32
...o_qual/calmando_qual_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
/artists/satan/satan_general.html	...edocelestecomimagescdbaby_icongif	1	1.32
/pages/contact.html	info@edocelestecom	1	1.32
...o_qual/calmando_qual_general.html	CalmandoQualsOfficialWebsite	1	1.32
...ts/misaruka/misaruka_general.html	...docelestecomimagesmyspace_linkgif	1	1.32

C.3 Survey and Survey Results

Results for survey: EdoCeleste

Page: 1/1

Question 1

This survey is done as part of the studies in fulfillment of my Master's Degree at Keio's Graduate School of Media Design.
All the bands participating in my study at www.edoceleste.com have consented to participate in this study and have their data hosted on EdoCeleste.

Your name and identity will remain anonymous throughout the survey.
If there's anything you don't want to answer, feel free not to, however if you fill in everything it will help me get better statistics, and in turn you will help the bands involved, and the bands which will be involved in this and similar projects in the future.

Overview of the project:
Japan is the second largest world music market. Record sales have been plummeting worldwide and new methods of promotion and distribution are required in order for current and new musicians to be able to survive out of their trade; their music. This study tests out new ways to do viral cross-promotion for bands.

For example, we use social media like Youtube and Facebook to keep our fans updated. When you access our Youtube account, you can be re-directed to either the bands page, our Youtube channel, or our site, depending on your choice. If you visit our youtube channel you are likely to view the other bands we are promoting, and therefore you'll be exposed to their music. If you go to the artist's site, you might find their blog, where they mention us from time to time. If you end up on edoceleste, you will notice our design, catered to get you interested in the bands we promote. Yes, there's few bands for now, and maybe we might have to change some things when we get more bands. However that will be the basic design.

Each artist has their own music samples and links to their pages and sales pages once you click on them. It's all done to facilitate the spread of information about them, and to help you, the fan be able to get official information in English, with links to buy the music directly from the musicians you like.

Terminology:
Cross-promotion occurs when two bands or more promote each other. This is part of what we're trying to achieve here.
Viral promotion occurs when your information is being spread like a virus. We want these bands to be all over the place, which is why we asked them to supply music samples so we could create their youtube videos. If you like any of them, go ahead and share them, that's exactly what we want you to do! Our channel is RenaissanceRouge (the former name of our site).

No answers required.

Question 2*

Age:

Text Answers (101)
18
23
23
28
28
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28
21
25
23
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24
27
22
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22
26
22
23
19
26
24
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21
23
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18
22
14
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20
21
24
32
19
25
23
23
26
40
21
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21
17
16
33
30
24

Question 3

Country of Residence:

Text Answers (99)
Malta
Malta
Malta
Singapore
Singapore
Malta
Malta
Malta
Japan
Netherlands
USA
USA
USA
United States
Canada
United States
USA
Czech Republic
Japan
United States of America
Russia
Poland
Finland
France
Brunei
Moldova
indonesia
Russian Federation
Slovenia
Indonesia
Japan
Spain
Sweden
France
Singapore
Hungary
Sweden
Saudi Arabia
Australia
Japan
United Kingdom
USA
Mexico
Japan
Portugal
Germany
USA
The United States of America
Netherlands
The Netherlands
Poland
UK
Poland
Finland

Poland
Malta
Finland
United States
Croatia
United States
France
USA
USA
Chile
USA
United States
USA
Serbia
Sweden
USA
Belgium
United States
Germany
USA
USA
United States
Portugal
Canada
united states
USA
United States
Poland
usa
USA
singapore
United States of America
Netherlands
germany
France
USA
France
MEXICO
United States
United States
Slovakia
France
germany
USA
Brazil

Question 4

Do you consider yourself a fan of visual-kei music?

Yes	94	93.07%
No	7	6.93%
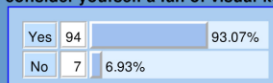
Question 5

If you answered Yes above, what other genres of music do you like? Please select all that apply.

Genre	Count	Percentage
Pop	45	11.14%
Pop-rock	68	16.83%
Rock	86	21.29%
Goth	33	8.17%
Hip-hop	18	4.46%
Rap-rock	22	5.45%
Metal	70	17.33%
Death Metal	17	4.21%
Other	45	11.14%
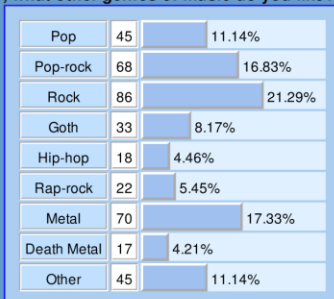
Indie
Opera, Classic Rock, Motown, Techno,
classical
darkwave, shoegaze, cabaret
Industrial, electronic, synthpop, NDH, punk-rock, glam
Classical, classic rock, electro pop, alternative
Classical
K-pop
Jazz, Classic
Experimental, Ethereal, Shoegaze,etc
classic
Classical
Punk
jazz
Instrumental
post-hardcore, industrial, darkwave, black metal, folk metal, nintendocore, trancecore
Alternative, indie, baroque
classical, anime/game music, movie soundtracks, experimental, dance, punk
Symphonic rock
Though, I'll listen to pretty much anything if I find it catchy
celtic music, Swedish folkmusic, classical music
Jazz
Ska, Punkrock
Folk
deathrock
classical
k-pop
jazz, classical
Triphop, electro, ambient, punk
RnB, Soul and korean popmusic
Other metal sub-genres (Black, Pagan, Doom), Neo-Folk
Alternative, Indie
R&B
R&B
Electronica

Question 6

Do you buy music from the artists you like?

Yes	97		96.04%
No	4	3.96%	

Question 7

If you answered yes above, which of the following formats do you prefer and why?

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CDs	Digital Downloads
Because it's something you can showcase and there is less chance of loosing or accidentally deleting the songs you just bought.	
Prefer CDs as they are more physical and feel much more like. Purchasr	
Order from Amazon.jp or from CD shops	I want to but unfortunately, the service is not available in Singapore. The Japanese/VK artistes tend to release their digital downloads only for Japan, some countries in Europe and US but not for Asia, e.g KISAKI PROJECT featuring Satsuki.
For collection. Some CDs have beautiful cover photo of the artist.	
I prefer CD format. I love the cover art of the albums/singles and the fact that I have a growing collection makes it all the more enjoyable for me. I also find it more comfortable to play the music off a CD.	
Only for collection	For convenience!
I rather have a hard copy than digital downloads. Never tried buying digital downloads	
Like to have a copy in my hands, enjoy the art of booklet, for lyrics as well	
Actually kinda same price as in Europe/America. I really think that CD's in Japan are way to expensive.	MP3 320kbps Because good sound, good quality. That's what you want.
I like having something physical, having the official lyrics and building a collection.	
I prefer CD because I don't like paying for something and not getting something physical. Love to have the album credits in the CD jacket.	
I like the solid feeling of cds	
I prefer CDs/physical media because I enjoy the experience of owning something tangible, and I also enjoy special shop privileges from buying multiple types.	Because physical media is SO expensive, I prefer digital downloads for artists that I like, but aren't my "#1", so to speak. I buy digital downloads of artists that I'm interested in whenever they are available.
CDs can be saved forever.	This is just easier because it is faster and easier to move to a music player of choice, such as an IPOD,etc.
CDs for particular bands because I like to collect them and see the effort put into creating the case.	mostly as a last resort if a CD is sold out, or if it is ridiculously expensive to ship.
I buy CDs because I like to listen to music in the card or while I exercise. I also love to see the album artwork and to actually hold and physically own the music.	I do download music as well but it's more to sample the music before I buy it. Or I just purchase it digitally. I listen to a lot of foreign/Japanese bands whose music is very hard to get in my country and/or is very, very expensive. So while I do like to buy the music, I do download some of it as well.
I like CD's from the bands that I truly enjoy. It's nice being able to have a copy of the lyrics.	I like digital downloads for bands that I like, but don't want to pay shipping fees for to buy a copy of the CD.
I like having a physical product in my hands. I also like to be able to see the album art, read the lyrics, and enjoy the special bonuses (trading cards or instore events or what-have-you) that usually come with them.	
I will always prefer to have a hard copy. Files can be deleted and lost or corrupted, but to have something physical in my hand is wonderfully fulfilling and it's something I know I will have forever, should I choose to of course keep the CD in good shape or not sell it. Besides that fact, I love the bonuses that often come with cd purchases and having the booklets always makes me happy.	
They are real and material.	
I prefer CD's. It's a visible, touchable, pretty thing standing on the shelf and reminding me about the artists I like whenever I look there. CD's look really good these days: booklets with lyrics and pictures, nice cover art - looking at tem really makes me happy. CD is also something I can sell if I don't want it anymore and get some of my money back.	
If it's a band I'm a real big fan of, I want CDs. Mostly for cover art, leaflet and the joy of being able to show off my cd collection to my friends.	If it's a band I just listen to and like but am not a huge fan of, digital downloads are better, because they save time and money. I never listen to CDs, I just rip them and listen to mp3s.
Physical because I like the scans and I'm somewhat CD-fetish xD	
I prefer having real CDs in my hands, being able to look through the booklets and enjoy HQ sound	
SO ia have a real something or memorabillia of the band I like	

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It's always a pleasure to have at home examples of good design (in case the release was designed well enough that I bought it).	
I buy as many as I can, to support the artists and because albums/singles are something one can hold. Beside usually there are other things you get with it.	
I prefer buying cds because I love collecting cds from the artists I love.	
I prefer CD's because I like having an actual, tangible object as opposed to a digital file, partially because of the threat of losing the digital file to a virus/corruption/etc.	
I prefer CDs. I like to have a CD collection.	
A physical CD doesn't get lost. It doesn't disappear if your computer crashes. It's more expensive, yes, but collecting digital downloads just isn't worth it. With actual CDs I can showcase my music while I support the band. On top of that the sound quality is at it's best when ripped from CD, not downloaded from iTunes. If I want to, I can choose to have lossless formats, but via an online store, I get what they have.	
I prefer Cds format, it's more expensive, but have the Cds of your favorites artist is more pleasurable than have just a mp3 file (that you can download free evrywhere in the web).	
It's easier to rip the songs off from my own cd and transfer to my ipod. Also, I like the packaging that comes along with it, and you might get extra stuff like trading cards and such. (I've never actually tried digital downloads)	
CD, DVD - I collect CD-s if I can afford them, and I really want to own all my favourite band's live DVD-s, but... that's a lot of money haha.	
It's solid and you can't lose it as easily as a mp3 file.	
CD/DVDs you can play it practically anywhere.	It's easier to share and upload without worrying about a damaged CD
I like to have something tangible and in my possession.	
1. For the sake of collecting 2. You can have it signed 3. You get bonuses such as posters or tickets to instore events.	
I prefer CDs as with Visual Kei a lot of effort goes into the artwork designs, there tends to be meaning behind the look of the CD. Also I like having the CD in physical form in general.	
CDs are preferred, simply because you receive a "tangible" release with a case, booklet and any other extras. However, because of the inflated Japanese price (plus expensive shipping), I can only buy CDs for the top bands that I want to support.	Digital downloads are also nice, especially because they are much cheaper (Usually only about $1 per song). However, you don't really get anything extra with downloaded music. That makes it seem less special for people, especially when they can usually find illegal downloads for free.
I prefer buying CDs because I want to have at least one original CD from my favourite bands. Unfortunaly, shipping methods are so expensive for all oversea fans so I am not able to buy always all CDs my fav bands release.	
I prefer CDs because I primarily buy Japanese CDs and am not fluent enough in Japanese to understand the lyrics without looking at the lyric booklet that comes with most CDs. I like being able to take the booklet with me so I can transcribe the lyrics with my electronic dictionary when I have free time.	
	I prefer digital downloads because I can put them in my mp3
I prefer having the items in my shelves, kind of conservatively.	
I feel as if you get more out of a hard copy, some things get lost in digital music sometimes. Also, if your computer crashes, you lose everything you've bought.	
It's frequently easier to obtain CDs and legal digital downloads, depending on the band.	
I prefer CDs, because I enjoy actually holding the CD in my hand, seeing the cover and receiving the extra stuff you sometimes get.	
Mostly the artwork is very nice, and if they come with priviledges it's even better ofcourse. Also, to me it seems that a digital download is easier lost than a cd (pc-crash, etc).	
I like to have physical records. Also CDs usually come with lyrics booklets and photos.	

	Digital downloads don't incur a customs charge - the UK has a very low customs limit on items bought by mail.
because of that beautiful moment, when you get a new cd and you're unpacking it ;D	
I'll buy a CD if I want to purchase full album. I wouldn't download a full album cause I want to get the CD case with the cover art (considering the amount of money used). To have your favourite CD found from your shelf feels good and valuable.	When buying a single song then it's a lot easier to use digital downloads. There aren't many artists, whose music I actually like to an extent that I'd actually buy full albums. If there's a song I like then I get it if I'm able to download it from an online store, if not then I wouldn't buy the product at all.
buy them, but rarely	I prefer this one, because DDs are easier available.
Because it's easier to carry around in case youll need to listen to it in car stereo or partied + Youll have less risk of losing data when buying them digitally	Never Bought Digital Downloads:/
I prefer CDs as I like to own concrete objects. I also believe that artists will get more money through CD sale than through digital downloads. The third reason is that I don't want to buy things via internet due to data safety risks.	
I prefer having CDs from my favorite bands. It's tangible and holds more importance than a download.	
I prefer CDs because it feels better to have a physical possession than a digital download that anyone can find. But the main reason, though, is because they often feature beautiful artwork. Lyric booklets are a huge plus, as well.	
it's the real thing ! but they are too many types... and they are expensive...	cheap, but we cannot find everything... and the quality is not always optimal
I love being able to hold the CD and seeing the insert. I also love being able to visually see my collection. It makes me proud, for some reason. I will buy a lot of different formats (CDs, digital if they're available before I can get to the store, records, special editions) if I really like the artist.	
I like both formats and buy both. CDs I like because they can be lovely as objects, and I like having booklets and art, and, while it is possible to damage or lose them, the data cannot be lost if your computer crashes or your internet/website/cloud account goes down. I also have an attachment to listening to songs in a particular order, and if I have the album only as digital, I'm more likely to only listen to the songs that I really like and ignore the rest.	I use digital as backups for my cds. This format is much more portable and easier to move around from computer to mp3 player, as well as often being cheaper and instantaneous.
Because I enjoy the original artwork (booklets, photobooks, etc.) and having the CD phisically	
I'll only buy CDs for bands I truly love. I'll usually get the limited edition version that come with special features, making the money spent more "worthwhile" (even if it is more expensive in the long run...) When I visited Japan I bought many used CDs because of convenience.	I prefer digital downloads over CDs mainly due to convenience when it comes to storage and the ability to easily add it to my MP3 player or other device (without having to rip it). It is also generally less expensive.
I consider myself a "collector" for the artists I buy music from, so I like to have a hard copy.	
Definitely CDs! I like having something tangible, I guess. I like looking at the booklets, etc. Plus, Lyrics.	For some reason, I'm actually discouraged by digital downloads... that's just me though. I won't completely shun it. It does, however, work in favor for my impatience in regards to having to wait a week or so for shipping. I still prefer CDs though.
I love to collect CDs and keep them on shelves. They're pretty to look at, with pictures and everything, and I can read in the pamphlets. I usually transfer the songs into MP3 files myself so I can listen on computer and MP3 too.	
Limited Editions- I like watching the dvd extras PVs, makings, ect. I also enjoy the booklets, poster, card that come with them.	Normally I don't buy them.
I like the artwork on de CD's as well, though I prefer vinyl over all.	
CDs by far because of it physical tangibility and unlike digital downloads buying the limited or different versions of the same release(s) usually gets you some type of privilege. Like a comment dvd,photobook, signed goods or a poster. Also digital downloads are yes cheaper and easier to get a hold of but when a hard drive or music player fails sometimes you have to go back and buy the digital release again.	

I can listen to it every time i want without using my computer. I like the design, too and if there is a signing session the band has the chance to sign the cd. I don´t want to pay money for some mp3.	
I prefer to buy CDs of my top favorite artists because I prefer physical copies to digital files.	Since CDs are more expensive, I usually only purchase those of my most absolute favorite artists and for the rest of the artists I like, I just purchase digital copies of their works.
I prefer CDs because I can play them in my car without buying accessories that allow me to play from my iPod (which is usually out of battery anyway). I enjoy the CD booklets, and I know that I have a backup readily available if I lose the contents of my hard drive and don't have access to the Internet. Buying CDs feels more reliable because I'm sometimes concerned that my Internet access will cut out while I am making an online transaction for digital downloads.	
If I am going to buy music, I like having a tangible element as well (album art, lyrics, something to hold).	
I prefer CDs because of the booklet artwork and possibility to have the lyrics.	
I enjoy being able to hold the CD in my hands. It feels special.	
I love the packaging of CDs. Particularly with bands that really go all out in making a beautiful, visually stimulating package such as Dir en grey and Mastodon.	
I like CDs because they are tangible. If I'm going to spend money on something I want to be able to hold it in my hand. I also like opening the case, pulling out the cover art, looking at the lyrics, and all the production information.	
I buy CD's. I really like have physical copies.	
I like booklets and stuff that comes with cds. And I like the fact I can hold it and look through when listening to music.	
When I buy CDs I feel like I really own what the artist intended to sell, unlike just downloading digital downloads that has just the music, but not the album art, inside photos, credits, etc. I reserve buying CDs only for my very favorite artists, or sometimes for artists I want to try but whose music is unavailable online (rare to find). Therefore, my preferred method is to buy CDs.	
I prefer CDs because I have the physical album, along with the artwork and album case designed to go with it.	
I like to own my favorite music in the tangible object format as I think of them as a keepsake that even after I stop listening to it in the months after, in the future I can still look for it and listen to it again. Unlike digital purchases that may get lost during data formatting etc. Also I enjoy looking at the cover and booklet design especially for vk genre as there are often unique visual, which I prefer to look at in print.	
I prefer CDs because I like to collect.	
Prefer this, because when I pay for something I want something material in return.	Don't like, it's paying for a download.
I love to hold a real CD in my hand and watch the booklet. It's much better to have something you can touch, as something which is only on your computer! I think it's a totally different feeling! I also prefer limited editions with more stuff to collect.	
For the artwork and the physical existence of the music (digital data can get lost or corrupted)	For easier access.
CD is my second choice, even though the sound quality is much higher, most Japanese music is just too expensive to purchase in that manner. I reserve this for pieces that are personally important to me, or are so old that they are rare and out of print.	Paid digital download is my preference- it's eco-friendly and costs less than importing CD's.
I buy CDs only of my most favorite bands. The sound when I listen to them on my stereo is really great and there is something special in the fact of having the CD itself...	
I love booklets	easier to use
	More affordable, will be used more often
From visual kei bands. I enjoy looking at the cover and the inside contents. I like to look at the lyrics and the visual aspect of the	If I really want to listen to the songs immediately then I purchase them off itunes (if available).

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album/single.	
I'm a bit of a collector so I like to have the actual physical copy rather than just a digital one. The physical ones also tend to come with some privileges or bonuses which I enjoy a lot.	
as materialist fan	
often come with bonus depending on shop. it's nice to own physical copy for collection	usually cheap + fast (buy those to have the music until cd arrive)
I buy both, but for varying reasons. I buy CDs mostly for packaging. They can come with photobooks, posters, even unique items if you purchase first pressings and/or limited editions. And some artists are just more precious to me that others, and for those I like having a hard copy of their music in case anything were to happen to my computer, I would never be without them.	As for digital releases, you can't beat the price and speed. Some artists release their songs for as little as 79 cents! By far, the most economical option, and you can completely bypass any and all shipping costs (and the wait!) since it's unnecessary. But I must admit, I use this option when I simply cannot afford the hard copies and I feel just a little empty only having a digital release, to be completely honest. But it is wonderful to go this route if I'm unsure if I like a band or not. I think most people can spare 79-99 cents to preview a band.
Because I like handling the booklet, touching the CD, putting it to play on my CD player and so on. The physical copy usually has artistic features that the digital downloads, however cheap, can't make up for.	

Question 8

What factors hinder you from buying music and merchandise? Rate as appropriate with six being the highest. (You can only assign each number to one factor. If you assign the same number to more than one factor it will give you an error later on). Any other suggestions can go in the comment boxes at the side.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Responses	Total
Shipping from Japan is too expensive	9	5	12	17	31	25	99	18%
Can't find items in local stores	2	15	10	15	26	30	98	18%
It's easier to download music	3	16	27	25	12	13	96	18%
The merchandise is ugly	46	24	12	5	3	2	92	17%
The items are too expensive	0	6	21	27	21	18	93	17%
Other:	24	16	8	4	4	9	65	12%

The most frustrating thing about buying Japanese VK music is, some songs are released only as digital downloads & the service is not available in my country so I can't get them in either formats.

stuff can only be bought at live events, where over sea fans can't go. And that's often a real pity to.

I have no further comments

Seriously? Use each ranking once? This is going to skew your data big-time - is this an error? Honestly none of these things are a particular hindrance to me at all. I do buy merch and music when I want it, and I hate downloading music. So, I want to rank everything a 1 except "too expensive" (hey, I'm just a teacher, I have to budget sometimes)

The stuff I like gets sold out before I'm able buy it

Time: Delivery from Japan takes at least 2 weeks. Download is instant. I'm much more likely to buy a cd in-store than order online, because I can hold it in my hands and take it home with me instantly.

Nothing hinder me from buying releases I want. I have even those that were issued as far back as in 80s.

--

I usually do not have the money... :"D

I wanted to answer "1" to "it's easier to download music" but this website won't let me...

I don't think I would like too much of Visual kei to be available in my country, I like the uniqueness of Visual Kei and Japan, and also the feeling of being a fan of something not many people in my own country have heard about. It's like being a part of a special club or something.

Lack of money

Nothing

Some merchandise is impossible to buy by fans from countries other than Japan

Customs charges/fees

-

Merchandise Cannot be Shipped to my Country

I can listen to Japanese bands on Youtube easily and for free.

Why does it say "Error: Use each ranking once"? I want to give mostly 6's, damn it. This skews your results, I hope you know.

It's not so much that items are too expensive, it's more that the US dollar has -tanked- versus the yen over the last few years. There's also an instant gratification available with downloads that is not present with purchasing cds/shirts/etc.

There is sometimes high tax when shipping things from outside Europe to inside Europe.

Unknown content. Sometimes english sites cdjapan, yesasia don't have details on cds. Indie bands and new bands sometimes it is hard to find a sampling of their music so I'm unsure if I will like the group enough to buy from them.

Privileges (in the case of cds and dvds) also weight in whether or not the price of the physical merchandise and shipping is justified.

Custom taxes

It's easy to convince myself I don't want it if the music really isn't that great. Youtube playlists of all the album's music work just fine if it's just study-time music.

Buying too much merchandise clutters up my house and if I moved out it would be really difficult to take it all with me, so I only buy merchandise from my favorite artists nowadays.

-

Sometimes it's not to expensive but If I want to have to much, I can only buy a few things and the other have to wait.

Have bills and rent to help pay, and mouths to feed.

downloads not always available to buy from certain bands.

can't answer "can't find items in local stores" since local stores for me are both stores in japan + my home country. cant find anything in my home country, but loads in japan of course!

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Question 9

Where do you find out about Visual-Kei bands? Please select all that apply.

Friends	68	21.45%
Websites	94	29.65%
Magazines	29	9.15%
Blogs	62	19.56%
Flyers	13	4.10%
Anime	30	9.46%
Video games	10	3.15%
Other:	11	3.47%
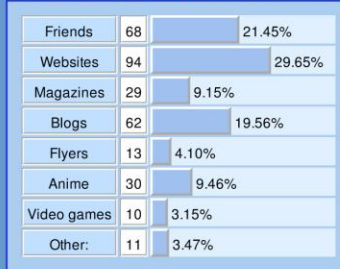
Watching videos on YouTube of one VK artistes leads to another.
live events
There used to be a great podcast introducing bands. Sadly it's been discontinued.
I found VK through a movie (non Anime) and found lots of bands after spending time in Japan
I used to buy magazines, but the internet provides information much more quickly these days. :)
concerts and conventions
Japanese music events
Sometimes I just look around on YT and find some new bands
Personnal researchs for new music through Youtube and blogs (illegal)
Twitter
my own research
twitter
school's radio club mixtape (school on japan)

Question 10

Did you ever notice that some bands take pictures with other bands or blog about them?

Yes	93	92.08%
No	8	7.92%
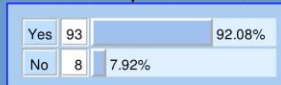
Question 11

If you answered Yes above, did you ever try out these other bands?

Yes	79	83.16%
No	16	16.84%
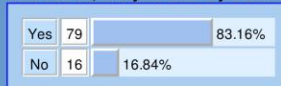
Question 12

Did you ever INTENTIONALLY try to look up new bands on your own?

Yes	92	91.09%
No	9	8.91%
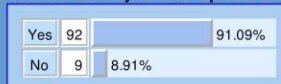
Question 13

If yes, where do you look them up? Please select all that apply.

I go through lists of band names on websites like visunavi and I try out the ones that seem interesting.	39	13.88%
I check the related videos on youtube	69	24.56%
I try out bands with a similar genre as suggested by the music sites I use (for example last.fm)	46	16.37%
I look for bands with different genres on the same website	19	6.76%
I go through websites listing visual-kei bands and the songs created by such bands.	34	12.10%
I try out bands from the same label.	48	17.08%
Other:	26	9.25%

I look at blogs
I listen to bands who say they are influenced by other bands I like already
Flipping through music magazines
If a band I like seems to play live events with another band a lot, I will check them out. I also sometimes check out other bandmen that my favorite bands are friends with on Ameba.
I check out bands I see posted on livejournal frequently, or bands that have a cool look that I see posted on Livejournal.
If I like a musician, I try to find each of his side projects.
I follow some Twitter accounts that recommend music
Through magazines like SHOXX, I've discovered new bands that are now my favorites.
I found a lot of great bands by going to random lives while being in Japan
I look through CURE magazine, Flyers, search on the web via Ameba etc
Ask for a friend's opinion
just wanted to mention that youtube is a GREAT help in finding new interesting bands (that I might buy music from in the future)
Blogs
I use last.fm, but in the way that I look at users with similar taste and find which bands they like and which I'm not familiar with yet.
I ask friends
Repeated recommendations, or suggestions from others
I read interviews with bands and find out what kind of music they like. If I like the same music, I'll usually like the new band, too.
vkdb, sometimes I look for bandmen through blogs (like through the friends-list of the bandmen I'm already aware of) and check out their music then, other times I look at the bands they've played with or the ones they've mentioned (casually or otherwise). Bandmen tend to hang out with other bandmen a lot, so they themselves are a pretty good source. Or seeing who they follow on twitter!
I ask friends for suggestions and browse CD selling websites.
I ask friends
friends' recommendations
As someone who works on a site that promotes Japanese artists, I search the web extensively for bands.
I check out new bands playing in my favorite sub-genre of VK, or if their visual, band name or concept are evocative, new or in line with my interests
iTunes Genius recommendations
I look up previous bands the members of my favorite bands were in
knew members before
usually discover new bands at multiband lives one of my liked bands also playes at
I look through ads for new releases in VK magazines.
I browse people's files at programs such as slsk and download what I think may be interesting.

Question 14

Have you ever come across new bands, without intentionally looking for them?

Yes	99	98.02%
No	2	1.98%

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Question 15

If you answered Yes above, where did you find out about these bands? Please select all that apply.

Noticing a new band in related youtube videos	71	25.72%
Checking out similar bands on last.fm and similar sites	23	8.33%
Noticing a new band on visunavi or similar sites	27	9.78%
Looking up bands suggested to me by the bands I like already (for example on last.fm suggestions or by looking up bands my favourite artists mention in interviews)	45	16.30%
Websites listing visual-kei bands and information about them.	47	17.03%
Bands from the same label.	34	12.32%
Other:	29	10.51%

Their songs are featured as opening or closing songs in animes

Friends' recommendation

Ameba

Looked up bands mentioned by musicians on twitter

Seeing other people talk about bands in different communities

Attending event lives of the bands I like.

flyers, live events, etc. also, random petas from bandmen on Ameba.

friends giving me some music they like

My friends recommend them to me

Friends on whose taste I rely on

Various artist albums.

In a compilation CD I listen because of one band.

Same as above; lives

flyers, guest appearances of bandmen at other bands' shows

Opening acts for bands

Friends listening to them

Heard the song as a soundtrack or a background music to a video (most probably on youtube)

friends' recommendations

Some of my friends like to introduce me to new bands without me asking for recommendations

friend suggestions

Anime op/ending songs, music communities

Blogs, fellow fans

Sometimes I find other bands in the midst of looking up info on a different band. Often, I don't even remember how I stumbled across them haha.

Friends talk about bands or hear that they are having a concert (especially if they play in Europe).

new listing on shopping sites, or clerance sale items with interesting cover art, magizne articles

Sometimes there are multiple bands at a concert and I might look them up before I go, or after the concert I might think, "wow! they were really good." and look them up.

About friends or they were with an other band on a concert

Magazines

friends and blogs

When people discuss a band on twitter/tumblr I go and do research.

usually discover new bands at multiband lives one of my liked bands also playes at

Watching live streams of concerts (like Jack in the Box) where multiple bands play.

Question 16

Would you like it if looking up visual kei bands you don't know of was made easier for you?

Yes	83	83.84%
No	16	16.16%

Question 17

What would make it easier for you to find out about these new bands? Please select all that apply.

Updated lists of existing and past bands	47	11.99%
Greater availability of songs from such bands	77	19.64%
Greater availability of videos from such bands	70	17.86%
Greater availability of interviews from such bands	34	8.67%
Greater availability of pictures from such bands	39	9.95%
Easier access to music and videos directly from the band's website	67	17.09%
Easier access to music and videos directly form music related websites.	50	12.76%
Other:	8	2.04%

Having next to each band name the closest western music genre

Friends' and other fans' recommendations. Comparation to bands I already know.

More digital downloads on iTunes and Amazon

Dropping the visual kei and j-rock terms as main description of the bands. It is very difficult to browse Japanese bands when they are all lumped into "visual kei" or "j-rock" because those two aren't really music genres.

I guess this was already an option, but I want to stress in particular how nice it would be to be able to get my hands on the music of some of the more obscure bands.

Labels should stop taking away PVs from youtube and such!!

More concerts from this bands also out of japan

Interviews that go behind "what's your favorite meal/perfume" and talk more about music or the creative process.

a more intuitive form of iTunes Genius, that didn't try to force out of genre bands that were being promoted by iTunes (or the site)

Question 18

Do you think that bands should give away some of their music for free in order to attract more fans and allow you to hear exactly what they sound like? I'm talking about whole songs and promo videos not 20 second clips.

Yes	82	82.00%
No	18	18.00%

Question 19

Would you still buy items from the band, or consider buying items from the band if they gave away more items for free? Explain why.

Yes	No
Definately. I like having the band merchendise, it makes me feel more connected as a fan to actually have a concrete part of what I love so much about these bands rather than just dowloading their songs off the internet.	
If I know for sure that the music they produce is something I like then yes I will buy it. As it is most of bands' music is still freely available through youtube. Maybe if the bands themselves provided that free music, less people would be likely to look them up elsewhere.	
Would consider buying more merchandise as I think one would feel that you imbaghad way are repaying the band and you feel more connected.	
If their songs are good and I like the album, I'd buy it to show my support. However, I can't do that if I can't decide if their songs are nice with the extremely short music samples (45 secs or so), who could? Also, since their albums are expensive when I order them from overseas, then all the more I need to know if I like the whole album & not just one song or two from the same album.	
If the song is good enough for me to become a fan.	
Because if I like the music I will want to collect the discography and at the same time I know that I'm supporting the band to continue playing their music.	
It makes the buyer more certain of the band's style and the quality of the complete song not just the best/catchiest 20 seconps!!	
It depends if I like their style of music they create. I love the promotion and I support that because they are advertising the band itself. Doing such, I might consider to buy something.	
Of course, because that shows how hard they work and try to get more fans. And that they enjoy music and not only care about Money.	
I buy to support bands I love, and I only discover which bands I really like by listening to full songs/watching videos.. I'm not usually willing to commit from just a short clip.	
If I want to support the band, I will do so. The quality is always better when you pay for it anyway. Plus if you love the band, you want to pay for their products. But you won't get to love the band enough to buy their music without having heard them first. CDs are too expensive to buy just to test them out. PVs solve that, but since they are so adamantly removed from youtube these days, I think that's hurting the bands by keeping them from drawing the attention of new fans.	
If I like the band then I will buy cds to support them. I also like the solid feeling of cds.	
If they gave away items for free (whole songs, etc.) I would have an idea of whether or not I like their sound, and based on that I would be likely to buy something from them. I am unwilling to spend money for expensive physical items if I have no clue what the band sounds like. (That being said, I am fairly likely to spend money on digital downloads of an unknown band, because they are so cheap.)	
Giving away a small sample of music tends to attract the real fans because it shows people if the band is even worth listening to in the first place. Many times on the internet people are able to download things freely but real fans will still purchase CDs/digital downloads in order to support the bands they like. It is as simple as that.	
yes because I still feel the need to support the band.	
I think offering more full previews to music or even giving away some samples of merchandise would not only give potential fans more of an idea of the band's music but it might also make the band more favorable to people as well.	
Of course. If it's something I really like I am more than willing to support the band by buying their releases.	
	It doesn't really matter. If I don't like the music, I wouldn't buy it even if they pay me to.
Of course. Bands usually will put up streaming versions or videos of one or two songs, only. If you want the rest of the album you have to buy the CD. (I am generally against the illegal downloading of music from indies bands and don't do it) In fact, I usually don't bother buying anything from a band unless there is some free and legal way for me to sample their music, first. CDs are expensive.	
I love it when they give away posters and things with CD purchases. I generally only buy from three websites (cdjapan, yesasia, or HMV) because I know at least one of the three of them will have something for free if I buy from them.	
Having a CD is like having flesh and blood band near you.	
Of course I would! Because: 1. If they invested money in me recording a song and giving it away for free, I would feel a need to give them something from myself, so that they can keep on offering free music without any loss for them. 2. Easier access to music means more time to think do I like this band enough to buy something from them. Shipping costs are horrendous, therefore I can't afford buying things I don't really need.	

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If the band is good and buying is easy. It might not be the same item though - watching a couple of PVs migh not be enough for me to order physical singles from Japan, but it may be enough for me to pay to see the band play live is Ustream.	
As for CDs and DVDs, I would, to support the band. And I will still buy goods.	
Coz I LOVE to collect CDs, especially if the single sounds great overall or even if it is just for 1 song, I would still buy.	
If i like a band, i want to support it, and the most effective way of showing your support is buying the CDs and DVDs.	
If I like the sample then I will buy the whole package, this is how I show my support to them	
Yes, I would, because: a) I want to support them; b)I'm a conservative, I like having releases in physical form, aka CDs for example; c)Putting media on the net impose limitation on the quality of the said media, so of course I'd like to have live recordings in DVD format, not tiny 50 or so Mb video uploaded on YouTube for promotion.	
Not for free, but an official Youtube channel with music videos would be awesome, or just an official page with music or would do.	
I will still do. One of my reason of buying cds from the band I like is to support them. Not only popularity, they also do need money to continue making good music and/or making music videos and other promotional things.	
Yes. I've always worried since I was a child that I'd use my savings to purchase a CD by a band that I kind of like only to discover that, save one or two songs, the rest of the album is bad. It's nice to have confirmation that I wouldn't be wasting my money.	
If I like a band, I will buy their music. For example, the band Misaruka have given away 2 songs for free in their website, but because I love their music from before, I have bought all their CDs.	
Yes. As long as the whole CD they release hasn't already been given out for free, I would. If I like the band, I could technically buy a whole CD just for one new song. I've done it before.	
	I don't think bands should gave away items for free. I buy some items from bands I like, but not often and this just because of the shipping cost from Japan and the expensive price applied in Japan (In France CDs are less expensive). I know much fans buy items, even if they live overseas, and fans in Japan buy a lot of items, so I don't think they should gave away items for free. Maybe they should just lower their prices or do a special edition less expensive for overseas fans, because life in Japan is more expensive than life in many countries.
I would consider buying cds from the band, as long as the "free songs" don't show up in the tracklist :P Buying items from the band means that you're showing support for them. It's really difficult composing and coming up with meaningful lyrics, so I guess this is a way of showing our appreciation.	
If I find them good enough I would definately buy their stuff.	
If you really like the band, you want to own their albums etc Since, to be honest, whether the band gives away stuff for free or not, we will get hold of it for free first and then decide if we want to invest our money in them. If they gave away songs it would simply make things legal.	
Because then I would have heard and saw what they have to offer and already liked their sound,beside everyone likes freebies	
If I love the band, then I will support them no matter what, but I don't think that they should have to embark on a campaign of giving away things for free to try and get sales. That is what their OHP and youtube channels are there for; promotion of PVs and songs. If you like the previews given, or like the song from the PV they supplied, then that should be enough to fuel sales.	
A band needs support to be able to make new music. And you cannot download things like cheki or towels, so I would still have to buy such items.	
Yes, although if more VK bands started giving more things away for free they wouldn't be making much money any more. Many VK bands go into Vk because they can make slightly more money as a indie VK band than as a normal rock band in Japan. Also I think it's the attention they get from it as well. Nocturnal Bloodlust were just a normal deathcore band before they changed to "VK", obviously because this way they can make more money and get more attention. After all if the band were giving stuff for free and I liked their music then i would then go on to supporting them by buying their releases etc	
Yes, I would still want to support the band, perhaps even more, BECAUSE they are trying to make it easier to get their music out to more fans.	
Yes, because I know the best things that this kind of bands release, are the most expensive, because they have special features or something like that. So, after 5 years liking japanese	

bands, I'm almost sure that we should pay to have the better things. So, I will always buy items from my favourite bands. And of course, the best way to show your support for a band, it's BUYING their items.	
Well, they can give away stuff for free as much as they want, but if they have a towel or bandana or a limited release that I want, I'm still going to buy it. I'd prefer it if they didn't offer something for free after some people have already paid for it. Like, releasing a PV for free after it was released on a CD that people had to pay for.	
yes, because if you like the band you would want to support them	
If I like music, I want to have it in my shelves, so I buy it anyway.	
Yes, they need as much financial support as possible, especially bands who tour a lot or are constantly in studio.	
	Because whether or not a band in Japan gives something away for free doesn't affect me here in America. Maybe they pass out a free CD at a live, but I don't get one.
Yes, I would, because I still prefer actually owning an item.	
I'm really not sure... All I know is that I need to know what a band sounds like before I'll buy their stuff. Also, if I'm not too familiar with a band, I would want to know what their cd's sounds like before I decide to buy them. But on the other side, if they were to give away some of their music for free I would probably not want to buy that exact same music. But maybe that's a little obvious..	
	It could be possible I only like a few of the bands songs so if I get them for free I wouldn't feel the need to buy more. If I really like the band then I would buy their items regardless.
Yes, because I want to support their career.	
because this is their work and if they don't earn money, they couldn't make new songs and videos.	
When marketing a full album and giving for example one full track and several short samples then yes. If I like what I hear to a greater extent then yes I would buy the full album next.	If it's a single song that's been marketed by giving the song for free then there wouldn't be any need to buy it after. I do think it would work when marketing full album but not a single track. At least that's the case with me.
Of course; it's their hard work and should be awarded. The fact they are artists, doen not mean they work for free. And fan's role is to support them in order to enjoy more of their music.	
Yes I would :) It would be nice to get freebies but they also need the money the make BETTER and Improved Music :D	No Reason ..
It's already possible to watch whole promo videos and listen to songs for free in Youtube, so I don't think it would really change much if bands for example had their own Youtube channels where they would upload whole promotional videos. I suppose, though, that if there was no Youtube or any other channels to get music for free, I would be forced to buy more CDs than now... On the other, I rarely buy CDs from bands I know nothing about, so if there wasn't any free music available, I probable wouldn't own as much CDs and other items than I do know. Maybe I didn't even listen to visual kei or know about its existence. All in all, I buy CDs and other items first and foremost because I want to support the band, and getting some songs or promotional videos for free wouldn't change that fact. (If almost everything was free, though, it could increase the temptation to not buy items, but I don't think you implied that bands would give so much items away for free as it would be financially stupid.)	
Yes	
Of course I would. Just because I get a few songs for free doesn't mean I wouldn't want to own a CD by the band that I love. If I really love a band, they could release an entire CD free on their website and I'd still buy the physical copy if I had money at the time.	
If I like a band enough I am going to buy their shit no matter if they give it away for free as well because I want to support them.	
Of course ! the perfect thing would be like releasing 1 free single per year, and all the rest paid !	
	I think that it's great when bands release a song on their website as a way to reward their fans. It doesn't necessarily have to be a free download. A player with the full song a few days before it's up for sale would work for me. Occasional free items wouldn't make me feel a sense of entitlement where I felt the band owed me more songs for free so I wouldn't buy from them anymore. It would just be nice to hear a

	full version of the song first so I could decide if I want to spend the money.
Absolutely. I am very much a believer in the 'offer something for free so the consumer can test it out, and if they like it, they will pay for it' method of marketing. I think that, given a reasonable price and availability, people will be willing to pay for artistic works. There must be a balance, though, so that the creators are not being taken advantage of. Bandcamp is one of my favorite methods for finding new music, for example.	
Because as I said before I'm not very fond od virtual items	
First, the free item would probably not be the same quality as a purchased item. Second, the purchased item would most likely have more content than the free item. Third, if you love a band enough you'll want to collect their merchandise and support their endeavors. Bands can't run just off of appreciation alone.	
Quite simply, if I like them, I'll support them monetarily. I can't know if I like them without hearing them first, and it's way too expensive to just take a gamble.	
Most likely, if I like them well enough and I could afford it. I get really enthusiastic sometimes about just supporting them if I really like it.	
Since I'm a collector who like the pretty CDs I will always buy the CD if I like the music. Also, I want to show my appreciation of the music to the band/artist by buying CDs. Usually I check out a few (3-4) songs by the band on youtube before I buy a CD.	
I won't buy from a group unless I've heard a couple of songs from them. Making a song or two or a pv available would help me buy from them if their music isn't widely avaliable.	
Because if I like a band, I'd like to support them by buying their stuff	
Yes, because generally the free items tend to not be they greatest quality.The items that are to be paid for should and I personally think be better than the giveaways.Its nice for a band to giveaway some now and again but not overly so.	
if I really like the music i would still buy items from the band. And free items are a very good promotion.	
I selected 'yes' though I don't really have an opinion either way; it's really up to the artist how they feel about this. But it's definitely easier to know if you'll like a band if you can hear more of their music beforehand. I, personally, don't usually purchase anything by a band unless I've heard enough of their music beforehand to know that I like them well enough and my purchase is going to be worth the money I'm spending.	
Every single one of the albums I buy is from a band whose music I have heard before, usually for free. The one musical group from whom I buy the most albums is one that allows most (more than 30%) of their music to be streamed from their website, and that is how I know with certainty that if I buy their albums, I will enjoy them. I therefore have no hesitations about buying an album of theirs from which I have heard zero songs, and I also buy the albums they allow to be streamed for free for the convenience of having the songs in my music player.	
I would... but I am more tempted to buy things I can not already get for free (ie, band releases DVD with videos not found on youtube).	
Because you're only a fan if you help the band move forward and that's made by buying their items after you liked what you got for free.	
If I enjoy a band's music, then I will try to support them.	
I have more money to spend on the other songs.	
If I like the band, I will buy there stuff because I want them to have the money to continue making more music. I almost always download free stuff first and then if I like it, buy it.	
Probably, because It is really important to support the band you like so that they may be able to fund tours and creation of more music.	
Because if I like what they do, I want to support them.	
I would still buy items from the band if I hear their music for free or see their videos for free if I truly like the band. Other popular music from other countries upload their music videos on their youtube channel and get people all over the world to watch the videos for free and that's how many artists are then able to sell many albums. For example, this is very true of K-POP. Many K-POP artists debut their music videos on their youtube channel prior to the release of the album and besides the videos getting many views, it gets people interested in the music worldwide.	
If I like an artist's music, I want to own what they release. I want to support their hard work.	
	I usually consider buying a band merchandise based on the pricing plus shipping fee and whether it is worth the total (also, whether I will use such items for a long time or is it just for impulse buy). Hence freebies don't really matter for me. It would be nice if more official merch are available at band's official site without having to buy through specialized

	services / blogshops as the prices are marked up.
Yes of course. When I like a band, I like to support them. Therefore I will buy the CDs, DVD concert footages, magazines they happen to be on. Go to their concert if they ever come to the US and buy their merchandise. To me, being a fan is doing all these things and supporting them every step of their career.	
	Giving away one or two songs for free per year is fine, but the moment it becomes more than that, or they give away actual items, the motivation for paying disappears.
Yes, of course! It would be a great chance to listen their music before but it's so much more to have a CD or DVD or going to a concert. This give something which a download never could!	
-Hearing a song on a official website and liking it and immediately proceeding to buy wards off the temptation of downloading illegally the whole album or single and then never getting around to buy the official merchandise. -Many bands in the current scene, especially young ones, are very hit and miss or drastically change their style between releases and I only buy things that I'm sure to enjoy -Buying is more of an act of support to the band rather than a way to listen to music nowadays	I won't necessarily buy it either
I've received a free MP3 and a full DVD sized downloaded concert from Acid Black Cherry, and have been enjoying BUCK-TICK's fare on NicoNico Live, and it actually has been encouraging for me to purchase from them (which I have been doing). Having access to free shows now and then, or bonus download gifts like that are very satisfying as a fan that is spending large amounts of cash on their work. That said, I think one of the most important moves the bands could make to extend their music to a global market is what they are just starting to do: offer their concerts live as a paid webcast. Fans that can't attend due to finances, distance, or limitations on tickets/venue sizes can still experience fresh performances without the band having to eat the loss. Win-win.	
I think I'll continue to buy some items because it's something special for me if I really like the band. Most particularly the CDs and DVDs or maybe some magazines...	
I will know the quality of the band, if I like it I will support them.	
First off, I get to hear how the band sounds. Secondly,there are bands that have done better and gor more fans by doing things like free song downloads. If people can't hear the sound, they won't bother buying the music, or promoting the band to others (like on blogs, websites, friends, etc).	
I think starting out as a band it would be great to bring in a crowd with freebies. If I ended up liking their sound, not just on the visual aspect, then yes I would buy their items. Down the road though there's a point in time where doing freebies should be rare because they need to make a profit somewhere.	
If I like an artist a lot, I support them. And as I've already stated, I like collecting CDs.	
It can promote them, and incite fans to buy next CDs	
they'd be stupid to give everything away for free...	
	No matter how much free content a band gives away, if I don't like their music, the fact that it's free won't make me like it any more or less.
By giving away items for free, the band shows that it is interested in having new fans and providing the possibility of people checking them out before buying the product without having to download (all) items illegally. I respect bands that understand that people will want to check them out for free first before buying their products, since I wouldn't buy anything without knowing what it sounds/looks like first.	

Question 20

Viral promotion is aimed at spreading information and music from a band everywhere to try to increase their popularity and increase their fan base. Hopefully increasing the number of people who pay for their music in the process. What do you think of viral promotion?

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Text Answers (90)
I think it's a vital method necessary to gain acknowledgement from a substantial amount of people in a shorter period of time.
If overdone it might end up having the opposite effect. Sometime overexposure though promotions and adverts makes me hate the object/person/service without even knowing what it is or does.
It must be targeted well towards a particular audience. If people areconstantly bombarded by bands theymight see it as a nuicance and after a while stop caring about it
Viral promotion via the Internet is a good idea, especially since most of these VK bands are indies & thus, have low marketing budgets. However, it's apparent that the Japanese companies are too cautious in putting their materials on the Net as evident from the quick removal of their stuff from video-sharing websites such as YouTube.
I guess it's good, especially in Facebook. Most people surf Facebook daily, especially if they work in an office (if Facebook has not been blocked). If my friend has "like" their page before, it might appear at the right hand column as a suggestion. If the icon looks attractive enough, there is a good chance that I will check out the page. They can even increase their publicity by having stuff like "when they reach xxx number of "likes", they will upload a good photo on the Facebook page for fans. Fans will most likely ask their friends to help "like" the page.
I find viral promotion healthy for a band's success. If it weren't for youtube in my case I would have never found out about VK bands and I would have never heard any of their music or seen their videos. In the end even though I was listening to their music for free I still ended up buying all the latest singles and albums, and am currently searching for all the old singles/albums released.
Sometimes it works but sometimes it's annoying and makes you hate a band based on 1 song
I like the idea. There are so many bands I don't know about and would like to know. If there is some kind of updates or spread of these bands I believe it will help a lot and hopefully will have some fans and sell.
It's really good and nice!
Viral promotion is really the main way for musicians to make music nowadays. If they aren't promoting virally, they aren't ever going to be successful internationally.
I don't know anything about it but it sounds annoying. Too much of a good thing and all.
I think viral promotion is great but almost impossible to harness. I think visual kei bands should embrace overseas audiences (for example, allowing overseas customers to purchase releases, having translated interviews, etc.), and "viral promotion" will organically grow from those customers.
I think it is wonderful. It weeds out the fake fans from the real ones. People get attracted to the music, may download some stuff but in the end will buy music from bands they truly like and wish to support.
not very keen on it... usually I hate the videos that "go viral".
I think if done appropriately, it can be very effective though I think some people take it way too far.
I think it's a good idea and something that social media can be utilized for.
I honestly don't see vk bands doing much of this.
It's always a good attempt to bring in more fans. More fans = more money in the long run, and the only way bands get to continue to function is if people support them by buying their stuff. Its all a big circle, and I think the fact that CDs are going the way of the dinosaurs really hurts the music industry, but on the other hand, with everything being digital, tons of small bands and solo acts can spread their sound everywhere. Look at all the DJ's and the dubstep phenomenon. The pop up like daisies.
It sounds more like a spam.
This can be pretty interesting. I can't say how other people react or what will they think, but it works for me. An yes, it helps getting recognised.
Isn't that what all marketing communications is trying to achieve? No option.
Depending where the music is from, if shipping is too costly, people would likely just go for legal digital downloads.
Don't really care about it
It's okay as long as it's done in a good way and not too forcefull
I think that it isn't efficient for indie bands or bands who don't play mainstream styles - those will always have rather limited fanbase.
It's good. On a flyer you only see how band looks like, but n virtual promotion there's music so you can decided from a start if you like it or not.
I agree with Viral Promotion.
I don't really understand viral promotions.
I don't like viral promotion. It attracts all kind of people, not only fans like me who have followed the scene for long. Some people can make fun of the bands. I don't like that. Bands need respect.
Definitely a good thing. The more exposure, the more potential fans. People who usually wouldn't find out about bands, especially younger bands, would get a chance to listen to them. Which of course is good for the band, because the larger fanbase, the larger chance they will get to sell their stuff.
I think it may be good for the band. If I hear much about a band, I will go listen their music on the net, and if I like them much, I will try to buy their CDs one day.
I think it's a good way to advertise themselves.
I think it's really good. More bands should choose this method.
Good. That's how they get famous now.
I think viral promotion is very important,when you see something everywhere you will know there is something going on and you would give it a try.
When you try to FORCE things to go viral, it's annoying.
It's worked so far.
It can sometimes be annoying, especially if you don't like the band that is being promoted.
I think it's good that people know more about these bands because the only way to have our fav bands on our countries is showing the support to

them. I think that as a fan, your dream is seeing your fav bands playing alive. But I always been proud of beeing fan of bands that "normal" people don't know, so I want to have this "exclusiveness" too... So I'm 70-30% ... 70% of spreading info because I want to see my fav bands on my country. 30% of no spreading because I want to be part of something non-common on my country.

Well, the most common type of viral promotion I see here in Japan is for the pop stars. You can't visit Tokyo without being bombarded by trucks blasting music, huge ads on the giant screens at crossings, and gigantic ads or other promotions everywhere. Because I am not interested in the music being advertised I usually find it extremely annoying. But even if it were bands I like being promoted, I think I would find it annoying to constantly see their faces or hear their music everywhere.

I think it works, it allows a lot of people to know about the band

I strongly dislike it, because it really goes on my nerves, I hate being bombarded with PR advertising. However, I fully understand, that such kind of marketing might really help new bands to promote their music (and not only new ones). As they say, any promotion is good, if in the end people talk about you.

I think it's very important. Most bands would still be unknown if it was not for viral promotion.

I don't really like it in the music industry.

I think that's a good idea, because usually it's the lack of promotion that makes bands disappear.

It's good, but it probably won't have much effect on me as I tend to dig bands of interest out, rather than them being served to me...

It can help less known bands to get attention and a larger fanbase. Estabilished and well-known bands don't need this kind of promotion.

It's okay, but very hard to engineer.

I actually had to google what viral promotion means so that I can answer this question even though you had the terminology section up there. Learning new things while doing this :D Using word of mouth, social networks and such as a help to promote is a good thing in my opinion. It seems to save time, it's easier and faster way to find out and get to know something new and interesting. If I'm not interested in something then I just pass it and move on.

If it doesn't violate the copyrights - it's OK for me.

Never heard of it :/

I'm not sure what to think of it. If people share links and recommendations with their friends and acquaintances on Facebook, for example, it's good. But if viral promotion means aggressive marketing or that the promoted bands would be pretty much everywhere, like advertisements on websites, it would be annoying. People don't like having something forced on them. Non-Japanese visual kei fans are also used to finding out new bands through their friends and fellow fans, not throught marketing or promotion, so viral promotion would be pretty huge and probably not entirely welcomed change.

It would help the band get a larger fanbase.

I think it's great. More bands should be aware of the powers of the internet (and probably of the ridiculous shipping fees, too...)

It's how a lot of bands make it. It's a legitimate path to success.

I've never seen such a thing in Vkei

Sometimes I stay out of the fan base, so I don't ever see the viral promotion. Sometimes, I see it every where, but I have to be especially inclined to give in to the promotion. Promotion like that doesn't usually work on me unless it's very eyecatching.

I don't enjoy it, though I do appreciate that it's become one of the ways I am most likely to encounter new music/movies/media.

From my experience, viral promotion seems to allow bands to expand from a home market to a world market. I've seen many new fans join the visual kei (and other) communities based on PVs (music videos). After all, band image does not necessarily equal band sound, so it is always best for the two to go together during promotion. Not many are willing to spend the sometimes expensive prices for a CD/DVD for a Japanese band without knowing that they will actually *like* it first. Of course, with most things on the internet, there is the downside of content leeches who will never purchase a thing, but that's typical.

I think it's a good idea! No other way to see if it'll be effective than to put the plan in motion. I don't see the harm in it though. Having more access to information and samples of music and the like is pretty encouraging. I've known of some really indie VK bands that put samples of their music up on myspace that sound actually pretty promising, but I have no way to access their music otherwise nor do I know anything about them or HOW to get the music. So it makes it hard to be a fan haha.

Sorry, I don't really get what viral promotion is.

Never heard of it. Sounds like a good idea.

No oppinion

I like it. I really helps get the feel for a band and their sound.

it seems to be good if it works. if the fanbase increases the possibility that the band will tour in overseas increases too.

It's helpful, I suppose.

Sure.

I don't think Visual Kei bands need to be virally promoted. They are kind of already easy to "discover" through anime endsongs, etc.

I think that's a good way to promote the bands.

It might become annoying like overplayed american radio music, but it is effective.

I love it. It works wonderfully. When something first starts out it needs great numbers to get great cash to keep the function going. Rebecca Black made plenty through her Youtube channel and 50 Shades of Gray is making it all over the place in a short amount of time because of the original fanfiction. Viral Promotion is perfect for our world where everything is shared.

I think its a good thing. Although its annoying if its a band you decide you don't like.

It's important for a band to get their name out.

I hate it. If this happens I don't even try the band because I'm already annoyed by being attacked with it everywhere.

I agree with viral promotion. It's what an artist should do in order to spread their music and become popular. If a band does not want to be popular,

they shouldn't promote.
I think that when done properly, it works well.
well strategized, I feel that it will do well, especially as many vk fans, or rather everyone is on social networks these days. long gone were the days when startup bands can only promote around their own neighbourhood/city. there are currently bands that utilize sn, but i have yet to see a well strategized and targeted viral promotion.
I don't particularly like the idea. It promoting the band was done strictly in ares where they are known fans of the same genre, then yes. But not to expose them everywhere, where fans who just like their current style and not appreciate the band and their roots from where they come from. I don't appreciate that.
I have no problem with it.
I think it's good.
I don't like it when it's done in a very obnoxious "buy my stuff! here are my web-store links " way, but I'm not bothered or even potentially interested when it's done with taste or really attempts to make people discover the band's universe.
The most effective form of viral promotion is letting fans spreading word to other music fans- something that some bands are aware of (such as Acid Black Cherry). Some go with it, and some (and their labels) try to fight it as much as they can, but the proof of how effective it is, is seen online: those that have had fan uploaded PV's and concert footage ripped down aren't seen or heard of outside Japan, and end up having a much smaller paying fan base as a result.
I think it's something that can be good for the band...
Is effective, when you here a song over and over. Finally the song will end in the mind of the people.
The ability to promote anything virtually is a gift from the 21st century. No one gets their name out better then the world wide web. Visual Kei bands are only popular because of the internet, and if bands don't do the job, the fans will (and that's usually how illegal downloading happens).
I honestly think this is a great thing for the band itself, but as a fanbase, people can get a little out of control. To spread their name and music is the main thing the band(s) want. At the same time though, you have trolls, for example, on youtube which like to go off topic and start little arguments that have nothing to do with the music/band. Overall though, promoting is a good thing.
It's nice, but I know it annoys some people.
don't care
I think it's great. In the digital age word can spread incredibly fast. Why not take advantage of it?
I think it is important, especially in the case of smaller bands who need the money to continue making music.

Question 21

On EdoCelste.com we are trying to include direct links to buy music from your favorite artists, their full discography, samples of their music and/or videos and pictures together with links to youtube. How easy does this make it to discover new bands and what they sound and look like?

	1	2	3	4	5	Responses	Total
Rate the design (10 is the highest):	8	2	11	8	56	85	357
	8	6	25	10	16	65	215

Question 22

Therefore do you think something like EdoCeleste.com, on a larger scale, would make it easier to discover bands? Please discuss why in either case.

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Yes	No
Providing more information about bands and easier access to their discography and videos related to them would draw more people in since viewing them would be an easier process thus maintaining the people's interest.	
A well designed website that provides all the necessary information in a single place, would encourage people to actually put the effort to look up new bands and types of music. Speaking from personal experience I know that when it comes to looking for something new, it's hard to know where to start, especially when it comes to rather unknown foreign music. I was introduced to this type of music by friends who found out about them by sheer luck. There is also the fact that most people are just too lazy to bother making the effort to look up new bands and music. Knowing that you only need to access 1 website to find all you need might help overcome that.	
It does help especially if it can properly guide the audience towards new bands	
If it establishes a certain reputation with VK fans as a staple source to learn about new bands e.g. like Visnavi in Japan, then yes.	
If EdoCeleste becomes popular, the chances of getting more fans for all the bands is greater, as fans are likely to check out the other bands in the website as well.	
It would help to have all the bands on one single site along with links to videos, samples of music, discographies etc. It basically will help to sum up the work of all the artists giving people a chance to see the whole work of the bands from beginning to end [in the case of full discographies] and will also allow people to discover new bands by listening to samples available etc	
Definitely, the easier the access and the greater the amount of information in one place, the greater the chance of discovering bands	
Yes it would. Sometimes finding a band can take ages like finding a song from such source and a list of discography on another source ecc. To have a website where all the info of the band is contained in ONE PLACE (except their OHP) is a great way to discover new bands. This is because while I am viewing a band named 'X' I can go back and click on band 'Y' on the same website, and it doesn't necessarily have to be on the same record label.	
If you add more bands from more different labels yes.	
Yes, but the organization of the website needs some work, as do the aesthetic aspects.	
Yes, I think an English version of VISUNAVI, for example, would be great for the visual kei community. This seems to be something that people very much want.	
exactly.	
yes, it would provide a wider variety of bands to an audience that may not be otherwise able to afford to listen to them.	
I like that EdoCeleste.com provides both information and music AND links to finding more info and ways to purchase the bands' music.	
Possibly. It needs to also not hinder the artist by giving away too much for free. It also needs to be well managed. A lot of times ideas like this are started up with good intentions, but then fail because the founders do not have the necessary skills to make it successful.	
Probably, though right now the sight seems poorly designed (messy frames and just very amateur looking) and very focused on one genre.	
Couldn't get onto the website.	
	There is a tendency that such websites don't have a full compilation. Of course the reason is clear, but the user can get disappointed in such case.
Yes, definitely. Every piece of useful information for a new fan is good. Some bands are really hard to find on the Internet by ourselves, so a little help is definitely needed. A site like this also makes buying easier.	
	I haven't seen the site, but it sounds similar to JaME. Even though JaME has large databases of artists and discographies, I only use it to keep up with new from bands I already know and listen to.
If it is your aim, then it would.	
It will be somewhat cheaper if there's digital downloads for everyone.	
	I haven't check the site
Well, yes. If there's band with youtube videos and and links to where one can buy music from that band it makes it easier. Getting stuff from some bands it's pretty hard sometimes.	
I think buying music easily really helps. Also, sample music,videos and pictures also really helps when we want to try out a new band/artist.	

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It would help for people who need to listen to different styles and wants to discover new music.	It wouldn't help for fans like me who already know the bands they like.
Yes, it would. What could be needed is a couple of more well-known bands to attract those that only listen to the big bands out there, to get them interested in looking up the rest. But yes, it would probably make it easier. I definitely don't see why it wouldn't. Of course it depends on who needs the information - I myself read and speak Japanese well enough to use any official site for information already, but I can imagine that something like your site would have helped a lot in the beginning of my visual kei interest.	
Yes I think it would make easier to discover bands. There is some sites in French where band are listed like in EdoCeleste, and propose youtube videos, CDs and live. The first time, I visit them for artists I already knew, but when I saw the list of artist on the right, I check a few bands, by curosity and discovered bands I like very much. Another thing I like about EdoCeleste.com is that upcoming live are listed. If I saw a band will perform in France, I will listen them on the web and if I like them, I will go to the live, so it's a good way to discover new bands.	
by putting samples of the music and videos/pictures together, people can search for bands according to their own personal musical tastes.	
It would be cool, but this should be as big as last.fm for example. I know that's a lot of money and time to make a website like that, but edoceleste.com in it's current form is just a little puzzle of he whole visual kei world.	
As longs as the site is well-known and easy to navigate, yes it would make things easier. But it won't be the primary source for such info, people will still use YouTube etc.	
Yes, it would make it easier, but in a way, doesn't that take the fun out of it? There is nothing funnier than following links and finding bands to laugh about or bands to get excited about.	
	It's already rather easy to discover new bands, and fans do a lot to promote bands among other VK fans on social networks.
	I've never heard of this place before, but if it's more popular in America if they want to do it they can. I personally prefer the act of looking for bands, i.e discovering them off flyers, magazines etc then looking up their OHP an going from there. The idea of having a website which lists all the bands would take a LOT of upkeep and I personally wouldn't use one. But that is just my personal preference, I'm sure others would say different!
On a much larger scale, yes, it would be helpful. However for now, not many of the listed bands interest me.	
Yes, because Visual Kei style is (as it's name says) a Visual style. I mean, I started to have interest on this bands because I like their costumes and their hair and makeup. So, if someone who didn't know so much about Visual Kei wants to discover new bands, I think the best way is first of all, showing videos about them. Videos specifically because a video shows costumes/makeup and music as well.	
Sure, I can't guarantee I'd use it often because I like the music I listen to and I find most of the new bands I like by seeing them at random live events, but it could be useful to find out if some of the lesser known bands at the shows I see are worth staying for.	
I think it would help people gain interest in new bands	
I guess so, 'cause it would have many bands in one place, which would make it a lot easier to actually find new material.	
I think it could, if people have one set location to find everything so that they can purchase music, people would be able to expand their choices.	
It looks well-organized, so if it can stay that way on a larger scale, then I don't see why not.	
It would show people more without them having to go through lots of trouble to find it.	
Certainly!! I totally support this idea and sites that do similar things are great, in my opinion.	
It would be easier to look for a band that suits our tastes in a large database so more bands would have a chance to gain recognition.	
Yes, if I could see the site and the design was good.	
Thinking on larger scale I can see how it makes it easier for some to discover bands. Having everything in one place saves you time if the information is easy accessible.	I personally don't often feel the need to search for bands so me actually going through sites looking for new stuff is rare. I usually discover my favourite music by accident. If I do then it'd be great to know where to head to but unfortunately I don't most likely have the need for that.

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deffinitely	
Yes I found it pretty easy to use :D	Didnt find anything bad in it :)
It would if people found their way to EdoCeleste.com. It sounds like an excellent idea, but I'm not sure if many people are interested in it as there are already many other ways to discover new bands (friends, Youtube, last.fm, JaME...). Many visual kei fans also seem to be happy with the bands they have already found and therefore aren't interested in discovering new ones. Still, I think the biggest challenge is to get people visit the EdoCeleste or a similar site. I, for one, had never even heard about it before this survey.	
Yes it would make it much easier.	
On a much larger scale, yes. Especially if you are associated with the artists. I think it would be great to have a big, artist-supported portal for fans (although I have to notice that something like that already exist, like MusicJapan)	
	Jesus that website look like it jumped out of the 90s. What the fuck are you doing?! Hire a web designer good god. I can't even focus on the question. Did I get a virus from going there?
no idea in particular	this site is focusing on only one label, there are so many bands that it's impossible to do
Definitely. If all the resources are there, there's no reason why I wouldn't not use them. Especially if I was just getting into the scene and I didn't know where to start or what websites to trust.	
The idea is appealing, though not exactly new. There have been sites devoted to this sort of thing for many years. In order to make it truly useful, it would need to have a more high-profile partner and/or someone with the money to advertise it in more populous places. A purely fan-driven site can only go so far, and is prone to dropping off when the fan(s) move on.	
Because I think that any site that promotes bands by giving updated information about them, including videos and things like that help people to know about new/unknown bands	
It would make it easier because the music is what makes the band (without the music the band would just be models in costume...) Being able to experience the sound will allow you to decide if you want to be a fan, and then, of course, if you'd want to purchase any of their merchandise.	
Definitely. Sometimes it's fun searching for information, but only when it's relatively easy to access. Otherwise it's just frustrating, so having a lot of information in one database makes it easy to find out what we want to know. Plus, there's always the option of just scrolling through the band list! And in some cases, bands are often underrated cause they aren't advertised at all or not in the right places, so I simply just never hear about them or know they exist until forever later. I mostly stumble upon bands like those on complete accident. So yeah, I think it'd be pretty convenient, for the bands too.	
I think so, because it is always nice to have all information in one place. Now when I search for new music I always have to look around on many different websites.	
If you had heard about a band or had a vague interest yes. But on a larger scale you end up with just with a data base of info on visual kei group. Helpful but not the easiest way to find new groups. You can click on random names that look interesting hoping you click a group the falls into you music range but that isn't the best way to look for new groups. Grouped by genres, suggestions on pages for groups similar to the one your looking at would be more helpful along with the data.	
	People mostly depend on their friends opinions in general.
Especially for those whose Japanese skills are not very advanced. Site like shattered-tranquility.net (all vk) and tokyohive.com (on bigger VK bands) have filled in part of the void in that but there needs to be something that is larger and more frequently updated.	
Yes.	
The biggest problem I have discovering bands is limited access to their music. This would hopefully solve that.	
	I think people who are intentionally seeking out music by VK bands would stumble on sites like EdoCeleste anyway; it wouldn't necessarily make it easier.
because then you only have to go to one place and you could find everything instead of going around trying to find new bands and sometimes not succeding.	
	Not at all. It wasn't attractive. Also, myspace was and is much more effective as this. EdoCeleste.com seems like a run-of-the-mill and not taken care of blog. It wouldn't attract anyone new and it isn't anything new.

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On a larger scale the amount of bands on the left column would be overwhelming.	On a larger scale the amount of bands on the left column, because there is no method of sorting other alphabetical, would be overwhelming and I probably wouldn't click on them unless I was already interested in the band and recognized the name.
I think so, as long as people manage to find it of course.	
	I don't know anyone who goes through such sites to discover bands but it would be nice as an encyclopaedia of bands.
I think on a larger scale it would make it easier to discover bands, but it would definitely have to be updated very regularly in order for people to keep interest in the site. As long as everything is kept updated and organized I think it would be very helpful.	
It can.	
	there are already many blogs around that, while not exactly the most comprehensive, have already compiled release dates and live dates of many bands.
If they gave me the option of listening to their music prior to buying, then that would be a huge help. Instead of going out of my way and looking up the artist themselves, having a direct link to sample their music is a good idea.	
There's visual and audio, and it doesn't require searching on other websites, just a simple click-through instead.	Personally I already use last.fm which does this. So I'd only use it if the website very clearly has a large visual kei database, or if it is aimed only at Japanese music.
I think it would be much easier. Some people still don't know where they can buy japanese CD or music. So it would help them.	
Yes, all bands concentrated in the same place with easily accessible material is good.	
It sounds OK, but I've never heard of the site, so I can't judge it.	
Well... I think so but...... some other websites with the same purpose already exist...	
Yes. People who follow this site will get to hear and learn about new bands, and they will be able to listen to them and create more fans.	
I think something like this would be really great, although as a total outlook, it would be great if most, if not all, bands would put up their music as digital downloads to make it easier for oversea fans to buy their music. We don't have a problem with buying and supporting them, it's just we're limited.	
Many people are either too lazy to search for new bands on their own or simply get annoyed in the process because to get to know a band for real takes a lot of time as the information is scattered all over the web. That's why it's a good think to have all the info along with the links in one place.	
EdoCeleste.com does exist already? that link goes into nowwhere just a blank page (google crome, firefox, ie) am confused!	
Unfortunately, there is no site connected to the URL so I can't really rate how easy it would be able to discover bands on said site. It'd have to be incredibly user friendly and simply laid out. But in theory, a site like that could be a great resource to search up new bands.	
You'd have a larger number of bands to check out and several kinds of information would be available at the same place, which makes it unnecessary to look everything up and go through a large number of sites instead of just one.	

Question 23

Do you have any suggestions regarding the design, function, or future works of EdoCeleste.com?

Text Answers (58)

If the website were to grow, I think that including a search bar could help make it easier for people to find the information/bands they want. I would also try to avoid an all black background to make the website more visually pleasing and less harsh. And while I do love the banner, there seems to be a lack of continuity between the banner and the rest of the site, they don't have enough common elements to really tie them together which detract from the overall experience.

More bands, perhaps from other labels or other areas in Japan. More bands from Osaka would be nice. It also need to be more navigation-friendly than Visnavi or some of the other Japanese music websites.

Design: 1) I guess the bright banner is kind of glaring in the black background. Personally, I would prefer something more gentle to the eyes. For example, GACKT's website (http://www.gackt.com/jp/), the banner is greyish against dark background. GACKT is using red with black background as well. 2) On the left column of EdoCeleste, it would look nice if the links for the band names are more elaborate. Maybe it can look something like the links at the bottom of GACKT's website. Maybe you can replace the white fonts with the band's logo? It will leave an impression on the fan's mind. Even if they do not become a fan immediately, if they see the band's name (in logo) next time, they will remember that they have seen it somewhere before.
3) I clicked on the "Download on iTunes" icon on "LAYZis"'s page. The instructions are in japanese. Some foreigners might not be able to read Japanese. It would be nice if you have a small link next to the icon which will link to a page teaching them how to purchase the songs. Screenshots with clear instructions would be great.

To make it as user friendly and organized as possible!

There should be a sort of suggestion box/form so maybe new indie bands or fans who came across a yet unlisted band can send their music/info and the EdoCeleste website host can choose whether to add these bands to the website

Love the work! I really like the fact that news such as upcoming lives and upcoming releases are included. The website is in english making it easy to follow and will definitely attract international fans.

Please look up for a designer who can re-design the website. right now it looks a little bit cheap.

It would be nice if a more professional designer could be hired, because the site as it is looks way too amateurish. Also, such an idea will ONLY work if a lot more bands are featured—just Starwave Records bands (who aggressively target foreign markets anyway) and more popular indie bands like ELM is not enough.

maybe greater use of a featured artist section at the top of the page where the video is...

Some of the information needs to be updated. The variety of bands isn't very broad considering a lot of them (if not all of them) come from the same label.

Clean up the site's design and state whether or not you have permission from these bands to upload their videos onto YouTube. If you don't, then get it. As of now, the site looks more like a fansite and less like somewhere I would trust to get reliable, up-to-date information about these bands. For now I will continue searching directly on YouTube.

I couldn't view the site unfortunately.

Colours are too aggressive. It's good to see them an musicians but not on the website and text especially.

As soon as more bands are added, ther will be need to reconsider way of displaying their names. But now it's okay the way it is. I don't like the blue roses, but that's just my opinion.

When I want to discover a new band, I like knowing their history --> by reading their biography. Maybe you can add this?

I haven't check the site yet

I think it's already doing good. The simplicity makes people with low internet speed can access it easily too.

I'm going to be honest, as an IT-media student. It currently looks like just another blogspot vk site. It might be the red och black that does it, or the simplicity of the design in general. I would change the default font to something that is not Georgia - if you still want serifs, I can recommend Garamond. It looks more stylish. Unless the amateur look is what you're going for (I've seen that in other vk sites, where I know the designer and coder actually can make better things but chose not to), I would change a bunch of things. I myself am not a great designer, but if I get a design, I can easily code it up. I'm sure that if the coding is the problem for you, you can find someone willing to do it. If the design is the problem, I sadly cannot help you much as I'm, like I said, not very good at that, haha. But I do think it's a good project, all that it needs is a little fixing up!

Keep the layout simple, since every band page has got pictures and such. try not to use white fonts against a black background, I think it might be a little difficult to read... Also, since you want feedbacks to improve on the site, why not create a feedbacks section on your website?

I'm a webprogrammer and designer student, so please believe me. Forget the blue roses. They are completely out of the deisgn, are ugly, etc. Try to choose lighter colors in the CSS and also forget thoose red-orange menu pictures like 'Artists' and 'About us'. Be professional, serious and creative, use more colors and be brave enough to forget this design partition.. |=| It's old and not popular. I hope you can work something out because your idea is really cool! Good luck guys!

Nope

The design is really basic, and the site itself seems to feature only starwave records bands. It's purpose in my eyes seems kind of useless all these bands are already being promoted by Kiwamu via twitter, facebook and Ameba. The only band he has which is overly popular in japan is Misaruka because they are emulating Versailles (therefore versailles fas go see them) , all his other bands are more well known and liked by american/europe fans.

Beeing always updated. Sometimes we know that a band release something and we just not find the CD because some places don't upload them. Also, always showing pictures of the bands in order to increase the interest on them.

no

Nope

As you already mentioned it needs expansion, but you're probably working on that already. Another thing that would be real good, and I know it's a lot of work, is a shopping guide. For every release a list of stores that sell the item and their respective priviledges. Ofcourse also the price should be listed

for comparison and the shipping costs and what not. This would be a great service to fans who'd love to support the bands (using their last money doing so XD)
Get as much bands featured as you can. Also it is important to put links to more than a fiev of their works.
Well it would be helpful if I didn't get a "website unavailable" when I try to access it.
not really, but I think you did a great job!
Maybe Different backgrounds weekly or something :)
No, as I have never visited EdoCeleste.com.
From a web designer's perspective, your design is very poor, the colour scheme in particular. I would suggest you have someone with a knack for design (or Photoshop, at least) look it over for you.
See above. And if you can't afford a real web designer go to an art school and hire someone. They'll do it for free just to put it on their resume.
good luck !
The current design is extremely dated, straight out of the late Nineties. In order to grow to the point of being useful/profitable for the bands you're aiming to increase visibility for, the design needs to be updated -- lighter colors (black and red may reflect the colors often used by the bands, but it feels like the goal is information dissemination, not individual promotion, and you'll find a wider audience with lighter colors), more professional layout and logo, more modern style, consistent fonts. Some of the frames are wider than their allotted space and adding the artists to the drop-down menus would be an extremely useful function to use to save on space and clicks. Remember the rule of clicks -- if it takes a user more than three clicks to access your content, you're going to lose a lot of users. Spend a lot of time reading websites aimed at many different types of promotion and see what works there. The homepage doesn't really give a good indication of the amount/type of information available. Even look at some of the popular infoblogs, like the Gizmodo group or Boingboing, for examples of a design that works to generate interest. Also, consider including a way for users to have conversations. Nothing gets people more interested than the ability to be involved with a site, whether via comments or a forum. I do love that you have links to all the places that people can buy the music in obvious places. That's incredibly useful for a subgenre like Visual-Kei where some of the biggest blockages are that they don't have good international distribution. I'm browsing your site and will be visiting some of those CDbaby & Amazon links myself! Overall, this is a great idea, and I really hope that it takes off. :) Good luck!
If possible it might be nice to have the ability to digitally purchase an album. Shipping from overseas can be pricey. I'd be more willing to buy from more bands if I had the convenience of digital download. As it stands there is only one band currently that I will without question buy merchandise from due to cost/favoritism.
Um, looks good so far. Maybe adding a small little section, if possible, in the artist's page linking to similar bands or those of the same genre, etc. I hope this helped!
Design should be simple so it's easy to read and it is at EdoCeleste. But I'm sorry to say that it somehow look too simple and very homemade. Ask someone really professional to help with the webdesign and I think more people would visit the website.
Links to shopping sites where international fans would buy from (cdjapan, yesasia, HMV) All sales from them contribute to the oricon sales charts. Most don't buy from Amazon.JP to complicated for international buyers. Genere grouping instead of just a list of band names at the side bar.
Not at the moment.
Apologies to your web designer, but your design is pretty egregious. The layout is unattractive (especially the header), and the information on individual band pages is very poorly aligned and inconsistent. You should be using some kind of template for this instead of hand-coding, which is what looks like is happening. I'm not sure what you're doing now, but I recommend using PHP includes instead of frames and maybe storing information about each band in a MySQL database to be output into a PHP page. Or at least keeping better track of your line breaks because your information doesn't even line up.
If bands are interlinked by genre perhaps, like the suggestion feature in last.fm (except more like by VK subgenre [angura, oshare] and then musical quality [acoustic, shoegaze]) maybe? If the design was less VK (dramatic pictures of roses and text) and more accessible, I think the music featured on the site would also be more accessible and appealing to people not necessarily familiar with VK and its trappings.
Think about it a lot more before hosting it on the web. There needs to be a freshness to it. Also, consider a more thorough and easy-to-manage tagging system. People hate spending too long looking for something. It could use a much more aesthetically pleasing layout as it is a little old school. Look to something more of our time, such as tumblr for inspiration. Head to the library and read up on how to successfully run a website it helps a ton. The smallest things can prove a quality website from another fansite.
It could use better design, many more artists, but other than that... seems ok.
I've only briefly looked at the site, but when you list the upcoming releases, I think you should also include the track list. I think you should also try to include more artists on the site. I admit I would be more interested in the site if it had more interesting bands on it, and also of more genres since I see a bit of a trend in the genre of the artists listed.
To offer suggestions when I am part of a site with a similar purpose would be self-defeating.
it'll be good to revamp the site design into something more clean and professional, while keeping visual elements as fitting of visual kei. also, i think there are still many functions that can be added in to promote, and gather audience and traffic to the site good luck!
I have not personally visited EdoCeleste.com as of yet so I cannot comment on the matter.
(In the "rate the design" question, the URL of the website is misspelled.)
Never heard of it, which means it isn't hitting many people in the US or Canada.
Maybe the design should be a little less dark. Also, a gallery of the artists could help to have an idea of the band's music style. However the upcoming lives is a really great idea ^^
N/A
I believe getting people involved in little "projects" or "contests" is fun. Or discussions. I know of a site that not only updates news on jrock bands but also hosts little contests here and there.
Maybe you could try to divide the artists according to their labels instead of just putting them into the "Artists" menu? Labels are a big thing in the Visual

Kei scene and it makes easier to navigate.
EdoCeleste.com does exist already? that link goes into nowwhere just a blank page (google crome, firefox, ie) am confused!
Like I said, I can't view the website. Maybe I found your survey too late? My comment here would basically be the same as above, as well.
Make the layout of the site more appealing and use twitter more often.

C.4 Interviews

How old are you?
I'm 25.

How long have you been interested in VK for?
I have been working in this industry for about 5 years now.

Can you tell me a little more in detail about whom you've worked with etc.?
I've been always a big fun of music in general, but I wasn't sure about V-kei because I didn't know. When I was in a rock band back in the states, I got invited to be the radio host for v-kei radio show. There, I was working with Shion for Cure magazine. From then, we were doing a show a couple times a week and we took the bands to anime conventions and stuff.

I have worked with Seikima-II, Inugami Circusdang, ALSDEAD, Despair's ray, sadie, heidi...and more. and even after I came back, I still help the bands for English chorus or lyrics.

Great so you have first hand experience with bands. Let me explain a bit about my project before we continue.I made a prototype site called Edoceleste viewable at www.edoceleste.com Unfortunately I wasn't able to make it look more professional because of my lack of skills. In addition to what the site has now, the functioning model would have a search bar, and drop down menus for searching artists, both alphabetically and via genre. There would also be sharing options on all the pages because the project is directed at viral marketing, so spreading information about the bands without restrictions in order to get them known better internationally.

The main aim of the project is to help bands expand internationally by focusing on them getting known and having a fanbase so that they can do more touring abroad and get distribution deals if they would like to.

As part of the project the site focuses on digitial distribution downloads, and emphasises on full PVs and song sample being made available to the fans. What do you think of such a distribution model? You can also explain from the point of view of the bands you worked with if you want to.
Overall, I think it's a great website to support the bands to be known internationally. If I were to give you an honest opinion, it will still hard to get hits only with those ideas because there are just tons of websites with the same ideas. So what you need is that something exclusive. If you have any connection with bands, ask them if they can film messages for your websites, so you will get a lot of hits. Lots of hits makes your website comes up sooner on search engines.

Thanks, yeah it's something I would like to see implemented in the website, to have original content from the bands. Also I forgot to mention, the idea is to use updates from all the bands, so that they can promote each other. So band A releases news

about a new PV, and next week band B releases news about another release, so fans keep on getting attracted to the site in order to view information and at the same time they might find out about other bands.

Also for bands giving content, since this started as such a small project, many bands were hesitant to join, and those who did were afraid to share statistics regarding sales of CDs etc. Can you think of any particular reason why bands are so hesitant in sharing official sales stats and related statistics?
I can say that it's just typical Japanese behavior, we tend to keep numbers or statistics to ourselves maybe because we are raised that way. Especially in music industry, CDs are not selling well as before so statistics look poor anyways. I understand if they don't want to put statistics out to the public...

I understand that reason too.
You know it's used to be millions to be on the top on the chart, but it's like 140,000 sales or something. The numbers don't attract fans either.

Very true. Oricon chart sales have been dropping so low. Now a 14,000 copies sales of a CD gets a band in second position, it is really weak.
It makes me sad that even the biggest v-kei bands, normal people (as in not visual-kei people) don' know about them at all.

Conversely even though sales are dropping so badly in Japan, not many bands are venturing abroad or making it easier for foreign fans to buy their merchandise. Do you think there is a particular reason behind this?
I have been to a couple of anime conventions with bands and there are things I realized. There are different kinds of merchandises sold well abroad, so in order to sell more abroad, the bands might have to make different goods to attract more foreign people. Like for T-shirts, Japanese like the design with the band name printed really small so they can wear it outside. but I see a lot of foreigner prefer bands' faces on the shirt or big logo of the bands. Speaking of venturing abroad, there is a language barrier. We say there is not, but it's still the biggest problem for Japanese people who are conservative.

The easiest countries to go are those in asia, but they don't speak good English or Japanese. It's easier to go to English-speaking countries, but now dollar is really weak that it's hard to get invited or evne if they go, the merchandise won't sell due to high price.

True, selling to foreign fanbases takes some adaptation and it seems many Japanese artists are not ready for it. I agree about the language barrier as well. I think it's still a big problem on official sites as well. Some have content in English, but the updates are done in Japanese first in most cases, and in English within the next week or so, so news are never fresh.
Yeah

In fact a lot of bands are hiring full time translators for touring abroad right? And they're trying to get cheaper merchandise printed in the country they will be touring in because it's too expensive to bring it from Japan.

Yeah, that's what I do I go with the bands as a translator, but they don't pay us well so it's just tiring.

Yeah it makes sense, they always try to cut costs while touring, so they try to pay everyone as little as they can. I guess it's good to get official experience as a translator though.

And yes, some bands print T-shirts and stuff over there, but this still needs English-involved communication so the bands usually just bring stuff from Japan in their suitcases.

Oh I understand! Another source of waste of money I guess, especially if you have to pay for an extra suitcase during the flight.According to a survey I did, it appeared most fans would like to buy CDs as collectibles, but if they have to pay for shipping too it becomes very expensive. They still prefer CDs to digital downloads though. I don't think Japan has noticed that they can increase CD sales like that. Actually most bands are still very hesitant about digital downloads and some are starting to rely on them only very recently.

Yes. Japanese bands need to have something special for digital downloads or something because if it's the same price, I understand the listeners prefer CDs with an exclusive booklet or something. If they shift to digital downloads, I'm sure international sales will increase more. And plus, I heard from Avex guys that there are different restriction to English iTunes, so they have to basically do everything from the first step to sell music on English iTunes. So I think they are being lazy to sell even digital copies for foreigners.

The people from my survey also said they would still rather buy the CD rather than the digital downloads even if they were much much cheaper, like 99cents each at the iTunes store. On the other hand they want to support their favourite bands, so if they are only given their option they would buy more digital downloads.

I also agree on that. There are 7 different iTunes, so bands have to have a new set up for each. In addtion if they have distribution deals abroad, they cannot sell in some countries, etc. From the other end of the spectrum, people in Asia wanted to buy digital downloads but they couldn't because there is a U.S. iTunes set up but not an Asian one set up by the same label for example. In fact most labels didn't open the Asian store yet.

Ugh.

Besides laziness do you think there could also be other reasons why they don't want to make downloads available everywhere?

Asian market is big for v-kei, though. That's not good.

I think they know that too, I just can't understand why they don't open their markets, especially when the situation gets worse and worse each year.

That's just a general problem with Japanese companies. They just try to attract more people in Japan when there are more markets outside of Japan where they already want them badly. I've been trying to bring more bands abroad, but they are just so slow on conversations. It never comes true.

My impression is that they are also very hesitant to update their strategies, as in change to Internet use, or viral promotion, and that they never want to take a risk. Do you agree about that?
Yes, I totally agree. They are not risk-takers.

The same thing happened to me with band feedback. At the start of the site it took us months to get a reply from the bands. We still have that problem even now!
hahaha. NOT good.

So I'm trying to take the risk for them, or by proving them that it might work from the little they let me use. Ok, so let's talk about some of these ideas I used for promotion.
Okay!

The first is the artist database, or having a viewable list of all the artists available, so that if one is looking to find information about elm for example, they can also see umbrella and maybe look them up. How important do you think the artist database is?

And something else I didn't mention before. I know other pay per use sites like last.fm have a lot of links showing related bands etc. however the aim is to keep it all free so that everyone can access the site and use it.
Yeah. The artist database is very important. Information is what people need most of the time especially in English-speaking market. But if you have a database, you have to have almost all of the bands (including those disbanded), though. Once people can't find what they wanted to see information about, it's hard to get them back to the website.

Related bands are always good! I always get caught in those "you may also like" on eBay! Hahaha

Thanks, that's an extra reason why I kept disbanded bands on the site. On a side note for related bands, my studies also point that VK fans are more open to liking a greater variety in music. For example they might like a really harsh band but also listen to softer music. Like liking Dir en grey and Miyavi for example. Do you see that similarity in fans of anime conventions and VK fans in general?
At anime conventions, people are more open to any kinds of music. I think that's because all the live shows there are free of charge. They just go check them out even the bands have different kind of music. When I took Sadie to LA last year, there also was SCANDAL (Poppy girls band). and I saw a lot of people went both and liked both of them. But in general, it's hard to sample different kind of music when you don't know the

exact name of the band to search for. So even thought they might be interested, it's hard to realize.

Once they realize, I don't think the types of music matter. We are all music fan after all. Though, some people just try to be cool and they only like certain kind of music without even listening to something else.

I agree, some people never give other kinds of music a chance. Do bands have banners showing their name clearly at conventions?
Those who like visual-kei, they are already open to variety because visual-kei is still a small category in music and they somehow find out about it. Yes, they do at the screen on the stage and merchandise booth.

I guess it's hard to remember the name sometimes if you don't have direct access to Internet to look them up.
Yes, so it's always nice to have "Pick-up" column so people cam find something new.

Next topic. Do you think bands should move to new marketing models of giving away full song samples for free? For example one full song out of a new album, not 30 seconds samples
Hmm. That's a tough question. If they were to do it, how do you think they do it? Online, or they give out at the show or something?

I was thinking more online, like on official sites, youtube, and promotion websites. Some already do it at shows by giving away CDs, especially when they're Indies.
I think it's a good idea to distribute a complete song. But if I could suggest, just distribute their most famous song from the past so that the band can show them their masterpiece and people will still buy their newer song.

True, I think it's better than sharing a song which few fans like. Then again some fans say they would rather wait and download a full album illegally before buying it, so that they can hear the album, and know for sure they will have nice songs when paying a lot for the CD. Do you think it would also work with a new song? Like a new single, which the band feels, is very strong?
Well, I think big fans will still buy it even if they know that the album will be free after a couple of months (especially in Japan, there are events only for those who bought CDs on the first couple of days of release), and those who wait to get it for free wouldn't buy it in the first place, anyways, I think.

New single, I personally think it's good, but as far as I know, even the members get lazy making free songs to distribute unconsciously most of the time since they want to keep the good song to sell to see their progress in the industry with that new song.

I agree, there will always be that point if to distribute a great song for free to get more fans, or try to make more money out of it. It does also take a long time to make great songs. However do you think Japanese VK bands should pay more

attention to their foreign markets, and try to reach out more to them, instead of all the restrictions that they have now?
I strongly think so! Especially they are interested in foreign markets, too. Just their agency or company gets in the middle because they are not sure if they can get more money than the efforts they put for it. I hear members tell me to take them somewhere outside, then always the manager give me "Well..."

So overall do you think a project such as EdoCeleste would be effective for marketing these bands in foreign territories? Provided bands would be willing to give away some free music of course.
YES! Like you said, EdoCeleste definitely need more contents, but yes, it is a good website to get the v-kei bands known widely.

Thank you. Any other suggestions regarding the site, and any other comments?
Hopefully more people will get to know them so they can go abroad more!

It's a small thing, but I was thinking maybe you can have a bulltain board or something so people can find their band members. Do you know the website "Visu-navi?" That's how they got so big.bThis website is mostly for fans, but also for the band members to look for the company to make their costumes or find new members.

Thanks for the suggestion. So like a new page right? With announcements etc?
No, actually I meant the community bulletin boards where visual-kei fans find their band members to perform together. I know lots of visual-kei fans have their own bands.
Like craigslist but exclusively for visual kei needs.

Ah I see, thanks for the suggestion! I'll definetly keep that in mind.

That's all the questions I had. Thank you so much for your time and for your help.

Age?
28

Can you tell me about your interest in VK and about your work in the industry?
I started to know about vkei when I was in university. At anime conventions there were always some booths of vkei and jrock goods and through that and some friends I became a fan of Gackt. When I moved to Japan in 2006 I started going to Gackt shows and would sometimes check out smaller bands performing around the Osaka area. I wouldn't say I was a huge vkei music fan, but there were some bands I liked and I liked the live atmosphere. When I moved to Tokyo I got involved working with ROKKYUU Magazine. At first they recruited me mainly to do the fashion portion since my interest is more subculture fashion than music, but since we needed music writers I started to do live reports and band interviews as well.

Thank you. Let me explain a bit about my project before we continue. The project is a prototype for site called Edoceleste viewable at www.edoceleste.com Unfortunately I wasn't able to make it look more professional because of my lack of skills. In addition to what the site has now, the functioning model would have a search bar, and drop down menus for searching artists, both alphabetically and via genre. There would also be sharing options on all the pages because the project is directed at viral marketing, so spreading information about the bands without restrictions, in order to get them known better internationally. As original content, the site would host video messages from the bands enlisted.

The main aim of the project is to help bands expand internationally, by focusing on them getting known and having a loyal foreign fanbase so that they can do more touring abroad and get distribution deals if they would like to.

As part of the project the site focuses on digitial distribution downloads, and empahsises on full PVs and song sample being made available to the fans. What do you think of such a distribution model?
I think when dealing with Japanese bands and an international audience, digital is pretty much the only way to go. The biggest problems I see would be competing with things like youtube, where not only do you get to see a pv for bands you do know, they provide suggestions for bands you may not know which is how I think a lot of people end up checking out and becoming fans of new artists. A collective where people could easily download things would be welcome I think, especially if it were very comprehensive, and if it had original content to make people want to check out artists other than just the ones they were originally looking for I think a lot of people would visit.

Thanks, that is why youtube was used in the site, so that fans can be either redirected from our youtube channels, or they can choose to leave the site and find info about other new bands. Still, the main idea is to have bands posts full PVs and song samples instead of only posting 30-45 second samples. Of course so far most

bands are unwilling to do this and very few post full samples themselves. Do you think bands should give more away for free, for example, one full song out of each album?

I think the reality is that now people expect things for free, so I think offering things like free pvs and songs is a way a band can directly compete with all the free material already on the internet and convince people to buy the rest of the music. If they don't offer free things, it's harder to convince people especially overseas to pay money. It also creates a connection with the fans, I think people would rather download or get things directly from the bands than through 3rd parties if possible.

Those who took my survey agreed exactly with you. In addition most fans would have listened to a CD before buying it, mostly due to the cost and deciding if they want to collect this CD or not. They also showed much more interest in CDs rather than downloads. Do you think there are other reasons why fans would rather have CDs rather than digital downloads?

Really? I hate cds, they clutter up my apartment. I always buy online and if I have to buy a cd I rip the songs and sell it back to closet child or somewhere right away. A lot of bands do special signed cds, photo inserts, etc. so I guess if fans want those kind of things and they come with the cds they'll want to buy the cds. I guess a cd is also like having artist goods.

In addition Japanese bands seem either to reject Internet or to just try and experiment in it. While most Indies bands still don't have sites and info. Available in English, some other bands are trying out marketing strategies like distributing songs only as digital downloads. The downside to this is that the iTunes store is not open to all countries, so for example, people in Asia cannot obtain these songs legally. What do you think of this, and what do you think of the current Internet use by bands?

I think Japan in general is staggeringly behind on internet use, especially considering how advanced technology here is, and website design here in general is pretty bad (though I feel it's gotten better in just the last year or two, when I first got here it was shocking). I think more bands should invest in having presentable, professional websites with at least some digital media to help people become fans. It's true that the lack of a real international online store, not to mention the variations in currency, hurts the idea of having an all-digital marketplace though.

VK bands also tend to be kind of secretive by not wanting to show off sales statistics (unless they make it high in the Oricon charts of course). Can you think of reasons why they behave this way?

Maybe because the sales statistics aren't that great usually. Especially indies vkei bands have a very limited market, and even something selling relatively well for an indies band may still look pretty unimpressive to an outsider. I know for live shows I've had people come with me from abroad who like a certain indies vkei band. At the show they may have just 20-30 fans and I think "wow, they got a really good turnout!" and the fan from abroad who had a high opinion of them thinks "wow, nobody comes to see this band! Maybe they're not as good as I thought."

I see, I guess impression is something they really care about especially when trying to break into a foreign market.

Now, back to the site, another idea used in the site which we haven't discussed is the importance of a viewable artist list. Ideally someone who ends up looking up a band would be interested in other artists too, especially if they see a new name they don't know of. Do you consider this an important aspect in promotion?
I think that's really important. In Japan, artists get promotion by performing in shows sponsored by bigger artists or organizers, so fans going to see one band see the other 7-8 bands performing and perhaps become fans of them as well. Fans overseas don't get that kind of chance to sample other bands, so they need a way to see what kind of bands are out there.

Any other comments regarding the site use and function or the conversation we had?
No, but it sounds like a very interesting project! I hope I was helpful at least a little

July 29th 2012, Personal Communication with Neko Hako

Age?
26

How long you've been into vk?
I've been into VK about 10 years

Let me explain a bit about my project before we continue. The project is a prototype for site called Edoceleste viewable at www.edoceleste.com Unfortunately I wasn't able to make it look more professional because of my lack of skills. In addition to what the site has now, the functioning model would have a search bar, and drop down menus for searching artists, both alphabetically and via genre. There would also be sharing options on all the pages because the project is directed at viral marketing, so spreading information about the bands without restrictions in order to get them known better internationally.

The main aim of the project is to help bands expand internationally by focusing on them getting known and having a fanbase so that they can do more touring abroad and get distribution deals if they would like to.

As part of the project the site focuses on digitial distribution downloads, and empahsises on full PVs and song sample being made available to the fans. What do you think of such a distribution model?
I think it would work out great. As a fan, I'd definitely be interested in finding places to get full PVs legally, since so many record companies are taking them down off Youtube. Legalised full Pv use is also an option to overcome illegal downloading of songs and encourage more fans to purchase songs and merchandise from the band. Do you think this helps with artist discovery as well? Yeah, absolutely. Especially if videos are linked under "related"

So like if you're interested in one Japanese artist, or any other artist or something related to anime or whatever, you could easily see what videos would be related and could find new artists that way

That's pretty much why the site makes use of youtube so you can see a bunch of related items at the end of a video. Therefore in your opinon are easily available PVs and songs one of the best ways to discover new bands?
Yeah, I think so. You can't find bands on TV or (old timey) radio. Youtube is practically the only way to really get exposure to a wide range of bands.

On the other hand Vk bands seem to be very hesitant to adapt to the Internet age. Both through internationality, by having sites and content available in English and Japanese at the same time, and by opening their markets. Do you think there are particular reasons behind that?

Well, definitely a lot more bands are having their sites in multiple languages, which is a start. But Japan in general is behind North American and Western Europe when it comes to the Internet. You'd think the music industry would be more progressive, but they're just as bureaucratic and slow. Of course they're also worried about copyright infringement. They look at the Internet as a breeding ground for pirates. If they expose their product to the Internet, it'll just get stolen, like leaving a 10 million yen car out in the open with the keys in the ignition. They don't see the benefits.

In fact there was the same problem with getting feedback about the website from bands, or getting any form of statistics from them. Do you think the reason might also be partially coming from shame, because of the lack of sales?
Uh, that's really hard to say. I honestly wouldn't know

It's ok. What about bands restricting their international downloands, by restricting distribution via the iTunes store etc? Even in the recent scenario where bands switched to digital download only releases?
You mean are they ashamed of that?

No I mean they're trying to do some sales. But at the same time they're not making it available to all markets. It's like they want to increases sales but only in markets they like. I know for sure most labels never opened the Asian iTunes store,so Asian customers can only buy CDs. But recently some biggish bands like Versailles issued download only CDs so fans in Asia cannot get them, unles they do so illegaly.
What? REALLY? So you'd have to be in Japan to pay for the download?

No I think it's open for iTunes U.S. and Europe, but not for all markets. So they basically blocked a big chunk of countries.
Wooow That's ridiculous

Incidentally most from my survey most people from U.S. and Europe said they would rather buy CDs and collect them rather than paying for downloads they can get for free.
Yeah, it feels better to have something to hold in your hands. I think it's the same idea as e-books. Of course it's loads cheaper to produce a download-only album

It's cheaper for the band, though international artists who adapted never stopping producing actual CDs. They just increased the prices. Japanese artists seem to be limiting their options. And the few who try new things don't seem to have looked up what others are doing, or at least tested their own market, they just seem to try and give it a shot to see how it goes. You see that happening too?
Yeah, that's what it looks like. Though honestly I haven't bought a new CD in AGES.

Do you consider yourself a true fan of any band though? Or do you feel detached because your favourite bands stopped doing great music?
I don't think my favorite bands have stopped making great music. What is a "true fan" anyway?

One who tries to go to every show, and buys all of the band's merchandise by book definition
I can't really afford to go to every show, and I don't really like merch except maybe the odd t-shirt. I'd go to every show if I could afford it!

So your reason for not buying CDs anymore is due to lack of time and money?
I mostly just buy used CDs

What if they had better merchandise, and you had more money, would you be willing to buy more stuff from them?
My favorite bands only put out an album a year, if that. Or they've broken up

Fair enough, but that way you still help with used CD shops still carrying their CDs
For merch, I'm not really into buying stuff I don't really need. Plus the Tshirts never fit me right, so I end up using them as pajamas

Back to the website, how important you think it is to have a fully viewable artist database in order to potentially interest fans to other artists besides the one they came to look up info on?
I think it's good to have a resource, but it seems like most fans are interested in the "look" first. Is the band hot, their outfits, etc. Not so much the information. There's this site (I'm blanking on the name now) that's kind of a gossip site for Jpop and it's SUPER popular but it's really ALL gossip. Unfortunately that type of info is popular

That's another reason why pictures of the band and individual band members are included. True, it seems that some fans are more interested in gossip rather than actual info about the band. So overall you think the site serves the purpose of promoting VK bands to foreign audiences. Specially those who are at the beginning of finding out about VK?
Yeah, it would be good for new people. Also good for people who want something free of gossip and drama and fangirling

True!

Any other comments regarding the site or this conversation?
No I think I'm good

29th July 2012, Personal Communication with Rosa M.

Age?
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How long have you been interested in Visual Kei for?
About five years.

Let me explain a bit about my project before we continue. The project is a prototype for site called Edoceleste viewable at www.edoceleste.com Unfortunately I wasn't able to make it look more professional because of my lack of skills. In addition to what the site has now, the functioning model would have a search bar, and drop down menus for searching artists, both alphabetically and via genre. There would also be sharing options on all the pages because the project is directed at viral marketing, so spreading information about the bands without restrictions in order to get them known better internationally.

The main aim of the project is to help bands expand internationally by focusing on them getting known and having a fanbase so that they can do more touring abroad and get distribution deals if they would like to.

As part of the project the site focuses on digitial distribution downloads, and empahsises on full PVs and song sample being made available to the fans. What do you think of such a distribution model?
If the digital downloads are made available in my country, I'll be more than happy to use it. The price would have to be reasonable, of course. As for the full PVs and song samples, most of them are already available on YouTube but if the site is where the artistes upload and share their stuff officially, I'll use it too.

Of course as part of the special content for the site, the plan is to have the artist give special content in exchange for their marketing. Something like exclusive fan messages etc. So the plan is to attract them to view stuff about one band, so that they might take an interest in other bands as well, and market them all together. The aim is to keep the site free, and keep it unrestricted, as in some countries, youtube channels are restricted for example. How detrimental to sales is it restricting digital downloads in your country?
Well from a business's point of view, I understand Singapore has a relatively small market compared to countries like US and Europe so maybe it won't be detrimental to sales. However, restricting digital downloads in any country certainly prevents the artistes from being made known and hence, it's an immediate loss of potential fans and market at any rate.

However Japan's market is suffering, and Asia is one of their primary target markets, so although Singapore has a small market it's still relatively more convenient than other markets. Personally to you, does it also affect the rate at which you buy CDs, DVDs or other merchandise from the band?

If it does in any way, it's probably that I have to be highly selective in what I ordered online from Japan. I could only afford to buy the CDs and DVDs that I want to keep or collect like an anniversary single or a full-fledge album, for example... And even in the latter, I have to make sure that I like almost all the songs in the album before buying it 'cause of the high shipping costs. If digital downloads are available, then I could certainly purchase more music from other bands too.

Artists are hesitant about using Internet technologies in other ways. Some include the unavailability of information in other languages than Japanese, and benefits for those who are physically in Japan only. What do you think of this?
I think if they want to expand out of their home market, they would have to at least try to make their information available in English. As for benefits like throwing in a limited free merchandise, I understand it's harder 'cause of logistical costs and all but if it's technological like a mobile wallpaper or an unreleased track, it would be nice to provide those for overseas fans.

Of course it's understandable. Bands are hesitant to put up full PVs and song samples as well, but most people say they came to know about bands either illegally or through friends who gave them full albums. Do you think bands should start giving away songs for free in order to attract potential fans?
They don't have to do it at a radical basis like giving away an entire album but sometimes just a song from their new album would be good, I think? It gives potential fans a chance to get a feel of what they really sound like. Either way, people are going to get it illegally so may as well provide them with a legal source.

Also, some bands have been switching to digital downloads only and not offering a CD. Once again, if they have zone restrictions this doesn't help with sales, but how does it affect you with not having CDs available at all?
One of my favorite bands did exactly what you said recently and from a fan's point of view, it's downright annoying and frustrating... I want to support them as much as I could, you see so I don't like to download their music illegally but with all these restrictions, what am I supposed to do? In the end, I just don't get the music at all.

So as always, it's their loss because they don't want to adapt to changing markets.
Either that or they can't even be bothered with Southeast Asia at all... I'm saying this 'cause they only open the legal channels to US and European countries. We're being ignored as usual

Along with making it all available, how important do you think full song samples are, in exposing a band to new fans?
Quite important I would say, the 30 to 45 seconds most of the Japanese record companies use on their websites, are simply not enough, especially for Visual Kei 'cause they tend to be very rich in melodies and use of instruments... I can't tell if I like it till I listen to the whole thing till the end.

Especially if they make you listen to the 20 seconds of really nice chorus and hide the rest that isn't so cool...

That too

So overall how important do you think having media players is in order to attract more fans for a band?

Very important. How can anyone like a band if they don't even know how they sound?

On the site there is also a viewable list of artists, so that one might go on it to look for a band but might be attracted to finding out info about another group as well. Do you think having an artist database helps with promotion and why?

If they are of the same genre or of the similar musical style, then it certainly helps and especially so for Visual Kei 'cause it is quite different from the mainstream ones. I know 'cause beside myself, I know of some people who likes a certain genre and they are usually attracted to other bands of similar style while ignoring everything else...

I guess it makes sense if they only like that kind of music.

Yupz you can say that again!

So overall, do you think a site such as edoceleste is successful in promoting new bands to the fans?

If potential fans can learn about new bands by putting them in one database instead of having to search all over for individual bands, then certainly yes

So does it also make it easier for fans to find information about bands?

Definitely yes, otherwise I would have to go to their individual sites or try my luck with Wikipedia or something

Do you have any comments regarding the site?

It would be nice if there are more bands featured on the site. Besides their basic information and live schedules, if personal messages from the bands and their entertainment news are also featured on the site, then that would certainly be a plus as well.

Ok, thanks for your time.