

# The ethics of downloading music and movies illegally research paper examples

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## **Abstract**

Piracy, illegal, illegitimate or illicit music and movie download are all names that are used to refer to unauthorized access and download of copyrighted music and movies over the internet. Technology is a good platform, if used appropriately to achieve the right purpose. However, the rapid changes in technology has brought in a whole new breed of challenges that have left authors mesmerized while at the same time, confused due to the intensity in application. Music and movie piracy, among other things that are pirated online like software has gained a new meaning and people justify the necessity for piracy using a myriad of things that include among other thing, economic stance, technological stance and attitudinal stance. This means that there is an increasing need to have stringent control measures as well as other possible solution to the crisis especially with the development of the social media platform that provides open options for sharing music. In this research paper, the learner argues that downloading illegally copyrighted digital media is unethical and should be abolished. In this research work, the learner would like to also include the choice of purchase of online media over free download given constrained income as the ethical quandary.

## **Introduction**

According to Plowman and Goode (2009), the greatest challenge that has been and continues to be a threat to the music industry is one of “ illicit music downloads” (p. 84). Plowman and Goode (2009) continue to argue that using the “ rational theory of delinquency”, it is possible to evaluate an actor’s perceived costs and benefits and make the necessary decision on

which action to take (p. 84). According to Lu and Lu (2010), it is noted that in Asian market, sale as well as purchase of counterfeit goods is one of the most normal things in the region.

Take for example, in Indonesia that had a recorded GDP of a staggering “ US \$ 4, 616 billion” and a population of over 200 million (Lu & Lu, 2010, p. 193).

Of its entire population, it is further noted that about 27. 1 % of them live below poverty line with an addition 55. 3 % living in the subsistence category that only survive on “ less than US \$ 2” per day. Given such data and the prices that are put for purchase of music online, it is clear that Indonesians, also a reflection of what is actually happening in other parts of the world, have a diminishing purchasing power.

Take for example, music that retails at US \$ 10 online would translate to the resident setting apart at least five to ten days’ salary to purchase one song.

Take another scenario where a movie is retailing at US \$ 115: this would take a year or more to collect such an amount and thus the adage and belief of “ why should I pay for music and movie that I can download for free in some sites” (Berti, 2009, p. 43).

McLean, Oliver and Wainwright (2010) capture an interesting and captivating debate where they detail that a glance at the technological, it would be anticipated that this platform brought in immense possibilities and opportunities for artists and producers to market their products. However, it is noted that the movie and music industry has been slow in adopting this strategy and hence those that capture what can be shared do so, to the pleasure of other downloaders, an aspect that is well captured and documented by McLean, Oliver and Wainwright (2010). For example,

McLean, Oliver and Wainwright (2010) notes that technology provides the option for “ communication, promotion, networking as well as distribution” for artists, yet they are quite slow in adopting this and integrating technology in their work and marketing strategies (p. 1365).

## **Other Underlying issues and Problems**

Lu and Lu (2010) found out that the cumulative loss that is directly or otherwise attributed to counterfeit, as of 2007, accounted for an astounding US \$ 183 million in Indonesia only. Lu and Lu (2010) continue to note that as a trial in explaining the occurrence and rapid increase in counterfeit is attributed to “ certain unique personality traits” that have been found to adversely affect ethical judgment of consumers (p. 193).

Lu and Lu (2010) also note that the “ prolonged global economic recession” that has increasingly and adversely affected the Euro zone has also played a great role in propelling consumers to seek free and inauthentic downloads that have threatened to cripple the music and movie industry world abroad (p. 193).

Berti (2009) while addressing problems that are faced today in the online platform as far as illicit downloads are concerned note that, with the advancement of the online communication and interaction, it has become very easy and a possibility to “ download almost anything with just a click of the mouse on a button” on a web site (p. 42). Illicit downloading bars the authentic author and artist the implicit right to make profits from such downloads since such a potential customer sees no more need to purchase what they already have downloaded for free (Berti, 2009). To some internet

users, the era of anarchy has risen and the sound of revolution fills the air especially for the category that information should be shared freely online for communal benefit (Berti, 2009).

This is also a notion that seems to be shared in the works of Sirkeci and Magnúsdóttir (2011) who note that, to the illegal downloaders, it makes no sense in utilizing a channel that would require one to pay to achieve the same goal as another person utilizing another channel get the same download for free.

It is also noted that there are increasing concerns as to the level of security that a paying site has especially with the use of credit card and debit card information online and the number of hackers online looking for an opportunity to exploit (Sirkeci and Magnúsdóttir, 2011). Another issue is that of the “perceived quality” of what is being downloaded that makes an individual make related decisions (Sirkeci & Magnúsdóttir, 2011, p. 90, 96), (Plowman & Goode, 2009, p. 85) and (McCorkle et al., 2012, p. 73, 83). It is also noted that there exists some disparities with regard to illicit downloads and “age, education, gender and income” as explicated in the works of Sirkeci and Magnúsdóttir (2011, p. 90).

In general, there are eight outstanding issues that have been identified that include “download quality, price” (Sirkeci & Magnúsdóttir, 2011, p. 96) and (Plowman & Goode, 2009, p. 85), “file copying without restriction, product variety, time spent to acquire a download, security and data protection, copyright compliance and source legitimacy (Sirkeci & Magnúsdóttir, 2011, p. 97) and (Plowman & Goode, 2009, p. 86). One of the ethical quandaries IT aspect is the ease to download music and movie freely online. It is almost

inevitable for a low income earner who would like to listen to or watch a movie to forego the free option by sacrificing to listen to the music they cannot ordinarily afford. The pressure increases when there are peers around an individual.

## **The way forward**

For example, according to Williams, Nicholas and Rowlands (2010), some of the factors that might “inhibit piracy include fear of punishment, software performance and social norms and pressures” (p. 295). Since social, situational pressures as well as de-individualizing people play a major role on the likelihood of engaging in illegal downloads, it is crucial to formulate policies and control measures that are centred on these aspects.

According to McCorkle et al. (2012), there is an ever increasing need for artists and their directors to lower their music prices that would go a long way in promoting “legal music purchase” (p. 73). Additionally, it is also noted that artists can “add value to legal music purchase” (McCorkle et al. 2012, p. 83).

McCorkle et al. (2012) continues to note that there is need to have different varieties of music based on “sound and visual quality” that would enable consumers to decide which quality they would like and can afford (p. 83). It is also proposed that there should be increased option to download individual songs, an element that seems to be missed by most musicians (McCorkle et al. 2012, p. 83).

Finally, McCorkle et al. (2012) proposes that music industry should make it easier to download music and movies legally and in a more convenient way

where artists have to go through tiresome and “ mostly inconveniencing routes” to get what one wants (p. 83).

Berti (2009) comes up with rather interesting suggestions that are mostly applicable in the future. For example, Berti (2009) notes that there is need to increase awareness to the public on copyright infringement and proposes “ awareness as from first grade” so as to embed ethics and technology in the minds of children (p. 43).

In general, Berti (2009) notes that there is need to come up with new copyright laws since those that are existing are outdated and were “ fashioned in the analogue era” and have been inconsistent in the digital era (p. 44). Additionally these laws are both “ complicated and written poorly” and thus their interpretations are diverse (Berti, 2009, p. 44).

There is also need to “ improve the digital watermarks” as well as “ improvement of the digital rights management technology” (Berti, 2009, p. 44). In addition to “ appropriate pricing”, there is need for “ blanket download tax” as well as prop up of a ““ Perfect” distribution” to avert piracy of scarce media (Berti, 2009, p. 44).

## **Conclusion**

Piracy, illegal, illegitimate or illicit music and movie download are all names that are used to refer to unauthorized access and download of copyrighted music and movies over the internet. The greatest challenge that has been and continues to be a threat to the music industry is one of illicit music downloads. It is further noted that in Asian market, sale as well as purchase of counterfeit goods is one of the most normal things in the region.

Technology provides the option for communication, promotion, networking as well as distribution for artists, yet they are quite slow in adopting this and integrating technology in their work and marketing strategies. Prolonged global economic recession that has increasingly and adversely affected the Euro zone has also played a great role in propelling consumers to seek free and inauthentic downloads that have threatened to cripple the music and movie industry world abroad. Illicit downloading bars the authentic author and artist the implicit right to make profits from such downloads since such a potential customer sees no more need to purchase what they already have downloaded for free. In general, there are eight outstanding issues that have been identified that include download quality, price, file copying without restriction, product variety, time spent to acquire a download, security and data protection, copyright compliance and source legitimacy. There is an ever increasing need for artists and their directors to lower their music prices that would go a long way in promoting legal music purchase. Additionally, it is also noted that artists can add value to legal music purchase. Music industry should make it easier to download music and movies legally and in a more convenient way where artists have to go through tiresome and mostly inconveniencing routes to get what one wants. There is also need to improve the digital watermarks as well as improvement of the digital rights management technology. Ethical changes will happen when proper mechanisms are put in place to deal with current and emerging issues that drive individuals towards piracy. There lies a relatively thin line that individuals have to chose between either foregoing the option of free download and sacrifice listening or watching a good movie that the individual



cannot afford. On the other hand, the information and communication age has made it easier to get free information at no cost.

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