

**"ARE YOU A PEER TO PEER PIRATE?"
ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOWNLOADING MOVIES
AND TV SERIES THROUGH P2P NETWORKS**

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to investigate how collectivism and personal moral obligation may influence young consumers' attitudes towards the ethical stance of downloading of movies and TV series from the Internet and subsequent downloading behaviour. Data were collected using a convenience sampling method and 282 usable responses were used for analysis. The two factors were found to be significant predictors of attitudes, and in turn, attitudes is a significant predictor to intentions to download. Implications of the study and the corresponding recommendations are presented and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In the past, MP3s were the commonly downloaded and shared media content through P2P networks. However, more recently, movies and TV series have been observed to be increasingly available and downloaded through such networks. The ubiquitous nature of the internet has made downloading of movies and TV series a global phenomenon and hard to track (Lysonski and Durvasula, 2008). Many studies have delineated the benefits and cost of file sharing (such as fast, convenient and free of charge), and there seems to be more advantages than disadvantages (Picard, 2004; Hill, 2007). This makes file sharing and downloading a more attractive option to purchasing the original copy of movies or TV series, despite its close implications to piracy (Chiang and Assane, 2008). While most past studies have only examined music (such as MP3s) and software as being prone to downloading and file sharing (Lysonski and Durvasula, 2008; Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008), the examination of consumer behavior towards downloading of movies and TV series has been minimal (Bounie et al., 2006; de Vany and Walls, 2007; Waterman et al., 2007). It is also of great importance to understand the downloading behavior of young consumers since they are noted to be heavy downloaders of digital media through P2P networks (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004; LaRose et al., 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

“Peer to peer” piracy (Proserpio et al., 2005) and “digital piracy” (Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008) are some of terminologies used to describe the unauthorized downloading and sharing of digital media through P2P networks. Waterman et al. (2007) also states that file sharing is illegal by law and is considered to be one of the critical threats to the entertainment industry. Although there have been suggestions that software manufacturers are able to derive certain benefits from piracy such as exposure and facilitating adoption (Limayem et al., 2004), it cannot be said the same for peer to peer piracy.

Collectivism

Collectivism has been discussed in the past as one of the main influences that affect societies and their attitudes towards piracy (Wang et al., 2005; Phau and Teah, 2009). Furthermore, highly collectivistic societies regard sharing a resource for example, software as bettering the welfare of a group (Shin et al., 2004). Downloading of movies can be regarded as a group activity and beneficial to all when shared and circulated. This is further observed when most downloaders share their “downloaded” movies and TV series through portable digital media that they can circulate within their social circle. As such, highly collectivistic consumers will have positive attitudes towards downloading of movies and TV series through P2P networks.

Personal moral obligation

Based on Schwartz and Tessler (1972), moral obligation is a good predictor of intention. Moral obligation is defined as the feeling of guilt or the personal obligation under a situation to perform or not perform a behavior. Past research have used this as a factor to predict ethical behavior (Leonard and Cronan, 2005; Al-Rafee and Cronan, 2006; Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008), as such it could provide deeper insight into downloading consumers’ behavior. Ajzen (1991) has also suggested that the inclusion of moral obligation might be a more predictive measure in the theory of planned behaviour to measure unethical behavior. Individuals who are thinking of committing the act of piracy could feel guilty or a sense of personal obligation to pirate or not pirate the digital material. However, individuals may hold differing views and attitudes towards the ethical considerations towards illegal acts (Gopal and Sanders, 1997). With the increase of media coverage and exposure to the negative

consequences and impact of piracy, individuals could feel guilty or a personal sense of moral obligation before or when they form intentions to download (Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008). However, if younger individuals have lower propensity to feel a sense of personal moral obligation, the higher the chances they have positive attitudes towards piracy.

Building on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were postulated:

H1a: Collectivism will positively influence attitudes towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks.

H1b: Personal moral obligation will negatively influence attitudes towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks.

Furthermore, it is suggested that the above factors will also have an influence on intention to download. As such, the following hypotheses are postulated:

H2a: Collectivism will positively influence intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks.

H2b: Personal moral obligation will negatively influence intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks.

Attitudes towards downloading movies and TV series

Attitude is an individual's general feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness towards certain behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). It is considered as one of the best indicators of intention (Allport, 1935; Peace et al., 2003; Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008). Researchers such as Limayem et al. (1999) and Peace et al. (2003) have shown evidence that attitude is an important predictor of the intention to commit unethical acts, such as to pirate. Young consumers in particular, are more permissive towards digital piracy (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004). These consumers are indifferent to the direct harm that digital piracy may cause and have dismissed this as a "victimless crime". As such, they have positive attitudes towards downloading behaviour especially when they believe that it benefits the community at large and when they do not perceive this as an illegal or negative action.

The theory of planned behaviour purports that attitudes will influence behavioural intention (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977). Studies in piracy have also affirmed that positive attitudes towards downloading will lead to intention to download (Eining and

Christensen, 1991; Ang et al., 2001; Phau and Teah, 2009). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Attitudes towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks will positively influence intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks.

METHODOLOGY

The approach chosen was a convenience sampling of undergraduates in a large Australian University. Students are chosen as they are the segment of individuals who are found most likely to download (Aiken et al., 2003). Respondents were each given a self-administered questionnaire and these were distributed over five lectures. Respondents took an average of 10 minutes to complete the survey. The survey form consists of a number of sections comprising established scales on past downloading behaviour, collectivism, personal moral obligation, attitudes towards downloading movies and TV shows through P2P networks and intention to download movies and TV shows through P2P networks (from Wang et al., 2005; Goles et al., 2008; Lysonski and Durvasula, 2008; Limayem et al., 2004). All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, 1 represent “Strongly disagree” and 7 represent “Strongly agree”. The scale items were tested for their reliabilities and were found to be above 0.6 which are deemed useable (Nunnally, 1967). Demographic information of respondents were also included in the last section.

Results and ANALYSIS

282 usable responses were analysed using SPSS 15. 44.3 percent of respondents were males. The percentage of downloaders (72.7%) was higher than non-downloaders (27.3%), which showed a high prevalence and acceptance of downloading behaviour among young individuals.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the original 17-items “attitudes towards downloading movies and TV shows through P2P networks” scale. Four factors emerged from Varimax rotation and were named, “social consequences”, “anti-corporate attitude”, “personal risk” and “social acceptance”. In total, they were reduced to fourteen items with an acceptable range of reliabilities which were all above 0.6 (Nunnally, 1967). It was revealed that the “attitudes towards downloading

movies and TV shows through P2P networks” scale consists of four dimensions which will be used for subsequent analyses.

Multiple regression was conducted between the two independent factors “collectivism” and “personal moral obligation” and the dependent variable “social consequences”. As shown in Table 1, it was found that personal moral obligation has a significant positive relationship towards social consequences ($\beta = .315$, adj. $R^2 = .092$, Sig. = .000), whereas collectivism is insignificant ($\beta = .006$, Sig. = .924).

Multiple regression was conducted between the two independent factors “collectivism” and “personal moral obligation”, and the dependent variable “anti-corporate attitude”. As shown in Table 1, it was found that both antecedents have significant positive relationship towards anti-corporate attitude ($\beta = -.163$, adjusted $R^2 = .026$, Sig. = .008 and $\beta = -.163$, adjusted $R^2 = .026$, Sig. = .041).

Multiple regression was conducted between the two independent factors “collectivism” and “personal moral obligation”, and “personal risk”. As shown in Table 1, it was found that collectivism and personal moral obligation have a significant positive relationship towards “personal risk” ($\beta = -.161$, adjusted $R^2 = .113$, Sig. = .007 and $\beta = -.347$, adjusted $R^2 = .113$, Sig. = .000).

Multiple regression was conducted between the two independent factors “collectivism” and “personal moral obligation”, and “social acceptance”. As shown in Table 1, collectivism emerged to have a positive influence on “social acceptance” ($\beta = .492$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.361$, Sig. = .000). However, it was found that there is a negative relationship between personal moral obligation and “social acceptance” ($\beta = -.251$, adjusted $R^2 = .361$, Sig. = .000). Based on the above regression, H_{1a-b} are accepted.

Table 1 Multiple regression results on factors influencing four dimensions of attitudes towards downloading movies and TV shows through P2P networks

	B-values	Std. error	β	Adjusted R ²	t-value	Sig.
Social consequences						
Personal moral obligation	.229	.044	.315	.092	5.224	.000
Anti-corporate attitude						
Collectivism	.217	.082	.163	.026	2.652	.008
Personal moral obligation	.120	.058	.126		2.058	.041
Personal risk						
Collectivism	.216	.079	.161	.113	2.742	.007
Personal moral obligation	.337	.057	.347		5.926	.000
Social acceptance						
Collectivism	.463	.047	.492	.361	9.847	.000
Personal moral obligation	-.171	.034	-.251		-5.029	.000

Multiple regression was conducted between the two independent factors “collectivism”, “personal moral obligation”, and “intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks”. It was found that collectivism has a positive influence on intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks ($\beta = .321$, adjusted R² = .319, Sig. = .000) whereas personal moral obligation has a negative influence ($\beta = -.398$, adjusted R² = .319, Sig. = .000). Hence, H_{2a-b} are accepted.

Multiple regression was conducted between the four factors of “attitudes towards downloading movies and TV shows through P2P networks” and “intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks”. It was found that “social consequences” has a significant negative relationship with “intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks” ($\beta = -0.205$, adjusted R² = 0.311, Sig. 0.000). In addition, no significant relationships were reported between “anti-corporate attitude”, “personal risk” and “intention to download movies and TV series” ($\beta = 0.056$, adjusted R² = 0.311, Sig. = .332 and $\beta = -0.069$, adjusted R² = 0.311, Sig. = .194). “Social acceptance” emerged to have a significant positive relationship towards “intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks”. Thus H_3 is partially supported.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results show that collectivism and personal moral obligation are strong predictors of attitudes and intentions towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks. It was found that overall; collectivism positively influences attitudes and intentions towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks. As such, it is important for brand managers to be aware that if the collective belief of a group or culture is that downloading is legal, or there are no severe legal implications, and if consumers have existing negative sentiments towards major corporations, they are more likely to have positive attitudes towards downloading. The concept of bringing greater good to the society in general is accentuated in this situation whereby young consumers circulate their downloaded wares in hard disks and as such “benefit” those around them. The existing anti-corporate attitudes would suggest that as consumers they may feel that major corporations are “ripping” regular consumers off, especially with digital products being relatively expensive, and maybe unaffordable to students who have voracious appetites for media entertainment. As such, they resort to downloading, which is also perceived to be acceptable. However, with the success of iTunes, it would be an option to introduce an “iFilm” for the download of movies through the internet at a cheaper price. Similar strategies could be explored where consumers can trial the movie, and movies can be transferred to other media devices such as their iPods.

Further, findings also show that personal moral obligation plays a huge role in negatively influencing attitudes and intentions to download movies and TV series through P2P networks. This could suggest to managers the use of “guilt” could be a potential factor in dissuading downloading. At present, young consumers do not think that their actions substantially influence and impact the hard earnings of artists. Therefore, message strategies should continue to communicate the profound negative impact on an individual, the family and the society as a whole (i.e. how piracy could directly and indirectly cause harm to your loved ones) could drive the guilt into downloaders. Furthermore, it is important to educate consumers and the public on the general impact of downloading and with cut profits, less time and resources can be afforded on creative and innovative new productions, hence quality of products also dwindle. As such, key message strategies that are relevant to inflicting guilt on young consumers would be a strategy to allow young consumers to understand the disastrous

consequences of their actions, such as getting the people who are close to them in trouble.

Lastly, attitudes towards downloading was found to influence intention to download. However, specifically social acceptance positively influences whereas social consequences negatively influences intention to download. This shows that social acceptance among peers, or in this case authority figures could well form intentions and further fuel intentions to download movies and TV series. In this case, universities could also assist by providing less resources and monitoring systems that disallow students from downloading on campus. Providing a quota and monitoring the students who have been downloading could blacklist the students and penalize them through restricted access to the internet.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It was found that personal moral obligation is a strong predictor of downloading behaviour, future studies could consider using guilt as a predictor. It could also be cross culturally compared between a developed and developing country as to whether there are varying levels of guilt involved in piracy. The limitations of the study are that possibilities are present that the respondents are under reporting on their actual downloading behaviour due to nature of study (Limayem et al., 2004). There is limited generalizability as only students/young consumers are studied. Also, the examination of non-downloaders and downloaders could reveal deeper insights into motivations to download movies and TV series.

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