



# GOING VIRAL WITHIN THE FINNISH MUSIC INDUSTRY

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The rise of social networking, such as Facebook and MySpace, has defined the first decade of the new millennium in many ways, because people across the globe have demonstrated their desire to share aspects of their personal lives, their dreams and their interests with others and to make new connections. For businesses this offers a huge marketing resource that can be exploited at relatively low costs, using novel new approaches that have been tailored for or even developed specifically for the Internet. This research project was designed and implemented in order to shed light on how one such approach, viral marketing, can be used to leverage the social networking phenomenon for the benefit of Finnish music entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Viral marketing as a term is relatively new. In the very core it is a modern way to conduct marketing through word of mouth, but instead of words, messages are spread via keyboards, pictures, sound and video. This cost-effective marketing approach is studied for the purpose of understanding and evaluating the case of bands managed through the Firebox Agency, a company where the author works as an agent, thus providing real-life examples of viral marketing for analysis.</p> <p>The results show that viral marketing is a simple method that requires knowledge and understanding about the product or service and the intended target audience in order for it to produce a satisfying outcome. For Firebox Agency it is a relatively inexpensive way to receive recognition, which in the early stages of the company is determined to be more important than financial gain.</p>		
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Sosiaalisten medioiden kasvun myötä palvelut kuten Facebook ja MySpace ovat määritelleet uuden vuosituhannen ensimmäisen vuosikymmenen monella eri tapaa. Ihmiset tahtovat jakaa omat elämäntyylinsä, unelmansa, kiinnostuksensa kohteet ja saavuttaa samalla uusia kontakteja. Tämä tarjoaa yritykselle suuret ja halvat resurssit, joita on helppo käyttää hyödyksi markkinoinnin kannalta uusin tavoin, jotka on erityisesti räätälöity Internetiä ajatellen. Tämä tutkimusprojekti on suunniteltu tuomaan uusia näkökulmia siihen kuinka viraalimarkkinointia voisi hyödyntää näiden sosiaalisten ilmiöiden kautta kotimaisten musiikkialan yritysten toimintaan.</p> <p>Viraalimarkkinointi on terminä kohtuullisen uusi. Kyse on pohjimmiltaan ilmiöstä, joka on jalostettu eteenpäin suusta-suuhun -markkinoinnista, mutta sanottujen sanojen sijaan viesti välitetään näppäimistöjen, kuvien, äänien ja videon kautta. Tämä hyvin edullinen tapa on tutkittu Firebox Agency -yrityksen kautta, jonka markkinointimenetelmiä tarkastelemalla opitaan ymmärtämään, arvioimaan ja analysoimaan esimerkkitapausten sisältämät viraalimarkkinoinnin eri puolet.</p> <p>Tulokset näyttävät, että viraalimarkkinointi on yksinkertainen tapa, joka vaatii asiantuntemusta ja ymmärrystä markkinoitavasta tuotteesta tai palvelusta ja siihen liitettävästä kohderyhmästä. Tämän kautta pystytään saavuttamaan tyydyttävät lopputulokset. Firebox Agency'n kannalta tämä on kustannustehokas tapa saavuttaa tunnettuutta, mikä yrityksen alkuvaiheissa todetaan tärkeämmäksi kuin taloudelliset tuotot.</p>		
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this thesis is to help the reader to understand the concept of viral marketing, what its different aspects are and how it is utilized in the modern-day music industry. The emphasis is on the working and marketing methods of a small Finnish booking agency called Firebox Agency, where the author of this thesis has worked from the beginning of September 2008. A band called Ghost Brigade and an event called Pahan Kelmikerho are offered as case studies of different types of viral marketing campaigns, both of which are managed and promoted by the author. A third case study is presented through a street team for a band called Gotham O.D.

The American Marketing Association (2007) defines marketing as the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large. In short, it is a way of making oneself or the entity one represents known within the desired target audience. This way information can be spread forward, whether it be news of a newly released album or, as is mostly the case with Firebox Agency, shows and events.

There are various methods for marketing in general, but today, with the coming of several different web 2.0. social media networks, everyone has the possibility to be a marketer, and the consumers have to face marketing in their every day actions. Majini Majumdar (2009) says that viral marketing is popular because of the ease of executing the marketing campaign. It is also relatively low-cost when compared to direct mail, has good targeting and high and rapid response rate.

The secret of becoming a good viral marketer is to stand out from the mass of competition. The tools are easy to use and are at everyone's disposal. All that is needed is imagination.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Definition of word-of-mouth-marketing**

The Word Of Mouth Marketing Association (2007), or WOMMA, defines word of mouth as a method of marketing that harnesses the voice of the customer for the good of the brand or product. It is something that cannot be created, but it can be encouraged so that the targeted people would share their experiences on the brand or product.

### **2.2. Different types of word-of-mouth-marketing**

Womma categorizes word of mouth marketing into several different sub-genres that aim to explain it in a broader context. Viral marketing is among these sub-genres, stating it as a means to create entertaining or informative content that is designed to be passed along in an exponential fashion through electronic distribution channels, such as email.

Other identified categories include buzz marketing, which uses higher profile entertainment or news as ways to make people talk about a brand or product. Community marketing means forming or supporting communities that will probably share interests in the brand or product, such as user groups, fan clubs and discussion forums. These communities are then provided with tools, content and information in order to support them.

Grassroots marketing means organized volunteers who are motivated to engage in personal or local outreach. Evangelist marketing takes the idea of grassroots marketing further, cultivating volunteers, evangelists and advocates who are encouraged to take on a role as a leader in spreading the word.

Product seeding places the right product in the right hands at the right time, thus providing information and samples to influential people. Influencer marketing identifies the key communities and people who hold positions as opinion leaders who are likely to share information about products and have the power and ability to influence the opinions of others.

Cause marketing supports social causes to earn respect and support from people who feel strongly about the cause. Conversation creation builds up fun advertising, emails, catch phrases, entertainment and promotions designed to engage word of mouth activity.

Brand blogging is creating blogs and participating in the blogger communities in a spirit of open and transparent communication while sharing information of value that the community might then talk about. Referral programs create tools that enable satisfied customers to refer their friends to the products.

### 2.3. Definition of viral marketing

Dr. Ralph F. Winston (2000) describes viral marketing as a strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others thus creating a potentially exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. He explains that like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication so as to explode the message to thousands and even millions.

Dr. Winston also explains that while the term viral marketing is generally accepted on the Internet, off the Internet it has been called network marketing, creating a buzz or leveraging the media. He describes the duplication of the virus with this simple graph:

```

          1
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      11111111
     11111111111111
    11111111111111111111
   11111111111111111111111111111111
  1111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111

```

**Figure 1:** Graph showing the duplication rate of viral marketing by Dr. Ralph Wilson (2000)

The term viral marketing was introduced by author Douglas Rushkoff in his book “Media Virus”. He explains the term as an assumption that a suitable consumer becomes infected with the message of the marketing campaign, thus accepting the intended idea. The consumer then spreads his infection further among his peers causing a reproductive cycle.



## 2.4. Different types of viral marketing

In his article "The Power of Viral Marketing" Blake Rohrbacher (2000) explains that like word of mouth marketing, viral marketing can be divided into different sub-categories. These variations of viral marketing have different mechanisms and effects and they operate for different reasons. Although they differ from each other, they have the same focus to provide the user with quality products and experiences. His interpretation of viral marketing splits into five different types: four positive ones and one negative.

Value viral happens when people share quality experiences with each other. An example is given where a person tries a certain product and finds it to be very good. He then tells his friends to try it. However, value viral cannot be forced because the products themselves have to be good enough to create the discussion.

Guile viral works in such a way that people try to "sell" the product to others in exchange for incentives. For example, a person tries to convince a friend to try out a certain product because he may receive a reward if the friend tries it out. Again this cannot be forced, as users must feel that the reward is worth the inconvenience and that the product is good enough to risk the possible displeasure of others.

Vital viral is something that comes with modern computer programs, such as Adobe Acrobat or Macromedia Flash. It happens when people want to share experiences with others that require these mentioned tools in between, for instance. As an example a person wants to share an experience with friends but needs a certain product to do so. The users must also feel that the experience or the product does make a change for them and that they are willing to convince others to do likewise.

Spiral viral has more to do with funny, dirty and/or interesting experiences that a person wants to share with others. Numerous jokes, YouTube videos and alike fall into this category, but they are rarely intended to be viral, rather just humorous or sufficiently vile to be spread forward. Spiral viral is not well suited for marketing products.

Vile viral brings the negative approach to viral marketing, where people warn others of negative experiences and suggest their peers to avoid them. This can be very easily achieved simply by producing something that is of poor quality and not designed with the user in mind.

## 2.5. R-EA-C-H The Four Common Marketing Viruses

Through the article "The Care and Feeding of Marketing Viruses" Zhenya Gene Senyak (2000) gives a somewhat different aspect to the understanding of viral marketing. He identifies these elements by setting them alongside common medical viruses, Rhino, Ebola, Contact and Herpes.

R-virus is spread through the mouse and the keyboard, named after the common cold or rhino-influenza viruses and is potentially epidemic. The main characteristic is that the sender is required to decide to pass along the virus. Common "Email this article" and "Tell-A-Friend" marketing viruses are among this class.

E-virus, after Ebola, is highly contagious and persistent. It wipes out the established competition and aggressively acquires market share. Hotmail.com is given as the best example and it is among the first examples of a successful e-virus campaign or viral marketing in general. It was launched through adding this line at end of every sent email: "Get your free private email at <http://www.hotmail.com>". This was spread worldwide, with friends infecting friends.

C-virus, the contact virus, acts more slowly but is still highly infectious in the form of clickable logos on affiliated sites. Contact with the referring logo on an affiliated site and the host is needed before the infection can begin.

H-virus, after herpes, is usually teamed with games and other entertainment venues. It leads to active eruptions and consumer inflammation. As an example can be given such simple and free game sites where advertisements that link back to the original publishing and development site of the game are shown during game play.

## 2.6. The G-R-P viruses

Zhenya Gene Senyak (2000) also gives examples of negative viral marketing strategies through medical terms. These campaigns have received their names from the gastrointestinal virus, retro-virus and the papovavirus, commonly known as warts.

The G-virus can easily be identified as spam and is about as digestible. One of the most common ways for this virus to spread is that it disguises itself as a warning of a phony virus that is about to crash one's hard disk. The virus then urges the user to forward the warning to everyone he knows. "The G-Virus infects only those who deserve it".

Retro-virus infiltrates a host site and blends within the source code of the website, or "reproduces by integrating its genome into the host's DNA", as Senyak describes it. The users then interact with the host site and unwillingly spread the retro-virus to their peers.

P-virus, or marketing warts, takes the form of useless e-zines and newsletters that fill up email inboxes or are on display at websites. The P-virus is not dangerous, rather only annoying (Senyak, 2000).

## **2.7. Positive viral and word of mouth marketing strategies**

A good strategy involves finding ways to support satisfied customers and making it easier for them to talk to their friends. These ways include encouraging communications in which such tools are used that make telling to friends easier, creating forums and feedback tools and working with social networks. This usually means giving people something to talk about, whether it is information that can be shared or forwarded, advertising stunts or other publicity that encourages discussion or working with product development in order to build the discussed elements further into other products.

Other positive strategies include connecting people and creating communities, such as fan clubs or user groups, supporting independent groups that form around the products and hosting discussions and message boards about the products. It is also good to enable grassroots organizations like local meetings and other real life participation.

Womma suggests working with influential communities. Through these people that are likely to respond to the message can be found, as well as identified as target customers. Spreading the marketing message can be encouraged and helped by supporting issues and causes that might be important to these individuals. A great deal can be gained by listening and responding to both the positive and negative reactions of these people. This builds a two-way conversation with the parties producing feedback that can be used for one's advantage in the future. (The Word of Mouth Marketing Association, 2007)

## **2.8. Unethical viral marketing strategies**

The Word of Mouth Marketing Association (2007) states quite clearly that the basic idea behind an unethical viral marketing strategy is any practice that is intended to deceive people. Seven examples

of this type of action are given and they are stealth marketing, shilling, infiltration, comment spam, defacement, spam and falsification. Womma provides the following short descriptions of each one:

Stealth marketing is designed to deceive people by giving false promises of the involvement of marketers in a communication. Shilling is when someone impersonates a customer, but in truth is paid by the marketer to talk about a product or service without disclosing that they are working for the company.

Infiltration happens by using fake identities in online discussions in order to promote a product or service. This also includes taking over a website, conversation or a live event without the permission of the proprietor. Comment spam is done through automated software such as bots to post unrelated or inappropriate comments to various online communities.

Defacement is vandalizing or damaging someone else's property in order to promote a product or service. Spam is sending bulk emails or other messages to people without their clear voluntary permission. Falsification is knowingly spreading false or misleading information.

In conclusion Womma states that word of mouth marketing cannot be faked and gives the following quote: "artificial word of mouth marketing is dishonest and ineffective. Word-of-mouth-marketing must be based on the honest opinions of real people. We strongly oppose any practice that tries to fake word of mouth" (The word of mouth marketing association, 2007)

## **2.9. Structure of a viral marketing campaign**

Dr. Ralph F. Wilson (2000) gives a good insight in how a viral marketing works in theory and how it is utilized in the best possible manner. A successful viral marketing campaign does not need to embrace all of the following elements, but the more it includes, the better the results are likely to be.

According to Wilson, the following actions are valuable in creating a successful viral campaign: 1. Give away products or services that are valuable. In order to sell something, one must give away something. "Free" is a powerful word and it attracts attention quickly and, even though money cannot be made through free give-aways, it can generate interest in the products or service that is being sold. This is called "delayed gratification".

2. Provide an effortless transfer to others by selecting mediums such as emails, websites, graphics and software download to spread the message forward with ease. Viral marketers choose to work on the Internet because instant communication is inexpensive and easy. Because the format is digital, copying is simple as should the marketing message be. A compelling and compressed message is transmitted forward without degradation.

3. Be ready to scale your viral model from small to very large. If a campaign proves to be successful, the host might bog down and die. Wilson gives the example of Hotmail.com, where the more users the service attains, the more mail servers it will need to spread forward the message of free e-mail services. With rapid growth more mail servers need to be added quickly or everything collapses. These kind of details need to be planned ahead of time.

4. Take advantage of basic human motivations and behaviors. People have the desire to be cool, popular and loved. People are also greedy and have an urge for communication which produces a vast number of websites and email messages. Designing a viral marketing strategy that exploits these traits in its transmission usually brings success .

5. Use existing communication networks, as most people are social. A person's personal network of family, friends and associates may include eight to twelve people, and through these a broader network of hundreds or even thousands of people can be formed. A network marketer acknowledges the power of these human networks, both the close networks and the networked relationships. By placing the marketing message into communications between people its dispersion can be quickly multiplied.

6. Take advantage of resources provided by others to spread the word. This is what Dr. Wilson says to authors who, for instance, give away free articles in an effort to position their articles to others' web pages. In this way someone else's web page is forwarding the marketing message and their resources are used rather than those of the marketer.

### 3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Viral marketing in general is a well researched phenomenon that affects businesses with different backgrounds every day. When thinking about the music industry viral marketing might have an even bigger impact on the intended results of a project, whether it is releasing an album, sales promotion or an event. In some cases viral marketing could be taken for granted and as something that just “happens” without any advance planning, when in fact it can be planned in a way that harnesses the maximum capacities of the marketing tools that are provided. The research problem presented here asks what the tools are for a viral marketing campaign and how they could be used by Firebox Agency. This thesis considers those tools and possibilities and presents the following research questions which are directly related to the agency:

- How to identify various viral marketing methods used by Firebox Agency?
- What are the best ways for Firebox Agency to use viral marketing?
- Is Firebox Agency utilizing the best possible means to conduct a successful viral marketing campaign?
- Why would a small booking agency prefer viral marketing instead of more traditional marketing?

## **4 METHOD AND METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Methods**

The methods used in this study included studying articles on viral marketing and word-of-mouth-marketing, looking into case studies and giving real life examples. As a basis of the case studies and examples a company called Firebox Agency is used, where the author works as a booking agent and promoter.

### **4.2. Methodology**

The methodology of this thesis consisted mostly of qualitative desk research by reviewing existing literature about viral marketing followed by a case study approach where experiences were analysed from the perspective of Firebox Agency. A short interview was conducted with Firebox Agency CEO Jaakko Tarvainen to give a different point of view to the concept and the working methods of the agency. The sources used in the writing of this thesis came from various websites that offer incentives towards viral marketing and word-of-mouth marketing. The Media Virus, a book by author Douglas Rushkoff worked as an inspiration in many of the personal insights written in this thesis.

## **5 AGENCY BACKGROUND**

### **5.1. Company description of Firebox Agency**

Firebox Agency was first founded in September of 2008 under the wings of Firebox Records with an idea to build up a 360 degree company that would handle all aspects of the music industry. In addition to the label and the agency the company held within itself record distribution, a web shop and a physical store located in Seinäjoki, Finland. ([www.firebox.fi](http://www.firebox.fi), 2010)

For Firebox Agency the goal was to put together a professional agency that would handle the booking and promotional duties of the bands that were represented and released through the label. In addition to this other bands were represented as well, most of which I brought on from Secret Entertainment, which was the company I owned before joining Firebox. In addition to these we also held our own festival, Firebox Metal Fest, which took place in Rytmikorjaamo, Seinäjoki. ([www.fmf.fi](http://www.fmf.fi), 2010)

After one year we decided to separate Firebox Agency from the rest of the operations that were run through Firebox Records. Firebox Agency became its own independent company in which Firebox Records still was the major shareholder. The main reason for doing this was to simplify the organizational structure, thus giving Firebox Agency more freedom and responsibility. We have our office in the center of Jyväskylä now and we still work within the music industry as booking agents, artist managers and event promoters. ([www.fireboxagency.com](http://www.fireboxagency.com))

### **5.2. The artist roster of Firebox Agency**

From the beginning of the year 2010 Firebox Agency has worked as a home for 25 bands which are divided between three agents. The main genre we are working in is heavy metal, rock and punk, with some bands more commercial than others. Alongside myself Firebox Agency employs Jaakko Tarvainen and Mikko Hirvonen. Our complete roster is as follows (situation in April 2010):

#### **5.2.1 Bands represented by Toni Peltola**

Cantata Sanguis

Dead Shape Figure

Eternal Tears of Sorrow



Evemaster  
Ghost Brigade  
Hanging Garden  
Kalmah  
Omnium Gatherum  
Sacred Crucifix  
Throes of Dawn  
Total Devastation

### **5.2.2. Artists represented by Jaakko Tarvainen**

Aivoläivistys  
Au Pair  
Manufacturer's Pride  
Oranssi Pazuzu  
Plutonium Orange  
Purity  
Se, josta ei puhuta  
Sinamore  
Soulfallen

### **5.2.3. Artists represented by Mikko Hirvonen**

iRonica  
Gotham O.D  
Reflexion  
SaraLee  
BloodRedSky

### 5.3. Marketing methods

All of the agents at Firebox Agency work as individual units that take care of the bands as they see best. Thus in this thesis I will concentrate solely on the bands that I represent under the company, with the exception of Gotham O.D., a case that is described in the results section.

All the bands work under different kinds of contracts, and what applies to one band does not necessarily apply in the same manner to another band. For some of the bands we merely handle the booking duties in Finland, for some in Finland and the rest of Europe as well. For some we offer management, promotional and marketing services.

The type of deal depends much on the band and what their specific needs are. We also try to evaluate what these needs might be and try to direct the discussion towards a mutual understanding of the situation.

What all the bands have in common is that we sell and promote shows for them. The process of selling and promoting a show can roughly be divided into two different categories, first we have to convince the venue promoter to buy the band and after that convince the audience to come in and enjoy the show. Both of the situations are naturally different, but still they share the same elements.

Contacting with venue promoters in itself is a simple business-to-business affair. Making them book a band does not magically happen just by contacting them, as the promoters have their own monetary responsibilities and expectations of revenue. In a sense we are selling them a promise of financial gain. When dealing with young and upcoming bands with an agency that has not yet established itself as a credible and serious business, this promise is hard to make.

With time and hard work it is usually possible to progress to a state where an agency's credibility grows, and what they say and try to sell might be taken seriously. This lessens the need for viral marketing, but it is still important. A booking agent cannot be the only source of information to a venue promoter, as they need news about potential bands from other sources as well. If a promoter has prior knowledge of a band or an artist from a source that is within their closer circle of trustworthy peers, the band can be sold with more ease.

Music magazines can be filled with advertisements of new bands and bands that are releasing new albums, but in the end this might not tell anything about the band's true success. Rather they just say that the band's label has money invested in the project and they want revenue back, which is only natural. This is not to say that traditional forms of marketing are obsolete, but that a good message that spreads via word of mouth is more powerful, and if a booking agent can take advantage of this, more shows are bound to be booked.

Word of mouth is also good for our reputation as a serious agency when dealing with bands, as a good agency is only as good as the bands that it represents. Finland is a small country, and musicians tend to know each other well and share their experiences of record companies, clubs, venues and booking agencies. By maintaining a trustworthy and professional image of itself and the instance the agency is representing, it is possible to build up a credible roster of bands and artists. This is a slow process and many obstacles along the way have to be solved through the hard way. It is still necessary to sell oneself, and the best way to do this is to work hard to ensure that one of the artists the agency represents becomes a success.

#### **5.4. Web 2.0. marketing methods used by Firebox Agency and the audience response**

As a booking agency we rely heavily on the marketing opportunities that the Internet offers. Mostly through Web 2.0. we can reach a great number of people, but also because it is cost effective. Internet's social communities such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace are easy to use and provide tools to make marketing targeted and simple. There are many other online platforms that can be used for marketing, such as Irc-Galleria, but at Firebox Agency we mainly use the aforementioned three as our main viral marketing channels.

Facebook, Twitter and MySpace are generally the same. Their main objective is to give people a chance to share their lives with their peers and bring forth their own interests, photos and most importantly for use, their taste in music. For us this is a marketing gold mine, as we can see right from the start that if a person might be interested in the marketing message we intend to deliver.

First of all we have to request for the person to become our friend. After the person accepts the request we can start sending our marketing messages forward to him or her. Through this process we collect a "library" of people who are our potential customers. Our intention is not to spam the people, as this would only backfire against us, as people are easily offended if they feel that something is being forced upon them.

We approach viral marketing in a social network in a way that makes our company seem interesting to people and so that at the same time it provides them valuable information about bands that they are interested in and shows what these bands are doing within their close proximity. We roughly divide people so that we can target them more precisely with news they might be interested to hear. In this way people do not necessarily have to hear from bands that they are not interested in, or shows that happen outside their hometown.

To be interesting also means to be friendly. We try our best to act in a way that seems inviting to people and gives them the impression that the workers in our company and the bands they represent are easily approachable. In a way we are trying to demystify the music industry and avoid positioning ourselves in an ivory tower, from where we would look down on the consumers of music. It should be the other way around, as consumers are the ones that bring in the money to the booking agents and bands. Sending a positive impression to the consumers is important to us and, for instance, if the audience attendance is poor during a live show, we still try to be happy for everyone that came and saw the show, rather than frown because the ticket sales were not satisfying. This might add more people to the next show we arrange and send a positive viral message that people are welcomed with open arms at our events.

Behind the scenes the situation is different and as positive we try to be, we still have to make sure that the band's and our financial expectations are met. This is the side the audience does not and should not see. In the end the whole process aims for financial gain and with the friendly gestures there is the idea that this is the best way to achieve the goals that have been set.

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1. Case study – Gotham O.D. Street Team

What is needed is marketing done prior to the first contact with the venue promoters. Traditional marketing methods, such as advertisements in music magazines when a band releases something new help, of course, but for us this type of marketing is too expensive, and with low budgets creative thinking is often needed.

With creative thinking comes co-operation with the bands, who on their own need to do marketing and promoting in order to gain leverage for themselves. There are numerous ways in which a band can promote itself in a viral fashion. One of these is street teams that are usually run by fans dedicated to promoting a product or a band. As Justin Palmer (2007) describes in his article titled "Street Team Marketing" people do this sort of thing because of the interest they have for the product, but also for the prizes that are often presented as a reward for the work the street teamers have done.

A good example within the music industry of a well designed street campaign is a band called Gotham O.D., who is among the bands we represent as an agency. The rules and benefits of the street team are clearly posted on the street team's MySpace page. Gotham O.D.'s system on this is based on giving points for the work that the street teamer has done. The band will send promotional material to their marketers, such as posters and stickers with the intention that the material should be distributed forward. The street teamers then have to send back proof that they have actually done the work they were assigned to do. The more points one then collects, the more benefits he or she will receive. The prizes can range from free admittance to the band's concerts, meetings with the band and so forth.

Gotham O.D. is still a relatively small band and even though their street team is well designed, it is not as popular as many of the more well known bands are. For a small band a street team is more crucial and beneficial, as it works to spread forward the band's name for relatively small costs. Starting up a new street team needs to be thoroughly considered, as with viral or word of mouth marketing this type of promotion needs a band that is interesting on its own and truly has the potential to become something that the people want to endorse and speak to their friends about.

## 6.2. Case study – Ghost Brigade's Isolation Songs

Ghost Brigade is a band that gives a good example of a successful viral marketing campaign. The band released their second full length album entitled Isolation Songs through a French record company, Season of Mist in August 2009. ([www.season-of-mist.com](http://www.season-of-mist.com), 2010)

From a traditional perspective very little marketing was done in Finland from the label's side. The album was sent to journalists to be reviewed and gained mostly positive feedback, such as selection as "the album of the month" in the Finnish Inferno Magazine (Matti Riekki, Inferno magazine issue 6/2009).

Feedback such as this and the selection for the album of the month in Germany's prestigious Metal Hammer magazine (Metal Hammer Germany issue 8/2009) aroused interest in the band, although, in addition to the journalists, very few people had actually heard the album. Luckily the album had not leaked into the Internet either.

We as the band's management company or the band themselves did not really have a budget to do any traditional marketing. Instead we had to rely on the Web 2.0. methods, such as MySpace and Facebook to promote the album. Through these we could reach out to a great number of people directly and, most importantly, for free.

Instead of constantly preaching about the album, a more subtle approach was chosen. The band's website was cleared of all information and on the front page was a simple version of the classical hangman game. Each week a new letter from the album's name was revealed, finally revealing it in full when the first reviews were published.

On the band's MySpace page a clip of a song was published. The clip did not feature a full song, but rather a keyboard section that was edited out of one of the album's tracks. These actions, in addition to the positive reviews, gained the interest of the people as well as the industry professionals. Finally a week prior to the release date of the album, Isolation Songs was uploaded into the band's MySpace where people could listen to it for free for one week.

Once released Isolation Songs rose up to number 22 on the Finnish official album chart and stayed around the same position for five weeks. This may not be much on the bigger scale, but has since helped Ghost Brigade to be booked to do full length European tours with bands such as Paradise Lost, performances in higher profile international music festivals such as Wacken Open Air in Germany and Graspop in Belgium, through which new gates will again be opened for the band.

It should be noted that none of the aforementioned campaigns and results came from nothing. The band had released one album prior to Isolation Songs called "Guided by Fire", which upon its release sold quite little. The band was able to rise to public interest through active live performances that they at first did for a cheap price. With quality performances the audience attendance rates slowly began to rise alongside with the performance fees and the visibility of the events, culminating into shows in festivals such as the Tuska Festival in 2008.

### **6.3. Case study – Pahan Kelmikerho**

Pahan Kelmikerho is a small event that is arranged at Anniskeluravintola Ruma, a club based in Jyväskylä. Inside the club is a small separate bar that is called Paha, which holds about 70 people.

At Paha we are arranging an event called Pahan Kelmikerho that is an acoustic or semi-acoustic event that was held for the first time in April 2010. The plan is to continue arranging the club every now and then if the concept proves to be successful in the future as well.

What differentiates this club from other events that we organize is the way we market it. Here we put the emphasis on the event itself rather than the artists that perform there. Our goal is that people would attend Pahan Kelmikerho no matter who the performing artist is, and this is where viral marketing really shows its potential.

The marketing of Pahan Kelmikerho is completely concentrated into Facebook and MySpace. We are aware that by doing this we only reach a small number of people. This small number is all we need, however, as the marketing method is designed in a manner that these people would then talk to their friends about Pahan Kelmikerho. This is also possible because only a small number of attendees can fit into the small space of Paha. A logo was designed for Pahan Kelmikerho with the intention that it would be memorable and give out a good impression of the comedic side of the event.



**Figure 2:** The logo for Pahan Kelmikerho. Drawn by Sakari Puomiranta

The first Kelmikerho took place on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> of April and it proved to be very successful. The event consisted of two bands that both played cover songs ranging from Black Sabbath to G. G. Allin. Both bands held within themselves musicians from bands that are on our agency, helping us to promote the event and bringing in fans of their original bands. Paha was not full of people, but filled sufficiently so that the upcoming second Kelmikerho might obtain more attendees. We had printed pins with the event logo that we gave away for free, thus promoting the event itself further, and with the help of the performing artist's histories as musicians we gave a good impression of a quality event.



## 7 DISCUSSION

### 7.1. Overview of Gotham O.D. Street Team case study

With these examples we can see that viral marketing is effective, but in order for it to work well prior knowledge of the product or service, or as in these cases of a band and an event, is beneficial. There are various ways to control and guide viral marketing to a desired direction, but as a whole it is uncontrollable and depends much on the actions and reactions of the target audience, and in some cases the audience that was not intended to catch the marketing message.

When thinking of these three examples as a whole they all share common elements, even though as scenarios they are completely different. The case of Gotham O.D.'s Street Team draws its core from the actions of the band's fans who are rewarded with gifts and other prizes that the fans might consider to be valuable to them. In essence this type of a campaign contains various elements from different types of viral marketing that were presented in the literature review, mostly from value viral, guile viral and vital viral. Of these guile viral is the most prominent one, as people are involved in this viral marketing campaign in exchange for incentives. It is important to point out that this is not the only reason for people to be interested in the campaign, even though for some it might be, even if the prizes relate directly to the band and require interest in the music they play. Many are involved with Gotham O.D.'s Street Teams because they like their music and consider themselves to be fans of the band. This brings forth the side of the value viral, as the fans feel that Gotham O.D. brings them a quality experience that they would like to share with their friends even without the promised incentives, thus promoting the band in any case. Vital viral presents itself in a third party form through MySpace that is used to coordinate the entire campaign. Even though MySpace is not ultimately necessary in order to be involved in the street team, it still an important tool for initiating the whole procedure and making the first people interested in it.

Within the Gotham O.D. Street Team the best aspects of these viral marketing campaigns are presented. It does not rely exclusively on any of the specific viral aspects, but harnesses their best qualities, thus bringing in people that are interested in the band as well as the people that might be interested in receiving something for free. The main unethical viral problem might be spamming, which may be caused through forcing the idea on people who might not be interested in the band and for whom the band's music is not within their taste. This would bring a backfiring effect through a vile viral scene, where people tell others to avoid Gotham O.D. because of their relentless fan base. This can be avoided by educating the street teamers about ethical marketing method

## 7.2. Overview of the Ghost Brigade's Isolation Songs case study

Ghost Brigade's case is all in all completely different from the other case studies. First of all because within this case there are various factors and contributors that affect the end result. The album was released by a big indie label that works on the international scale and houses many well known bands and artists within the label's target groups which are strictly confined to metal music. The label, Season of Mist, has their own marketing departments which coordinate artist marketing through local distributors, which for Finland was coincidentally Firebox Records. They had their own marketing campaigns for Ghost Brigade, which in the end did not really affect the way we did our own subtle marketing maneuvers. They still provided the band with visibility which we could then use and develop the momentum further.

Another key issue was the choice that Metal Hammer Germany made to take Ghost Brigade's Isolation Songs and publish a review of the album as the album of the month. The magazine is very prestigious and when looking at the bands that receive nominations for the album of the month, one can see that many of the names are known even to the people outside of the metal music circuits. The fact that Ghost Brigade was selected for this position is a major issue and really tells something about the band and their music. This means they had really released something that has meaning. This raised the attention of many European music industry professionals and was followed by a contract of a major tour with United Kingdom's metal icons, such as Paradise Lost. This was then followed by many significant festival bookings and signing to a big central European booking agency, Avocado Booking.

Our own approach to album marketing was altogether different, as we mainly focused on the Finnish market, where the label's own marketing and the Metal Hammer Germany's nominations provided very little publicity. This case falls into the value viral category, where people share quality experiences with each other. We share very little information about anything, but still the information was interesting enough for people. It was great to see people writing to message boards and social media groups about the hangman game that was set up on the band's website, trying to guess what was hidden behind the puzzle, thus again spreading viral information about the band and a possible future release, of which there was no actual mention anywhere before the reviews came out.

As mentioned earlier, this is a risky maneuver and it cannot really be generally recommended unless there truly is a demand for the product, service or band. The risk of backfiring is significant, as people might not take in the marketing message and a viral campaign might not follow at all. The

product might be ignored and quickly forgotten. There would still be room to move, because no moves from which there would be no turning back were made. The situation could be saved by planning a completely new marketing campaign.

### **7.3. Overview of the Pahan Kelmikerho case study**

Pahan Kelmikerho shows the live industry side in more detail, as it is a club event that always goes under the same name no matter who is performing and as described in the results section of this thesis the name of the event is emphasized more within the marketing that is done. On the other hand Pahan Kelmikerho is a clear demonstration of a value viral campaign, but in a sense it also a guile viral campaign and uses elements from spiral viral campaigns.

The value viral side is shown within the audience, as the goal of the event is to get people talking about it and spread the virus to their peers because it would be something that they would consider to be a quality event. Guile viral in this case is really not about the audience, but rather gives incentives to the organizers. This might sound far fetched, but what was not presented in the results section was that Pahan Kelmikerho is in fact an event that has free admission. One of its main goals is actually spreading local information about Firebox Agency, thus trying to get attention towards our agency as a credible company within the local restaurant scene. Pahan Kelmikerho is our incentive into developing a successful agency and producing a good event that has good attendance, because its free an offers a change for a great time, and well planned details might spread the company's name further.

Spiral viral is not directly linked to Pahan Kelmikerho either, but it provides tools that are suitable for advertising an event that does not take itself too seriously and can in fact make a bit of fun of itself. Even the event logo shows the comedic side of the event and through the viral means that we use to market the event, we can also share other spiral viral cases that we consider to be funny or interesting. This is one of the many reasons why Facebook and MySpace are such great tools, as we can do almost anything to keep the audience entertained and still aware, even if subconsciously, of our main objective.

Pahan Kelmikerho is still in its early stages and this text paints a prettier picture of the event that it in actuality is in its current form. This is best viewed as a plan for the future development of the event and what it might become. The dates for future clubs have all been settled until the rest of the year 2010 with bands booked from a wide variety of genres. What is needed now is plans for good marketing methods, the core of which is presented here.

#### **7.4. Interview with the CEO of Firebox Agency Mr. Jaakko Tarvainen**

I asked the company CEO of Firebox Agency to give out his opinions and insights to viral marketing and how he has been using it various promotional cases. As the CEO of Firebox Agency and Off Records Finland Jaakko has strong experience from various situations within the music industry, from the side of the record company and the booking agency. The discussion started by asking generally about the marketing of a small booking agency and what type of marketing should a company like this use in its daily methods.

Jaakko feels that a small agency does not usually have the financial capacities for expensive marketing solutions. Thus the price is an important criteria when choosing a marketing channel. He in his work with Firebox Agency has directed marketing into such ways through which it is easy to reach carefully determined target groups with small monetary investments. The use of social medias is one of the most important channels with the marketing of Firebox Agency, still accompanied by traditional mediums.

What comes to Jaakko's personal relationship with viral marketing and the opportunities it offers he replies that generally in his work he tries to achieve a viral level of communication with the consumers so that they will then spread the marketing message forwards and work as effective marketers to products. Firebox Agency has tried various street team solutions, one of which was described in the results section of this thesis. On top of this Jaakko believes that one way or another viral marketing is an appropriate marketing method for pop culture phenomena where information about products is passed from one consumer to another and the fan base expands itself on its own. He understands that this rarely forms on its own and that it needs a certain atmosphere to form.

When thinking about benefits of viral marketing over more conventional marketing within the live music industry it is difficult to say where the line should be drawn, says Jaakko. Basically when advertising concerts and shows posters are used to promote the event, alongside social mediums and in some cases local newspapers. In his opinion viral marketing through social mediums might be the most beneficial out of these three examples, as it gives a direct contact to the target audience. While it is true that through posters and advertisements in local papers people that are out of the reach of the social mediums, these three compliment each other.

How to expand and develop viral marketing in the future with Firebox Agency and generally is a question in its own. In Jaakko's thoughts it can always be developed and enhanced. One should be careful of spamming as it brings more damage than good. In some cases it might even decrease the value of the event. In other hand the culture that is within the Internet keeps on continuously living

and expanding and to market within this concept is vital to keep it up to the standards of time. It is important to keep your eyes and ears open.

A marketing campaign can be considered a success when through them even thousands of contacts have been established. It is important to find the specific hook, like in any marketing. Just informing people is rarely enough, what is additionally needed is communication that breeds interest and possibly some interesting catch to inspire the consumers, thinks Jaakko.

An old saying states that a good bell sounds far, but a bad bell even further. With this it can be said that the products needs to be such that it can handle this type of marketing and communication. Even the channels within the socials mediums can be stuffed with too much information, which in its best form is easy to receive and interesting enough to be grasped onto. Each marketing campaign is still unique and when you think about the traces that are left behind, they are easy to analyze and track via different search engines. They just have to be dealt with means that are customary within the web community, ends Jaakko.

## 8 CONCLUSION

Thanks to the Internet we have in our disposal a huge number of people via social networks such as Facebook and MySpace that can be used as tools to deliver a marketing message through viral means. This helps many bands and artists, as well as the labels and agencies who represent them, to receive recognition and a way for them to become successful. On the other hand, mainly because these tools are at anyone's disposal, competition is even more fierce, as it becomes more relevant to stand out from the crowd.

"Tell a Friend" and "Share This Information" buttons work well within a circle of friends that are already aware of a service or product and thus accept it even with flaws, but to receive true success the product or service has to be of quality and meet the standards of people well outside of the closer circle of peers. This works for bands and artists as well, where a band or artist has to be truly unique and gifted to reach a level of larger recognition.

When moving from a general perspective to the situation with Firebox Agency's marketing routines and the questions presented with the research problem, we can see that for some there is a clear answer to be given, but through some aspects the whole is more vague. Identifying the various viral marketing methods is quite easy, as can be seen with the case study analysis. By identifying these methods it becomes easier to plan a viral marketing campaign and to see from the beginning what are its strong aspects and what might cause negative reactions.

What comes to the best possible means that Firebox Agency could use to conduct a successful viral marketing campaign. As one can see from the case studies all of them have been successful in various ways. The success might not have been monetary directly, but they have certainly spread the agency's name forward bringing in new clients, arousing new opportunities within the live music industry which in themselves might have brought in financial gain. With cases like Pahan Kelmikerho, while they are not directly about making money they aim to bring in profits in the future from other ventures. In this sense they are successful as well. The ways to determine if a viral marketing campaign has been a winner depends much on the goals that have been set and with Firebox Agency they are usually gained by achieving new opportunities through old efforts.

The reasons why Firebox Agency should use viral marketing instead of traditional marketing have been presented within this thesis on various occasions, but to recap everything shortly, it could be recommended because of its cost-effective nature. In addition to this the ways concrete feedback can be received quickly and the more direct contact with the consumer are reasons why emphasis should be laid upon the viral opportunities. Traditional marketing is not something that should be

forgotten by Firebox Agency, but in conjunction with Web 2.0 solutions it can be harnessed into a whole that offers the best financial structure suited for a small business.

From a personal point of view the writing of this thesis has proven to be a very educational process. Critical thinking about Firebox Agency was needed, which opened new ways of seeing things and helped on some day to day activities we had at our office. For future endeavors we can now think about the marketing structures in more depth and reach new goals that we might not have thought before.

In the end, even with these marketing tools of the next generation, in all comes down to the music. Those who have the gift to compose memorable music will become known and respected within the consumers of music no matter what the marketings methods are.

## **9 LIMITATIONS**

This thesis was written after a two year break from studies, which was due to getting a foothold of the music industry by getting employed by a booking agency. While most of the insights in this thesis have become from the experience gained from these working years, it still affected the academical side of the thesis and the research methods that were used, as the break detached me from the world of being a student. The final schedule of the formulating thesis was also quite tight as I was closing into the final months of my studies and was given a deadline to finish everything. This affected the writing of the thesis and with more time some of the details might have been presented in a more educated way.



## 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis was written solely under the experience received through working for just one company. For further research I recommend discussing viral marketing with different companies within the music industry who work in different fields, such as record producing, PR and promotion, distribution and as venue managers. Through the experience these type of professionals might have dealing with different marketing techniques can the researcher find deeper insight to the aspects offered by viral methods. Particular focus could be put into the procedure of shifting from traditional marketing methods to a web 2.0. style of marketing.

Viral marketing is something that could be described as a “hot topic” and many people write articles, books and theses about it and it's effects on modern marketing. Some of the written opinions might be uneducated and bias, so careful and critical study of the documents is recommended.

What comes to recommendations of using viral marketing in your own business ventures, whether they be within the music industry or not, I hope this thesis proves to be useful. Viral marketing is a very general topic that can be used to promote almost anything, even though mostly it is seen within the entertainment industry. While it is true that through word of mouth many products, services or bands and events what become well known, respected and recommended for others, they rarely depend on just that. A good viral marketing campaign supports a traditional marketing and both compliment each other which ensures the best possible end results. If one would choose to do a viral marketing campaign alone, they should carefully consider the aspects of the product in question and the ways that it could be marketed. For instance if the product in question would happen to be a freshly released album by a band that has no prior history from within the music scene it would be difficult to gain the needed viral leverage. It might happen if the band is good enough and the music is just that great that the listeners would embrace it immediately and recommend it to everyone they know. Such success stories are very rare though and what the band themselves and the instances that represent them might think that they hold in their hands the next gold selling masterpiece, the consumer might not think that. The consumer is the artists greatest friend and at the same time its greatest foe, as it is the actions of the consumer that in the end determine the fate of the artist. There are multiple methods that can arouse the interest of the consumer and some of them are presented in this thesis. One can always be creative within the marketing process and this field of opportunities expands in never ending ways. Do not be afraid to try things out, just as they keep inside the context of the marketed instance. It is somewhat pointless

to try to sell something to someone who is clearly out of the target group, just because “it's worth trying”. This might cause an unwanted reaction which could then reflect to the original and better suited target group, causing them to react negatively to something they might actually like, but choose not to because of the way it is presented.

Again this depends on the type of product that you are selling. There might be actual cases where “irritating” people has worked well in the end, and that might be something for future thesis researchers to get into. This final advice works well for both students writing their theses as well as to people planning a marketing campaign: be creative, show initiative, do not be afraid to try out new things and seek new perspectives, always plan your actions thoroughly and if in need, seek guidance.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW WITH JAAKKO TARVAINEN (FIREBOX AGENCY)

TP = Toni Peltola

JT = Jaakko Tarvainen

TP: Millainen markkinointi toimii mielestäsi parhaiten pienellä ohjelmatoimistolla?

JT: Pienellä toimistolla ei ole yleensä taloudellisia rahkeita kalliiseen markkinointiratkaisuihin, joten myös hinta on tärkeä kriteeri markkinointikanavia valittaessa. Olemme suunnanneet markkinointia sellaisille markkinointikanaville, joilla on mahdollista tavoittaa tarkkaan määriteltyjä kohderyhmiä pienillä taloudellisilla ponnisteluilla. Sosiaalisten medioiden hyödyntäminen on esimerkiksi yksi tärkeimpiä kanavia markkinoinnissamme. Jossain määrin myös perinteiset mediat.

TP: Millainen on suhteesi viraalimarkkinointiin ja sen tarjoamiin mahdollisuuksiin?

JT: Yleisesti pyrimme siihen, että saisimme markkinoinnin saavuttavan viraalin tason jolloin kuluttajat toimisivat tehokkaina markkinoijina tuotteille. Erilaisia street team ratkaisuja on kokeiltu ja niillä on saatu tuloksiakin aikaan. Uskoisin, että tavalla tai toisella viraalimarkkinointi on erittäin sovelias markkinointikeino popkulttuurin tapaisille ilmiöille, joissa tieto tuotteista kulkee hyvin pitkälti kuulijalta toisella ja fanbase laajentaa itseään oamtoimisesti. Toki tuo harvemmin muodostuu itsestään, mutta siihen pitää yrittää löytää mahdollisimman otollinen ilmapiiri.

TP: Näetkö että viraalimarkkinointi olisi hyödyllisempää ohjelmatoimistolle kuin perinteisempi mainostaminen? Jos niin, miksi?

JT: Vaikea sanoa mihin tavallaan laittaa rajan. Periaatteessa keikkoja mainostaessa käytetään väylinä perinteisesti keikkajulisteita, sosiaalisia medioita ja joissain tapauksissa myös paikallislehtiä. Noista sosiaalinen media ehkä osuu tuohon viraalimarkkinoinnin kenttään eniten. Voisi näppituntumalta kyllä sanoa, että se tällä hetkellä on mahdollisesti hyödyllisempää kuin juliste tai lehtimainonta, koska sitä kautta saa suoran kontaktin kohdeyleisöön. Toki julistemarkkinointi ja lehtimarkkinointi voi tavoittaa henkilöitä jotka ovat sosiaalisen median tavoittamattomissa. Eli periaatteessa nämä keinot täydentävät toisiaan.

TP: Miten koet, että ohjelmatoimistot voisivat kehittää markkinointiaan tulevaisuudessa? Käytetäänkö esimerkiksi Internetin tarjomia mahdollisuuksia hyväksi tarpeeksi hyvin?

JT: Aina voi varmasti kehittää ja tehostaa. Liikaa spämmäämistä tulee varoa, koska siitä on enemmän haittaa kuin hyötyä. Liika tyrkyttäminen saattaa monissa tapauksissa jopa laskea ohjelmatuotteen arvoa. Toisaalta Internetkulttuuri elää koko ajan ja siellä toteutettava markkinointi pitää olla erittäin hyvin ajan henkeä tiedostavaa, jotta hyöty saadaan irti. En osaa sanoa yksioikoista ohjetta miten markkinointia olisi kannattavaa kehittää, muuten kun että pitää silmät ja korvat auki.

TP: Mikä olisi mielestäsi hyvä esimerkki hyvin toimineesta viraalimarkkinointikampanjasta?

JT: Erilaiset sosiaalisen median kampanjat ovat olleen onnistuneita, kun niitten kautta ollaan saatu luotua jopa tuhansia uusia kontakteja / prospekteja. Tärkeitä on löytää sopija koukku hommaan, sama kuin missä tahansa markkinoinnissa. Pelkkä ihmisten informointi harvemmin riittää, tarvitaan myös mielenkiintoa herättävä viestintä ja mahdollisesti jokin mielenkiintoinen täky kuluttajalle.

TP: Voiko viraalimarkkinointia käyttää mielestäsi väärin?

JT: Riippuen mitä viraalimarkkinoinnilla tarkoitaa. Voisi viitata vanhaan sanontaan että "hyvä kello kauaksi kuuluu, huono vielä kauemmaksi", eli kun tieto tuotteesta leviää tehokkaasti kuluttajalta toiselle, kulkee myös huono viesti tehokkaasti. Eli tuotteen pitää olla sellainen, että se kestää tämänkaltaisen markkinoinnin ja viestinnän. Myös sosiaalisia medioita käyttäessä ei pidä laittaa kanavia tukkoon liiasta informaatiosta, ei pidä spämmätä ja viestintä on hyvä olla kohtalaisen vaivatonta vastaanottaa mutta myös mielenkiintoista jotta siihen olisi syy tarttua.

TP: Miten koet markkinointiviestin vastaanottajan reagoivan esitettyyn mainokseen ja ajatteletko, että viraalimarkkinoinnin kautta yleisön palautteen saa käsiteltyä helpommin?

JT: Vaikea sanoa. Todella tapauskohtainen homma. Jos taas ajattelee verkossa tapahtuvaa markkinointia, niin verkossa annetusta palautteesta jää toki jälki ja niitä on helppo kerätä ja seurata eri hakukoneiden avustuksella. Toki pitää myös muistaa analysoida noita palautteita verkkoyhteisön tapakulttuuri huomioon ottaen.