**PAPER**

**The land of Pirate Bay: online piracy habits and opinions of Swedish students**

**Kristina Berketa,** University of Zadar, Croatia, [berketakristina@gmail.com](mailto:berketakristina@gmail.com)

**Madeleine Lundman,** Linnaeus University, Sweden, [madeleine.lundman@lnu.se](mailto:madeleine.lundman@lnu.se)

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**Introduction**

Digital content and entertainment is undeniably a daily occurrence of modern life. Access and procuration of these modern commodities is another matter. Confronted by copyright restrictions, limited access, and economic issues, digital consumer turns to the black sails. Despite its turbulent history and legal proceedings, Pirate Bay still is, in their own words: the galaxy’s most resilient BitTorrent website (The Pirate Bay n.d.). The war on piracy in the last decade has resulted in the shutdown of many popular Torrent sites and file sharing services (Ernesto 2017a). In the academic field, we have witnessed the birth and growing popularity of Sci-Hub, a website developed to enable access to academic papers and articles around the world by bypassing the publishers’ paywalls (Bohannon 2016) and shocking verdict and consequences of the Aaron Swartz trial and the ‘free culture’ movement (Peters 2016, intro.). Websites such as LibGen and Library.nu have contributed to the fight for freedom of research by sharing pirated e-books (Peet 2016). We have witnessed the distress WikiLeaks and hacktivism have had on society and demand for social justice (Beyer 2013, 149). Even the Pirate Bay has joined in the fight with the Pirate Party of Sweden, arguing for freedom of digital file sharing (Wikhamn and Knights 2016, 43). While the war on piracy still rages on, a new player has entered the game, the legal and illegal, streaming.

**Theoretical background**

Recent research on online piracy issues mainly focuses on the consumers and their motivation for downloading pirated materials (Brunton-Smith and McCarthy 2016, 7). Other research focuses on the effects of illegal downloading and profit of copyright holders (Peukert, Claussen and Kretschmer 2017, 189-190). The belief that illegal downloading influence the sales of the entertainment industries has been highly debatable. In 2017 it was discovered that the European Commission did not publish a report that debunks evidence that suggests piracy has a negative effect on the sales of copyright materials (Maack 2017). This could be supported by research that focuses on the habits of pirates and users. It can often be observed on Pirate Bay website that the creators and users themselves encourage each other to “support the artist and buy the product”.

Piracy rests on the simple and noble idea: sharing. The idea is to enable access to those who do not have the same possibilities, whether because of financial difficulties or government censorships. Freedom of information for all by providing file sharing to the masses. The term ‘file sharing’ is a controversial one, depending on who you ask. The entertainment industry prefers the term ‘piracy’, making the action dark and heavy. On the other hand, the pirates themselves simply use the term ‘file sharing’ and see it as a public service (John 2014, 198-199). Pirate Bay grew out of the idea of file sharing and the wish for freedom of information and access. It is simply a website that facilitates peer-to-peer sharing of digital content by the searchable index of torrents (Wikhamn and Knights 2016, 43). By encouraging the social interaction between users of the website, Pirate Bay soon became an identity on its own and a symbol of resistance toward the entertainment industry and capitalism. On the other hand, the development of cloud computing, cheap storage, and Internet speed has led to the golden age of the streaming websites, legal and illegal. From music, movies, television shows and video games, today anything can be found on streaming links, yet again, the ethics and legality of those links are highly debatable (Marx 2013, 9-10). One surprising consequence of this, according to report published by European Commission in 2015, is the decrease of music piracy by use of Spotify, a Swedish music streaming service (Aguiar and Waldfogel 2015, 25-26). Ironically, Spotify’s biggest investor is Sean Parker, a notorious former pirate and founder of Napster, now ceased illegal service for music piracy (Wikipedia n.d.). On the other hand, television shows have been affected by the use of the copyright infringement streaming website. In 2017 it has been reported that HBO series Game of Thrones has been pirated more than one billion times, 84.7% of those were online illegal streams (Ernesto 2017b). These numbers could indicate a change in the piracy game, streams are easily available and accessible anywhere in the world for people to use.

Sweden is the birthplace of both Pirate Bay and Spotify. The legal battle of Sweden against Pirate Bay has been highly publicized and debated and resulted in a change of Swedish copyright law (Larsson 2013, 377-379). Regarding the country’s history of online piracy and innovations in digital consumers market this paper will research the online piracy habits and opinions of Swedish students and their influence on free information and social justice.

Libraries around the world are still affected by digital piracy issues, whether it is a problem of access or a commodity. Sci-Hub is equally used around the world, it is argued that users prefer to use Sci-Hub even when they have access to the papers in the local academic library (Bohannon 2016). This is probably the result of easy access to the Sci-Hub website. But it is still piracy, and in this paper, the author will research why students of one of the most developed countries in Europe turn to online piracy.

**Research questions**

Research questions of this paper are as follows:

1. Do Swedish students willingly use online piracy websites as a source for accessing or downloading digital materials?
2. Does the use of illegal downloads and streaming services point to access problems and user habits rather than economic issues of the user?
3. Would the Swedish students rather use Spotify than download music, legal or illegal?
4. Are Swedish students familiar with Sci-Hub and reason behind it?

**Methodology**

The aim of this paper is to research the online piracy habits and opinions of Swedish students. Paper will research the awareness of Swedish students in the problems and ethics of online piracy and all different media: music, movies, Tv shows, academic papers, software, and games. The paper will use a quantitative research approach. An online survey will be targeted at Swedish in the period of one month. The survey will be distributed among student population using social media and snowball sampling.

**Expected Research Results and Conclusion**

The authors expect the research results to answer the research questions previously stated. The search will look into habits and opinions Swedish students have on online piracy. The research will show if Swedish students willingly access piracy websites for obtaining copyright infringed materials. The research will show the reason behind using piracy websites: access and habit or economic. The authors expect that the research will confirm or deny previous research about using Spotify as a tool to fight illegal music downloads. Last research question this paper will answer is about Sci-hub. The authors expect high negative answers regarding this research question but want to point to academic research inequalities and to raise awareness among students about this copyright infringement case. This expected result is influenced by authors knowledge of the high availability of database access in Swedish academic libraries. The research will also question the reason behind the Swedish students who use Sci-hub to access academic papers and journals. Also, students who use Sci-Hub will be questioned why they avoid access through libraries if it is provided to them. The research will question students’ preference about entertainment consumption, download or streaming. Expected conclusion of this research will contribute to the academic discussion about online piracy, reasons behind it and movement of open information. The authors expect that the conclusion will offer reasons on why students prefer piracy rather than libraries. In the future, this could help libraries understand their user's needs more clearly. The research will show the degree of consumption of pirated entertainment material in the age of easily accessible streaming services such as Netflix and Spotify. Paper will conclude to what degree stated research question have on access to information and social justice.

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