

Online Piracy Hurts the Artists

Yana Morozova

Gogol State University at Nizhyn

ONLINE PIRACY

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In this day and age, millions of people have access to massive amounts of media. From music and video games to movies and TV shows, all of these can be easily accessed and downloaded from the Internet. However, piracy, while having always been an issue, has garnered even more attention and anxiety with the advent of the digital age. Two rival camps dominate public discussion around the ethics of illegal downloading. On the one hand, there are people who think that all ideas and artistic creation should be held in common and be freely accessible to all. On the other hand, there are people who think that illegal downloading is equivalent to common theft. We live in a society that critically views online piracy and many consumers of illegal content do not realize the potential negative consequences for the industry: decrease in quality, quantity and revenue.

Speaking about the decrease in the quality, the most vivid example is the film *The Wolf of Wall Street*. While *Transformers: Age of Extinction* gained only a 18% rating on Rotten Tomatoes (Transformers, Rotten Tomatoes), one of the most critical and most trusted film-review sites online, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, surprisingly gained a 77% rating on the same site (Wolf of Wall Street, Rotten Tomatoes). It was also nominated for five different Academy Awards. *The Wolf of Wall Street* is clearly the better film. Yet, besides the fact that *Transformers* was clearly not a great film, it somehow managed to be named the highest grossing film worldwide of 2014 and earned over one billion dollars in the Box Office (2014 Worldwide Grosses). *The Wolf of Wall Street* went on to be the most pirated film of 2014 with over 30 million illegal downloads (Spangler, 1) and didn't even gross \$117 million, giving the producers and the studio under \$17 million after the production cost, which is not a much of a profit at all for such a high-budget film. (Norkey). This information provides the example of how pirating directly influences the future of cinema. Producers are likely to throw all of their money into a profitable film than into a film of a good quality that won't bring much profit. If such tendency continues, there will be much more low-quality content. The media industry might have to compensate for a lack of sales of quality content by raising prices, which will make it harder for people to access it and there will be much less content in general.

As for the decrease in quantity, in many cases, piracy will damage the likeliness of a sequel. The *Kick-Ass* movies came to an end due to lack of funding from piracy. According to Chloë Grace Moretz who stars as "Hit-Girl" in the series, *Kick-Ass 2* was one of the most pirated films of 2013 despite having an extremely low Box Office Revenue (Highfill). Because of this, the plans for the third movie in the series have been cancelled. (Norkey). This quote draws on damaging consequences of online piracy for the industry. It definitely reduces the possibility of sequel. So what? When you download something online, instead of paying for it, you are actually showing the producers of content that you are not interested enough to support this project. Therefore, there's no need to create something that won't sell.

Speaking about the decrease in revenue, piracy costs artists and content creators millions of dollars in revenue. Hollywood studios have the financial backing to track illegal downloads and streams, and with those numbers they have estimated losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Emerging artists are at risk too: "When they are pirated they lose essential income, they lose confidence, and the lost income prevents them from re-investing in their creative work." (Granados). This quote illustrates that piracy not only impacts established artists, who strive to earn more money and make a bigger profit, but also emerging artists, who are only trying to get into the industry. The negative impact that piracy has on the content creation industry extends much further than lost revenue. Piracy deters content creators from investing in quality content, impacting the creative process and providing consumers with less choice.

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To recapitulate, online piracy is detrimental to content creators, including in the film and music industries. Digital theft may influence what kind of content is produced, its quantity, and how much money is spent on its production. So, despite providing accessibility and a chance for the audience to trial products without costing them excessive amounts of money, it does not help the manufacturers in creating more material to sell.

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