Introduction.

Piracy, good or bad?

There are obvious good and bad sides to online piracy, like most things, however there is more to look at than just: It's free so it's good vs the company is losing money.

Over this piece I will be discussing the for and againsts of piracy.

The main points for piracy are:

- Test before you buy.
- A way to create change within a company, e.g. make prices fall.
- If something is very expensive and you need it for work, when you have low income.
- Gives properties the property to enter the mainstream through mass exposure.
- Opens access to less fortunate.
- Exclusivity or region lock to certain services.

And against piracy:

- Small curators will lose vital income.
- Effects companies' employees through less money going through a company.
- Potential malware or viruses.
- If you are distributing, or in the past even downloading, you can face legal action.
- Pirating sites place ads on websites.

For.

The first point for piracy, is that it allows people to try before they buy.

An example is: if a user wants to buy a game, they might not enjoy it, so by testing the game they will know if they enjoy it and then buy afterwards to support the curators.

Demos for games in particular are decreasing which removes the trying before buying aspect, however this is due to that demos "Can Cut Sales in Half" (Karmali, L. 2013), however users still want to test the game to see if they want to buy it or not. The article says that game developers should create trailers instead.

However, there has been dishonesty through trailers. An example is 'Aliens: Colonial Marines' they used better graphics for their trailer which highlighted "the

"absurd" difference between the "in-game" and "playthrough" footage"
(Yin-Poole, W 2013).

For games, what can the user really do now other than pirating the game? Users have been backed into a corner to pirate to see if the game is right for them.

For software it's different. There is a lot of software with trials such as applications created by Adobe. They can run these trials for a certain amount of time and work with it but eventually runs out, however this comes to my next point.

Piracy opens access to less fortunate, such as people with low income having unstable network connection. If it is required for a job, but far too expensive compared to your wages it could matter between getting all the food you need or having photoshop. Trials always run out. Having a trial is good but being affordable is better. (Doctorow, C. 2011)

One-time purchase licenses are great, as this gives the user an incentive to save money for a long time to be able to use the software, they brought the license for life, however having subscriptions can be more difficult as it charges monthly or annually. If an option for annually that is better for a low-income user as they can see if they have all the money they need. However, a monthly subscription can be difficult as you are unable to save over a large amount of time.

Adobe programs are very expensive, for just illustrator, it is £19.97 a month (Adobe, 2020), this is obviously a large amount per month and will make people pirate rather than paying monthly, this is just one company, however this is the most obvious example.

This also links to exclusivity or region lock to certain services, as services like Netflix, which are also paid monthly, £5.99 per month (Netflix. 2020. II). Netflix has exclusive entertainment series, such as stranger things (Netflix. 2020. I). However, since Netflix appeared and became a huge success with over 150 million subscribers in 2019 (Cook, S. 2019), many other services have started to appear sprouting off the more traditional TV channel companies to be also subscriber based, like britbox (Britbox 2020) which was created by BBC and ITV.

Because of these numerous services, a large majority have started to produce exclusives like Netflix. If a user is subscribed to Netflix, they may want to also watch an exclusive on another service, but paying for another service you are hardly going to use is an inefficient use of money, so people will either use the trial and cancel or just pirate as paying more money will leave you worse off. There is no point paying for another service for a few shows, it is easier to just pirate than signing up and potentially forgetting to cancel a subscription.

The abundance of services requiring monthly subscription makes the user have to pirate it instead, there has been a resurgence recently caused by this which is making piracy happen more frequently(Feldman, B. 2019).

HBO has said that "piracy is 'better than an Emmy'" (Rodriguez-Amat, J. 2019) this is because of the huge amount of exposure it gives a specific property, in this case game of thrones. It gives projects a chance to go mainstream through mass this exposure. It could also apply with different types of media, such as a game or

piece of music is shared. However it will still mean a loss of money as some won't pay in the future.

It's also a way to protest a company's choice, such as extortionate prices, while also still being able to use the software. It can go either way, making prices lower or higher.

Against.

The negatives are much more blatant, the most obvious is that small curators will lose lots of income they need, which means they may no longer make software / media due to lack of funding. Larger companies can survive this due to them still getting lots of revenue from legitimate users (meaning people who buy the software). This would in turn also affect the creativity of the creators as they won't think out of the box, as they need money they would go and create something which is deemed as safe, meaning no more innovation for a company as they are trying to recover their losses.

Continuing with smaller curators being hurt, it can hurt emerging artists "With a very conservative estimate of 10% of music royalties lost to piracy" and it effects the other creatives who work with the artist publishing their music (Granados, N. 2016).

There is also the problem of malware. A user could upload a malevolent piece of software on purpose to try and infect the users PC. There are numerous types of malicious software such as worms and spyware, however there are now more ransomware types and causing a large loss of money per year, the average business cost of $8,025,500 (Cook, S. 2019) so if a user decides to pirate from work it could be detrimental. An example is a key generator for an application installing a trojan (Abrams, L. 2020).

Pirating sites also use a lot of advertising to keep up the websites. In my opinion, sites like these shouldn't profit off of stolen content as it's profiting off the backs of others, they should use donations as a way for the site to stay up instead, however this is difficult as pirates, well inherently, don't pay for stuff unless necessary. I would like to think they would donate to a website like this, even if it's a tiny amount, it still adds up as pirating sites are very popular.

Adverts can also be another way for malware to be introduced to the users system, if a newly discovered exploit is found an advertiser could host a malware unknowingly through an advert which uses javascript to perform something client side. One instance is a website called **gomovies.to** , which used an exploit kit to try and install ransomware on a user's computer. (Hegde, R. 2017) This could be devastating for a user as their files could potentially be lost forever.

If you distribute files on websites or seed, which is also distributing torrent files, you can get into trouble for distributing copyrighted material which you don't own. This means you will either have to pay a large sum of money or try your best

to defend yourself in court versus companies with lots of money backing them up. It wouldn't be a great senario.

I think that there are less points against pirating, however these points are more detrimental to the user as files like pictures and work are more important than risking to install a program, however some people have to pirate due to not having a large disposable income.

My Perspective.

Personally, I pirate occasionally, if the company is large enough to not be dramatically affected by my actions I will not hesitate but I won't for smaller curators and companies who need the money, if I'm desperate but then buy the product when I have the money.

There are bad and good pirates. The bad pirates are ones who have enough money and resources but who pirate software and media from big and small companies. Good pirates are people: who can't afford products but buy them later, use it as a way to protest against large monopolies, and people who require it for work are all valid reasons to pirate.

Pirating from small companies is more damaging than to bigger companies and pirating sites shouldn't host advertisements, however this will never happen due to it being a decentralised service.

Pirate with limit, don't pirate without thought of others.

Conclusion.

The risks of malware or unknowingly seeding a pirated material have more weight than the media or software a user gets, however people are pushed to pirate because of not having a good income, or it is required for work but they don't actually want to purchase it or that they themselves don't have enough money to purchase the software for work. Piracy is bad, but needed.

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