

Since the beginning of the internet, the topic of 'piracy' has kept the music and movie publishers awake at night, and recently the book and other goods publishers joined them. It's easy to understand it – the unauthorized distribution emerged as a free competition to the previous sales channels. Although much has changed since the times of the Napster lawsuit in 2000 – e.g. the broadband became faster and the publishers launched new distribution channels – P2P networks and websites like The Pirate Bay remain among the most controversial parts of the digital world. It seems everyone has a side in the debate – from the revenue-protecting publishers and artists to students streaming TV series online. Unsurprisingly, the topic has attracted many scholars aiming to establish whether 'piracy' actually hurts producers or perhaps – on the contrary – promotes cultural goods.

Although measuring the effect of the availability of unauthorized copies on legal sales is extremely important, the decision-making process connected to choosing the source of a good itself seems just as interesting. Would the situation be the same for a P2P user as for someone who always preferred the official source? Should a paying customer turn to an unauthorized source for the first time, would he ever return to the official distribution? How does the appearance of an unauthorized alternative affect the paying customers and how does the appearance of a new official channel affect the so-called 'pirates'? The project aims to answer specifically these questions.

The last year's pre-release leak of four episodes of the fifth season of Game of Thrones is an excellent opportunity to consider how such an event affects the viewers so far watching it on TV. Did they wait four weeks? Or did they decide to watch all four leaked episodes in one day? Needless to say, a pre-release leak creates an additional incentive to turn to unauthorized sources. However, this requires specific software and knowledge of how to use P2P networks. Also, some people may be stopped by moral barriers, whose breaking could permanently affect the consumer's stance on downloading. In our studies we will look for an answer whether GoT viewers actually turned to unauthorized sources and if so if they returned to their TVs for the fifth and all subsequent episodes of the series.

Video games so far have been largely omitted in the research literature. This may partially stem from the fact that they are not considered cultural goods by the law, and rather as software. Nevertheless, video game publishers have a much richer experience in protecting their products. Obviously, video games by definition have constituted digital goods from the beginning of their existence and used to deal with physical 'piracy' as well. In effect, games are protected by a much wider variety of methods, than music or movies, including: keycodes, registration requirements, the necessity of logging in online, etc.. Consequently, video games are the only good dealing with 'piracy', which manages sometimes to delay the start of unauthorized distribution (although not to prevent it). At the same time, some games leak to the internet even before their premiere, possibly due to the lack of the means of distributing them in a non-copyable format. Basing on the example of video games we will answer the question whether the delaying of unauthorized distribution can affect the players' decisions. Will an effective game protection motivate them to buy the product? If so, will the whole effect take place soon after the release and before the eventual uploading of the game to P2P networks?

We will search for answer to the last of project questions among comic book readers. In the recent years comic books entered the digital market at full speed, with their current revenues (not counting long-term subscription services) constituting 1/8 of those of their paper cousins! Comic books, of course, have existed for a long time. Because of that, comic book giants – e.g. Marvel or DC – besides releasing new titles in physical and digital formats simultaneously, are gradually digitalizing their old titles as well. This creates an interesting case, where a high-quality, software-supported version of a product is first presented in a store, while low-quality scans of the product have been already spread around online for a long time. Will the e-readers, so far able only to download crude scans of the comics, decide to try the official channel? We will conduct a survey study among comic book readers to assess what factors they find important when choosing the source of their comic books.

Thanks to the answers to the above questions we will learn about the consumers' decisions in the face of the illegality of one of the provided options. We will also better understand the motivations the consumers have in the digital market and assess what really drives the competition between P2P networks and producers. Our results should be interesting not only for the so-called 'pirates', but for the industry representatives and scholars studying rational choice behaviour as well.