

FACILITATING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL FACTORS  
AS PREDICTORS OF ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS  
TO ILLEGALLY DOWNLOAD

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# FACILITATING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TO ILLEGALLY DOWNLOAD

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors influencing downloading behavior of young consumers by examining their attitudes and intentions to download movies and TV series through Peer to Peer (P2P) networks. Regression analysis using data collected from 282 respondents revealed that both facilitating conditions and social factors were significant predictors of attitudes and intentions to download. These results have provided several insightful implications for marketers and policy makers in formulating strategies. New directions for future studies are also discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Fast internet connections, inexpensive high capacity media storage and underground peer to peer networks have opened the floodgates to piracy (Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008). The prevalence of downloading activity is most common through P2P networks or file sharing networks like Kazaa, RapidShare and more popularly these days, Bit-Torrent (Kwok, 2004; Lysonski and Durvasula, 2008). This form of piracy initially started with music and software, but has moved into other media such as movies or videos (Chiang and Assane, 2008; Lysonski and Durvasula, 2008; Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008). At first, Bit-Torrent was thought to be a helpful tool for movie makers to distribute trailers and copyrighted movies. However that optimism was short-lived due to the ubiquity and “cost effectiveness” of file sharing which catapulted it into a popular platform for sharing pirated movies, TV series and other digital media (Hill, 2007). Even though there is an observed prevalence of movies and TV series being downloaded through P2P networks, the examination of consumer behaviour in that context has been minimal (Bounie et al., 2006; de Vany and Walls, 2007; Waterman et al., 2007).

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The unauthorized downloading and sharing of digital media through P2P networks is also termed as peer to peer piracy (Proserpio et al., 2005) or more broadly termed as “digital piracy” (Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008). This form of illegal copying or downloading of copyrighted software and media files bring detrimental effects to the copyright holder, both economically or non economically (Proserpio et al., 2005;

Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008). While some argue that file sharing falls into the grey area of being “illegal”, Waterman et al. (2007) states that file sharing is illegal by law. In addition, this form of piracy is considered as one of the most critical threats to the entertainment industry. It is found that digital piracy is practiced more disproportionately by the young and by educated young males (Teo, 2001), who is suggested to be still “immature” in their ethical development (Hill, 2007; d’Astous et al., 2005; Hinduja, 2003). It was also found that internet users between the ages of 18 – 29 are more likely to illegally download digital music in comparison to consumers from other age groups. It is also common to find that college kids are the most active in digitally pirating music, movies and file sharing on the Internet (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004; LaRose et al., 2006). This could be attributed to the fact that most college students use the Internet to visit or obtain music, movies, fashion, online games and there are more students who spend time online than any other demographic group (Aiken et al., 2003).

### **Facilitating Conditions**

Facilitating conditions are factors in an environment that hinders or makes an act (legally or illegally) easier to commit (Triandis, 1980). Because of the accessibility and ease of committing the act, consumers would therefore have standards that could be more easily swayed, therefore forming more positive attitudes (Limayem et al., 2004). Based on the findings of Cronan and Al-Rafee (2008), individuals equipped with the skills and resources to pirate have a higher intention to pirate/download movies and TV series through P2P networks. In this instance, facilitating factors are conditions that will assist consumer in downloading movies and TV series, such as fast internet connection, lack of copyright measures, easily accessible websites or sources to digital files (Cheng et al., 1997). Furthermore, it is noted that with the internet being so widely available and P2P applications being free, these are some of the motivating factors that catalyze downloading intentions and behaviour.

### **Social Factors**

Social factors have been found to influence attitudes and the intention to illegal and unethical behavior (Eining and Christensen, 1991; Simpson et al., 1994). It is suggested that social factors such as norms, roles and values at the societal level that influence an individual consumer (Limayem et al., 2004). The expectations,

perceptions and interactions from peers such as friends, associates and family constitute social factors and can influence the attitudes and perceptions of a specific behavior (Tang and Farn, 2005; Ang et al., 2001; Phau and Teah, 2009). If a social group were to perceive downloading as ethical and support the act, then it will have an influence on consumers' attitudes and behavioural intention towards the act. As such, if the group were to perceive downloading as an acceptable act, then they would have positive attitudes towards downloading of movies and TV series through P2P networks.

From the above discussion, the following hypotheses are formulated:

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

**H1b:** Social factors will positively influence attitudes towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks.

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

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

**H2b:** Social factors will positively influence intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks.

### **Attitudes towards Downloading Movies and TV Series**

Attitude has long been postulated as one of the best indicators of intention and the most important construct in social psychology (Allport, 1935; Peace et al., 2003; Cronan and Al-Rafee, 2008). Studies in the past have emphasized on the importance and influence of attitudes on the intention to commit unethical acts, such as to pirate (Limayem et al., 2004; Peace et al., 2003). Young consumers in particular, are more permissive towards digital piracy (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004). It is suggested that consumers do not perceive the direct harm that digital piracy causes and consider it a "victimless crime". They are unable to relate and visualize the economic consequences affecting individuals, though some believe it might only affect major corporations slightly (Chellapa and Shivendu, 2003). Furthermore, the "anti-big business" attitude whereby they believe that the price of digital media is inflated and exorbitant, therefore blaming the industry for making their wares unaffordable to

many (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004). Basing on the theory of planned behaviour, attitudes will influence behavioural intention (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977). Other piracy studies have affirmed that positive attitudes towards downloading will lead to the intention to download (Eining and Christensen, 1991; Ang et al., 2001).

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

A convenience sampling method was used on undergraduate students from a large Western Australian University. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed and respondents were given instructions before commencement of the survey. The survey instrument consisted of three sections. Section A measured respondent's past downloading behaviour. Section B comprised of four adapted and adopted scales from established sources (from Wang et al., 2005; Limayem et al., 2004; Lysonski and Durvasula, 2008) that measured facilitating conditions, social factors, attitudes towards downloading movies and TV shows through P2P networks and intention to download movies and TV shows through P2P networks. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, 1 represent "Strongly disagree" and 7 represent "Strongly agree". Section C captured the demographic information of respondents.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In total, 282 responses were collected. Of these, 48 responses were discarded due to incompleteness. The usable responses were then 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 among young consumers.

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 above 0.6, which is

deemed reliable (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 analysis.

Multiple regression was conducted between the antecedents and the four dimensions of “attitudes towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks”. The dimensions are namely “social consequences”, anti-corporate attitude”, “personal risk”, and “social acceptance”. As shown in Table 1, the analyses revealed that there is a positive relationship between facilitating conditions and social factors, and “social consequences” ( $\beta = .229$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.054$ , Sig. = .000 and  $\beta = -.123$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .054$ , Sig. = .041 respectively). It was also found that facilitating conditions has a positive relationship towards “anti-corporate attitude” ( $\beta = .153$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.019$ , Sig. = .011). However, it was found that there is no significant influence between facilitating conditions and social factors, and “personal risk”. It was found that no significant relationship exists between facilitating conditions and “social acceptance”. However, social factors emerged to have a positive influence on “social acceptance” ( $\beta = .475$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .223$ , Sig. 0.000). As such,  $H_{1a-b}$  are partially supported.

**Table 1:** Results of antecedents towards four dimensions of “attitudes towards downloading of movies and TV series through P2P networks”

|                                | <b>B-values</b> | <b>Std. error</b> | <b><math>\beta</math></b> | <b>Adjusted <math>R^2</math></b> | <b>t-value</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| <b>Social consequences</b>     |                 |                   |                           |                                  |                |             |
| Facilitating conditions        | .273            | .047              | .229                      | .054                             | 3.813          | .000        |
| Social factors                 | -.097           | .072              | -.123                     |                                  | -2.050         | .041        |
| <b>Anti-corporate attitude</b> |                 |                   |                           |                                  |                |             |
| Facilitating conditions        | .235            | .092              | 0.358                     | .153                             | 2.547          | .011        |
| <b>Social acceptance</b>       |                 |                   |                           |                                  |                |             |
| Social factors                 | .345            | .039              | .475                      | .223                             | 8.818          | .000        |

Multiple regression was conducted between “facilitating conditions”, “social factors”, and “intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks”. It was found that there is no significant relationship between facilitating conditions and “intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks” (Sig. = .165,  $\beta = -.073$ ), thus  $H_{2a}$  is rejected. However it was found that social factors has a significant relationship towards intention to download movies and TV series ( $\beta = .519$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .262$ , Sig. 0.000). Hence,  $H_{2b}$  is 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”. 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  $R^2 = 0.311$ , Sig. 0.000). While no significant relationships were reported between “anti-corporate attitude”, “personal risk” and “intention to download movies and TV series through P2P networks” ( $\beta = 0.056$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.311$ , Sig. =.332 and  $\beta = -0.069$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.311$ , Sig. = .194). The “social acceptance” factor 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

In summary, the findings revealed that facilitating conditions and social factors do influence attitudes towards downloading movies and TV series through P2P networks. Specifically, facilitating conditions positively influence social consequences, and social factor negatively influences social consequences. Furthermore, facilitating conditions positively influences anti-corporate attitude and lastly, social factors positively influences social acceptance. Social factors was also found to positively influence intention to download. Attitudes was also found to be a significant influence of intentions to download. Specifically, social consequences negatively influences intentions to download whereas social acceptance positively influences intention to download.

Similar to findings in Limayem et al.’s (2004) study, facilitating conditions has a significant influence on attitudes and intentions. As such, downloaders with knowledge of downloading and accessibility to resources also know the social consequences of downloading. However, they also tend to have anti-corporate attitude. This could be suggesting that downloaders with the know-how or IT savvy, also may hold negative perceptions towards the major corporations who manufacture the wares. This could suggest that companies will have to address their own image and whether they are serving consumers’ best interest when selling goods. Especially since young consumers are unable to spend as much on movies, though they would



probably be the group with the most ‘voracious’ appetite to follow movies, trends and fads, as such their best available option is through downloading. Marketing can consider online purchasing where they can access trials, or timed versions of movies or create special packages and deals for young consumers.

Social factors strongly affects attitudes and intention to download. It is found that social factors will catalyze and enhance an individual’s positive attitudes towards downloading if the act is deemed socially acceptable. It was found that with high social influences, young consumers have less regard for social consequences. This could be attributed to the fact that when there are more people committing an act together, it becomes a common occurrence thereby making it acceptable. With many messages in the marketplace aiming to deter downloading, there aren’t many that targets young consumers and issues that are relevant to them. For example, messages like downloading from P2P networks are also prone to viruses, or huge penalties can be imposed on downloaders or a group of downloaders since they are socially connected. From a university point of view, downloaders can be blacklisted and put on the web as a “serial downloader”. This could possibly deter peer groups from downloading and the embarrassment may serve as an individual deterrence or a form of shame among peers.

Attitudes in general play a huge role in influencing intentions to download. It is noticed that if downloaders believe that the social consequences attached to downloading is high, such as the chances of being caught, penalties and legal lawsuits, the lower the intention to download. Whereas, if social group and network accepts downloading, then the consumer will regard it as an acceptable behaviour hence they will be more likely to download. As such, it reiterates the importance of social groups and network and how this could be one of the bigger challenges. In the university context, monitor and tracking systems can be in place to limit downloading by issuing quotas and monitoring websites.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The study has further reinforced previous literature (e.g.Chang, 1998; Kwong and Lee, 2002; d’Astous et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2005; Phau and Teah, 2009) that the theory of planned behavior is an effective theory to explain the downloading/piracy

phenomenon. Future studies can examine consumers from an older age segment. As internet competencies are increasing, they might be a group of consumers who may be adept in downloading behaviour. Other variables such as novelty seeking, whereby consumers download for the sake of trying out and for the diversity of movies, yet they may not be watching it. Similarly, downloading could be a habitual practice whereby they are so used to it that they do it as part of a habit or addiction rather than a conscious act of malice. Hence testing the model with habitual behavior in future studies is warranted (Triandis, 1979; Limayem et al., 2004). Further, the nature of the research and the sensitivity of the topic lead to possibilities of the respondents under reporting their actual downloading behaviour (Limayem et al., 2004).

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