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Strategies to Reduce the Impact of Digital Piracy in the Media Industry

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MS, Jackson State University, 2002

BS, Tougaloo College, 2000

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Since the widespread adoption of the internet in the late 20th century, consumer piracy

has led to significant revenue losses and undermined the value of intellectual property in

the media industry. Media industry managers are concerned that the escalation in

consumer piracy has resulted in direct financial losses and compromised investment in

content creation and innovation due to diminished returns. Grounded in the theory of

planned behavior, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore

strategies that six media industry managers in southern California used to reduce

consumer piracy and revenue loss. Thematic analysis of data gathered from

semistructured interviews revealed three primary themes: (a) enforcement measures; (b)

consumer education and awareness; and (c) detection, monitoring, and prevention

methods. A key recommendation for media industry managers is establishing an

equitable pricing model for content and subscription services to discourage consumers

from committing to piracy. The implications for positive social change include the

potential to promote the moral standards to pay for services, such as films, TV shows,

and music, which reduces consumer costs.

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Dedication

The last time I included a dedication page was when I wrote my first book. Reflecting on my journey, I recall being the first person in my family to achieve both a bachelor's and master's degree. Now, as I stand on the threshold of earning my doctoral degree, I dedicate this milestone to the girl who always placed others before herself: me. I sacrificed my own aspirations to nurture my remarkable daughter, pouring every ounce of guidance bestowed upon me by God into her upbringing. After 22 years of deferral, this achievement is finally realized. Kia, girl, you did it! Through God's grace, I completed my degree in a year and a half, redeeming the time that seemed lost. Additionally, I dedicate this accomplishment to my mother, who fervently wished for my return to academia. I vividly recall sharing my decision to pursue further studies with you and your overflowing excitement. Though you are not here to celebrate with me, I find solace in knowing you would be smiling, cooking, and having a good time.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Digital piracy poses a pervasive threat to the global media industry, impacting various sectors, such as entertainment, movies, television, film, music, and electronic books. Savelkoul (2020) stated that the increasing popularity of the internet has led consumers to exploit media content, resulting in significant and irreparable financial losses. In some markets, the total box office earnings for movies subjected to piracy will rise by 38% or greater (Yue, 2020). In this project, I addressed several factors influencing consumer engagement in digital piracy, including attitudes and perceptions toward piracy, accessibility, and issues related to unfair pricing. Effectively addressing the adverse effects of digital piracy on profitability in the media industry holds potential benefits for all involved sectors. Managers in the media industry who understand the factors influencing consumer piracy can develop strategies to reduce these challenges.

Background of the Problem

Leaders in the media industry have suffered financial losses due to digital piracy since 1983, the beginning of the internet age. Although having access to the internet provided a new way to connect and share information worldwide, this connectivity gave rise to both positive and negative outcomes. Digital piracy is the act of downloading or sharing copyrighted material without authorization, spanning across various media types including books, movies, music, television shows, and video games (Bayraktar & Tomczyk, 2021). The illegal use of digital products is now a worldwide phenomenon with negative implications for industry revenues (Pham et al., 2020). The authors also highlighted that digital piracy increased peer-to-peer sharing of illegal content. Zar

(2020) stated that digital piracy is the main transgression of the digital age. Since the early 1990s, media industry managers in music, traditional television networks, online streaming platforms, and movie businesses have struggled to implement successful strategies to combat digital piracy.

Revenue and job losses in the media industry have grown alarmingly since the advent of digital piracy. Herz and Kiljański (2018) found that the media industry loses revenue for every DVD/film watched illegally and for every person who skips attending a movie theater to watch online. Managers must create strategies to reduce the negative impact of digital piracy and avoid financial losses. The industry has encountered numerous barriers to creating an effective antipiracy strategy, including managers' understanding of why consumers engage in piracy. Jeong et al. (2020) stated that changing consumers' perceptions remains challenging, even with managers' efforts to encourage consumers to avoid piracy through education. Additional research on digital piracy is essential to provide media industry managers with effective strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue losses.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem was that some media industry managers lack strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue losses. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore the strategies media industry managers use to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. The target population consisted of six media industry managers from traditional networks and streaming platforms in southern California who have successfully used effective strategies to reduce consumer piracy and

revenue loss. I collected data from semistructured interviews with the participants as well as review of publicly available documents and peer-reviewed articles. I used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants to share their experiences for the research study. Campbell et al. (2020) explained that purposive sampling assists researchers in matching their samples to the research objective, which improves the trustworthiness of the study's results. I used social media and leveraged my network to build rapport with chosen participants. McGrath et al. (2018) highlighted that rapport helps participants share detailed and informative experiences contributing to the phenomenon studied. To ensure participants met the eligibility criteria, I chose managers who have implemented successful strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss.

I used the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to ground this research study. The TPB, developed by Ajzen (1991), was employed to help understand why people behave in a particular manner. According to the TPB, three components determine behavior: behavioral beliefs or perceptions, normative beliefs or intentions, and control beliefs (Ahadiat et al., 2021). The TPB is an extension of a previous theory called the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1991). Researchers can apply TPB to help media industry managers design intervention or antipiracy strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss.

Research Question

What strategies do media industry managers use to reduce consumer digital piracy and revenue losses?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

An assumption is what researchers naturally believe to be true but not based on factual information. Clair et al. (2022) explained that assumptions are heuristics that help people navigate their natural world more efficiently. I made several assumptions in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry. One assumption for this study was that media industry managers have created successful strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. I also assumed the participants would answer the interview questions honestly, thoroughly, and without bias. Additionally, I assumed the participants (i.e., six media industry managers in southern California) would provide enough information to answer the research objective. My final assumption was that the TPB was an appropriate framework because it offered insight into the causes of consumer piracy.

Limitations

Limitations in research may contribute to flawed findings and interpretations. Ratten (2019) stated that limitations are weaknesses that researchers cannot control and may affect the results of the study. The limitations of this study included the possibility of participants not offering truthful answers during the interview process. Participation bias can impact the internal validity of a study (Simsek et al., 2020). I assured participants of confidentiality to try to prevent participation bias. Another limitation was potential researcher bias. Saunders et al. (2019) stated that data quality issues, such as researcher bias, sampling bias, and errors made by the researcher during data collection and analysis, can negatively impact findings. I used peer examination, which improves

credibility, to eliminate researcher bias. Peer examination is when other participants review research data and findings for validation, reliability, and authenticity (Tenny et al., 2022). Interviewing participants from only one geographic location also limited the study. Future researchers can alleviate the geographical limitation by targeting participants in other states.

<div align="center">**Transition**</div>

Digital piracy continues to threaten the media industry. In Section 1, I introduced the problem under study: the lack of strategies media industry managers used to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. I also explained the specific business problem, purpose, and research question, ensuring alignment among elements. Ajzen's (1991) TPB was identified as the conceptual framework. Furthermore, I discussed the nature of the study and the research method and design. I concluded Section 1 by describing the assumptions and limitations.

In Section 2, I will review professional and academic literature focusing on the TPB and strategies to reduce consumer digital piracy and revenue loss. In Section 3, I will define the role of the researcher and the relationship I have with the research topic. The ethical guidelines adhered to in this study and outlined by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the *Belmont Report* will be described. I will also discuss the procedures for the informed consent process, identification of the population, and sampling techniques. In Section 4, I will discuss the themes that emerged from data analysis and provide suggestions for future research on consumer digital piracy.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, I explored how media industry managers describe strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. The literature review comprised 116 scholarly articles from EBSCO, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, ProQuest, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, and Emerald Management Journals, accessed through the Walden University Library. I searched for literature using the following keywords: *digital piracy, copyright infringement, revenue loss, piracy strategies, ethics, media industry, networks, consumer attitudes, theory of planned behavior,* and *consumer piracy*. Scholarly, seminal books; peer-reviewed articles; journals; and government sources published within 5 years of my graduation date were included as sources. I reviewed 124 articles for inclusion in this study. Approximately 86% of which were peer-reviewed articles, and 85% were published between 2019–2024. After reviewing the academic literature, I was able to answer the research question.

The literature review is organized in four subsections. In the initial subsection, I provide a broad outline of digital piracy, encompassing an exploration of its various forms and associated expenses. Subsequently, I examine the theoretical foundation of the TPB. In the second subsection, I delve into the theory of ethics and deterrence theory, elucidating their roles as complementary theories within the TPB framework. The third subsection includes a discussion of the adverse effects of consumer piracy, focusing on a significant consequence in the media sector: the loss of revenue and innovation. In the last subsection, I explore strategies employed by media industry managers to diminish

both consumer digital piracy and revenue loss within the media sector. Completing this comprehensive examination of the literature allowed me to scrutinize the contributions of other researchers who have studied consumer digital piracy, ensuring that I do not duplicate their efforts.

<div align="center">**Conceptual Framework**</div>

Theory of Planned Behavior

The conceptual framework applied to this study was the TPB. According to the TPB, three components determine behavior: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB is an updated version of a previous theory created by Ajzen and Fishbein called the theory of reasoned action (Bosnjak et al., 2020). This theory's The overall point of TPB is determining a person's behavior or what they do. The theory of reasoned action had limitations, such as a focus on a single activity; therefore, the TPB became an extension of this theory. Researchers can apply the TPB to business, educational, and health sciences research.

Researchers have applied the TPB to explain and predict human behavior. The TPB can be used to assist researchers in understanding what perceptions and behaviors contribute to digital piracy engagement. Choi and Suh (2022) indicated that the TPB proves valuable in anticipating illicit utilization of online material, with outcome expectations emerging as crucial factors influencing such unauthorized use of online content.

The TPB is one of the most beneficial frameworks for understanding the causes of digital piracy in the media industry. Researchers use TPB because the framework shows

that attitude, subjective norms, and perception guide a person's intentions. Therefore, if an individual has strong intentions to engage in digital piracy, then the person will. In applying the TPB, media industry managers can predict perceptions and intentions when implementing strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. Using the TPB is expected to be useful for managers to understand consumer perceptions and intentions that reduce or increase the effects of digital piracy and revenue loss in the media industry. Graf-Vlachy et al. (2022) stated that perceptions towards digital piracy and perceived level of control in individuals were factors that led consumers to engage in digital piracy. Koay et al. (2022) examined the factors that predicted consumer digital piracy behavior using the TPB and found that revenue loss resulted from the high piracy rate and that affordability, access, and habits also influenced intentions to engage in consumer piracy. Researchers have also applied the TPB to determine if technology influenced consumers' intention to pirate (Lee et al., 2019). TPB assesses how individual attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control regarding the use of technology for digital piracy influence intentions and actual behavior.

One of the primary components of the TPB is attitudes. Attitude or perceptions toward a behavior refers to the degree to which an individual holds a positive or negative assessment of a behavior, and this assessment comprises beliefs about the behavior and evaluations of its outcomes (Choi & Suh, 2022). An established pattern of thoughts or emotions regarding someone or something, usually evident in a person's actions, defines attitude (Bizer et al., 2006). Media industry managers should explore consumer attitudes toward digital piracy to create effective strategies because consumer attitudes contribute

to the intention to engage in digital piracy. Meireles and Campos (2019) highlighted that attitudes pertain to personal aspects when examining an individual's inclination towards engaging in particular behavior. Previous research revealed that individuals and content creators exhibit varying attitudes toward digital piracy and unauthorized downloading (Choi & Suh, 2022). To effectively implement policies and control strategies to reduce illegal online content use, exploring the factors contributing to consumers engaging in such activities is essential.

The second factor of TPB is the subjective norm. A subjective norm represents the social pressure influencing the decision to engage in or refrain from a specific behavior (Meireles & Campos, 2019). Al and Abdelhadi (2022) explained that the formation of a subjective norm occurs through a combination of normative beliefs and the motivation to comply. A subjective norm involves the perceived societal influences affecting the decision to perform (or abstain from) illegally downloading content. These influences can stem from friends, family, authority figures, or other significant individuals participating in consumer piracy (Meireles & Campos, 2019). The authors suggested that when the relationship between attitudes and subjective norms is positive, that they should result in intentions contingent upon individuals having confidence in their competence to engage in consumer piracy. La Barbera and Ajzen (2020) further explained that consumer piracy participation is low if the intention to pirate is minimal. With minimal intentions and low participation, digital piracy rates should decrease. A subjective norm influences an individual's intention to engage in a behavior, and consequently, their subsequent participation in consumer piracy.

Perceived behavior control is the last component, and it pertains to an individual's perception of how easy or challenging it is to carry out the particular behavior in question (Meireles & Campos, 2019). The authors emphasized that individuals' perceptions of the ease or difficulty associated with executing the behavior are important when discussing digital piracy engagement. Eisend (2019) suggested that motivation and experience play a vital role in the perceived behavior control component among internet users. For example, suppose an internet user believes that they are capable and able to pirate digital media. In that case, their perceived behavior control to engage in piracy is high, making them more likely to form an intention to follow through with piracy.

I chose the TPB as the conceptual framework for this qualitative pragmatic inquiry so that media industry managers can better understand what causes consumers to engage in piracy. Researchers have previously used the TPB to explore the causes of consumer engagement in piracy and its relationship to revenue loss within the media industry. Devarhubli and Tomar (2021) used the TPB and available data to examine the problems that arose from the booming internet age, such as increased piracy and revenue loss. Most researchers have used the TPB to explore consumer piracy by determining those factors that influence engagement of the phenomenon; however, Sardanelli et al. (2019) tried a different approach to learning about consumer digital piracy and investigated the factors influencing individuals to pay for streaming services instead of engaging in digital piracy. Studying consumer digital piracy through this lens provided a unique perspective on creating strategies to reduce the impact. In addition to researching the role of technology, Pham et al. (2020) also suggested more flexible strategies media

industry managers can use to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. Lestari and

Hartono (2023) confirmed that researchers can use the TPB to understand consumer

digital piracy better and analyze the perceptions and behaviors that lead to individuals

downloading content illegally. The TPB is also beneficial for the current study because

researchers have used the framework to study consumer piracy in other countries besides

the United States. Studying digital piracy outside of the United States provides valuable

insights into diverse cultural attitudes, legal frameworks, and enforcement strategies,

which can inform more effective global anti-piracy efforts and foster international

cooperation in combating digital piracy. Additionally, understanding piracy dynamics in

different regions can help policymakers develop targeted interventions that address the

unique challenges and motivations driving piracy worldwide. Figure 1 depicts the TPB

applied to consumer digital piracy.

Figure 1

Depiction of the TPB Applied to Digital Piracy
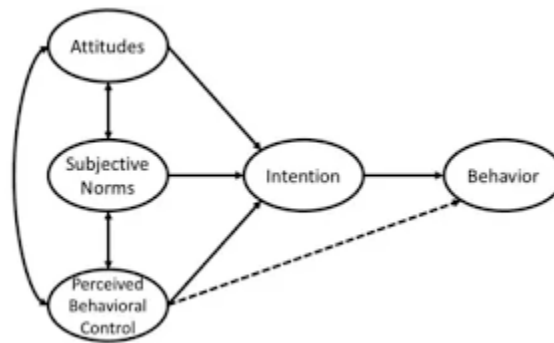
Note. The Theory of Planned Behavior model adapted from Ajzen 2005.

Supporting Theories

Although the TPB was the chosen conceptual framework for this study, I also want to offer deterrence theory and ethics theory as supporting theories. Luft et al. (2022) stated that supporting theoretical frameworks create a broader discourse on the research topic and may bolster the interpretation of a potential discovery. Hati et al. (2020) integrated the TPB, deterrence theory, and ethics theory to explore factors determining piracy perception. These three theories can all offer insight to media industry managers on consumer digital piracy.

Ethics Theory

The TPB and ethics theory are the most frequently employed theories when examining digital piracy. The current body of literature falls short in addressing the connection between the moral dimension and perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Developed by Hunt and Vitell (1986), the ethics theory is a comprehensive marketing ethics model that centers on individuals' cognitive reasoning. Researchers have used ethics theory to assist in making consumers more ethical, which override individuals engaging in digital piracy. Karahan and Kayabasi (2019) used the TPB and ethics theory to analyze and describe the factors that influence the digital piracy behavior of internet users. Black et al. (2021) also explored digital piracy using a combined approach of the TPB and ethics theory. Their findings indicated that moral disengagement precedes the TPB predictors of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (i.e., perception) in the realm of ethics.

Using ethics theory as support demonstrates that the TPB predictors serve as mediators, conveying the impact of moral disengagement on intentions for ethical behavior. Hati et al. (2020) explored piracy intention by integrating the TPB, ethics theory, and deterrence theory. The researchers found that ethics theory supports the TBP because moral obligation influences piracy intention. Ahadiat et al. (2021) brought awareness to how detrimental digital piracy is when influenced by morals. The authors also emphasized how ethics theory helped predict digital piracy intent. The ethics theory supports TPB because managers need consumers to use ethics when deciding not to engage in digital piracy.

Deterrence Theory

Deterrence theory is another theory that has been widely used to investigate digital piracy. Beccaria (1764) created the deterrence theory and revived during the 1970s. In deterrence theory, Beccaria posited that criminal sanctions not only serve to punish offenders but also act as a deterrent, dissuading them from participating in unlawful acts. Abramovaite et al. (2022) suggested that when punishment is harsh, guaranteed, and prompt, a logical person will carefully consider potential benefits and drawbacks before participating in illegal actions. In other words, individuals would be dissuaded from violating the law if the potential loss outweighs the gain. The TPB predicts behavior, while deterrence theory can be used to prevent or persuade behavior. Media industry managers can use deterrence theory when dealing with consumer piracy. I did not select this theory for the conceptual framework because it relies solely on imposing penalties, which might not necessarily reduce consumer piracy or revenue loss

(see Borghard & Lonergan, 2023). However, persistent challenges remain in reconciling theoretical propositions and predictions with the practicalities of enforcement systems and real-world individual behaviors. Figure 2 depicts the TPB, ethics theory, and deterrence theory applied to digital piracy.

Figure 2

Depiction of the TPB with Ethics Theory and Deterrence Theory Applied to Digital Piracy
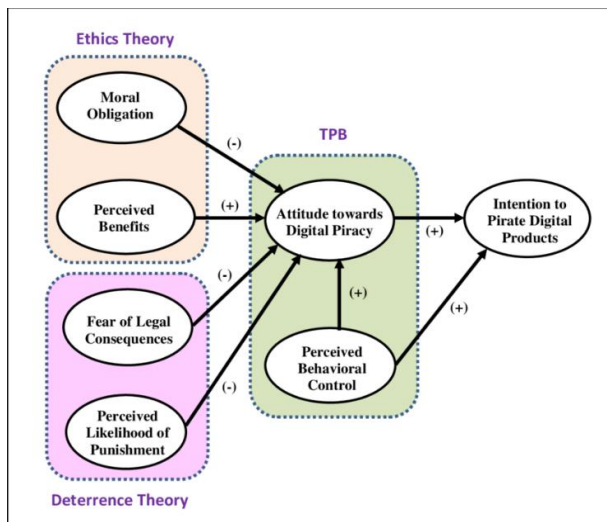
Note. Image adapted from ResearchGate.

Digital Piracy

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to examine the strategies managers employ in the media industry to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. The prevalence of digital piracy in the media sector is escalating rapidly (Anonymous, 2022). Primarily, research on digital piracy has mostly focused on intentions (Eisend, 2019; Pham et al., 2020). Media industry managers need to understand the factors contributing to piracy and how to reduce its impact. Digital piracy is a global phenomenon resulting in substantial revenue and job losses, with no apparent resolution

in sight (Savelkoul, 2020). The cited references in this study offer insights to managers, focusing on factors, such as perceptions and intentions, that drive individuals to engage in piracy to assist in the development of effective strategies to combat consumer digital piracy and minimize revenue loss.

Exploring Types of Piracy

The entertainment and media industry's creativity and online content must have protections. Protecting media industry content is essential for preserving intellectual property rights, guaranteeing fair remuneration for creators, and fostering ongoing innovation and creativity in the sector. Digital piracy is defined as an unlawful online practice encompassing actions like illegally downloading content, such as films, music, television shows, and e-books (Bayraktar & Tomczyk, 2021). With the increase in online content, the unlawful practice of digital piracy has increased substantially. Digital piracy remains a threat in the media industry, and engagement in this illegal activity happens through all channels.

Film and Television Piracy

Film and television piracy increased in 2022 and was higher than the year before (Anonymous, 2022). Liang (2021) stated that film and TV piracy is the illegal copying, distribution, and sharing of movies and shows without the copyright holder's permission. There are several forms of film piracy. In the media industry, bootlegging was one of the most common forms before streaming. Bootlegging refers to illegally copying films, often on CDs or DVDs (Simmert, 2020). Camcording is another version of piracy which involves recording films inside a movie theater and later distributing them (Liang, 2021).

There is also streaming piracy, of which, online piracy is the most popular form in the media industry today. Online piracy overshadowed bootlegging as the internet made films more accessible with the rise of the internet. Jha and Rajan (2021) highlighted that online piracy involves illegally sharing or distributing movies over the internet through file-sharing platforms, websites, streaming services, or other online channels. The increase in methods used to pirate television and films in previous years has led to increased digital piracy. The impact of piracy on legitimate sales remains a concern for film and TV studios.

Music and E-Book Piracy

While music piracy has diminished compared to its previous prevalence, it still persists among internet users (Simmert, 2020). Those engaged in music piracy often adhere to shared social norms, possess a limited understanding of copyright infringement, and hold negative views about the music industry (Borja & Dieringer, 2022). Music piracy encompasses illicit activities, such as downloading, sharing, and distributing music content. Pirates also create counterfeit CDs for distribution and share files of illegally downloaded media content. Park et al. (2023) suggested that the consequences of music piracy are significant, affecting economic and creative aspects of both the music industry and artists. This illicit practice diminishes the revenue earned by musicians, composers, and record labels, thereby presenting challenges in investing in future projects.

E-book piracy poses challenges to authors, publishers, and the media publishing industry as a whole. Bodó et al. (2020) highlighted that e-book piracy is a form of intellectual property infringement where digital copies of books are made available to

others illegally without compensation to the creators or other stakeholders. E-book piracy diminishes the income that can generate revenue for its investors and stakeholders. E-book piracy can result in financial losses for content creators and hinder their ability to earn a fair return on their intellectual property.

Factors Shaping Digital Piracy: Understanding Contributors

The global phenomenon of digital piracy has expanded with technology. Several factors contribute to the increase of consumer digital piracy and individual intention to engage in the behavior. Piracy is a problem within the United States and worldwide, and the media industry is growing increasingly frustrated. Ravi et al. (2018) explained that the negative effect of increased digital piracy is that media industry companies are suffering financially. Knowing what causes individuals to pirate is imperative in improving profitability in the media industry. Sardanelli et al. (2019) mentioned that individuals' perceptions encouraged their intention to pirate streaming services platforms. Attitude and perception toward piracy are contributing factors that increase consumer digital engagement. Perceptions toward digital piracy vary widely and can depend on various factors, including ethical and economic considerations.

An additional influence that causes individuals to pirate is bandwidth capacity. For example, Indonesia restricted internet bandwidth, causing individuals to purchase illegal music, film, and software content from unofficial sources. Casidy et al. (2016) confirmed that Indonesia's well-known markets remain filled with widespread retail piracy in both kiosks and malls. This includes producing and selling CDs, DVDs, and unauthorized copies of music, movies, software, video games, and published materials.

Olivero et al. (2019) emphasized that piracy utilizes 22% of global internet bandwidth. The relationship between bandwidth growth and digital piracy is complex and influenced by various factors. Some researchers recommend increasing bandwidth to reduce piracy, but high bandwidth facilitates the quick and widespread sharing of pirated content. Piracy websites can take advantage of higher speeds to distribute illegal content more efficiently (Casidy et al., 2016). Piracy platforms can also take advantage of increased bandwidth to distribute large files quickly, making it easier for users to download and share copyrighted material without proper authorization.

Access

The internet enables the global spread of content with the touch of a keypad. One element that increases consumer piracy is that films, TV shows, and music are easily accessible and free. The cost and convenience of obtaining illegal content contribute significantly to consumer piracy. Researchers found that more than 61% of users preferred pirated movies instead of paying for them (Ravi et al., 2018). In the media industry outside the United States, government laws appear ineffective in protecting content producers. Chawla and Buch (2023) reported that individuals engaging in specific types of file sharing enable the sharing of pirated films before arriving in theaters or streaming platforms. By doing this, media industry networks experience revenue loss and loss in tax collection. Chawla and Buch suggested that consumers were taking advantage of ineffective laws and silence from the government regarding penalties.

In addition to the content being easy to access, illegally sharing with peers also negatively affects the movie industry. Easy access for potential pirates through peer-to-

peer sharing through networks is rapidly growing. Lee et al. (2019) conducted a study to understand the perception toward illegally downloading copyrighted material and whether peer association played a role in encouraging engagement. Youth perception inked an individual's participation in digital piracy engagement. Additionally, the authors found that deviant peer associations impacted digital piracy negatively. Handa et al. (2022) agreed that young adult participants perceive that illegally downloading music and movies is prevalent when hanging out with their friends who engage in digital piracy. For certain adolescents, piracy is a means to swiftly and freely access various games, CDs, and movies. Bayraktar and Tomczyk (2021) further highlighted that categorizing illegitimate entry into digital content as intellectual property theft is unambiguous. Websites offering straightforward access to intricate collections of files are linked to this lack of awareness.

Unfair Pricing

Another factor that Meireles and Campos (2019) discovered was that higher costs of films and streaming service subscriptions increased consumer engagement toward digital piracy. When consumers believe that movies, television shows, and music content are unfairly priced, it is justification to engage in digital piracy. Kukla-Gryz et al. (2021) conducted a study and found evidence that the perception of price fairness was directly associated with considering digital piracy. Research shows that some individuals engage in piracy as an act of rebellion against the perceived overpricing of content. Martínez-Sánchez (2020) suggested that rather than government intervention, the approach should involve setting affordable prices for media content to discourage participation by pirates.

Youth and college students are one group that frequently engages in piracy due to the lack of income. Ravi et al. (2018) confirmed that college students lack income control and resort to gaining access by any means necessary. Media industry managers who set low prices early could use this method to improve profitability.

Customers' responsiveness to pricing is a significant concern that can prompt them to switch their viewing channels if the costs do not align with their preferences. Ciesielska and Jemielniak (2021) agreed that the moral decisions made by potential digital pirates often revolve around cost (they can obtain the desired item for free) and convenience (it is more accessible to download than to use legal distribution). If pirated versions of digital content are readily available for free or at significantly lower costs, users may be more inclined to choose piracy over purchasing the legitimate version. The perceived value for money plays a crucial role in consumers' decisions. Conversely, when consumers perceive pricing as unjust, they may resort to illegally downloading content. Taleizadeh et al. (2022) emphasized that the problem of digital piracy among consumers leads to reduced profit margins stemming from perceived unfair pricing. Adjusting the pricing model can help media industry managers reduce consumer digital piracy.

Adverse Effects of Consumer Piracy

Economic Implications of Consumer Piracy

The negative impact of consumer piracy has increased since the internet age. The rise of digital piracy has affected the bottom line of the media industry. Piracy results in substantial economic losses for the United States. It leads to job losses and the theft of

profits, affecting millions of content creators. Digital piracy compromises the income of numerous networks and creators, contributing to a rising trend in economic losses (Sadiku et al., 2021). The financial loss has been substantial for film, television, and music managers in the media industry. According to Bayraktar and Tomczyk (2021), significant economic loss is a consequence of consumer digital piracy. Devarhubli and Tomar (2021) indicated that piracy eliminates 572,000 jobs and an annual revenue decline of $959 million. Some internet users lack understanding and are unaware that engaging in piracy affects the profits of media industry companies.

Furthermore, consumers' perspective of piracy plays a vital role in whether they engage in the behavior. Aversa et al. (2019) highlighted that digital piracy allows consumers to replace purchases from authorized networks such as Netflix or Spotify obtained from unlicensed websites. Consequently, it diminishes the earnings of artists and producers who may need help to adopt innovative solutions to compete against piracy.

A primary reason that individuals engage in piracy and steal media company profits is that they may be unable to afford films, television shows, or music. In some developing countries, engaging in digital piracy is the only way to watch, even though it is wrong. Bayraktar and Tomczyk (2021) emphasized that some internet users view piracy as an economic loss, particularly affecting music, movies, and software content creators. The individuals behind these creative works are perceived as facing the most significant losses due to digital piracy. In 2017, the International Chamber of Commerce projected that the worldwide economic impact of digital piracy in movies, music, and

software was $213 billion in 2015. Experts anticipated that this figure would increase to between $384 billion and $856 billion by 2020 (Anonymous, 2017). With a significant revenue loss, the media industry cannot make any profit.

Digital piracy affects not only content producers and networks but the economy as a whole. Blackburn et al. (2019) emphasized that the movie and television production and content industry in the United States is worth billions and creates millions of jobs for the country. There is also an increase in pirated content from online streaming websites. To measure the full impact of digital piracy on the U.S. economy, the authors used a national macroeconomic model (IMPLAN) focusing primarily on digital piracy by non-U.S. residents of U.S. content and U.S. digital video piracy. Blackburn et al. further stated that the authors found that digital video piracy not only causes a loss in revenues to the U.S. content production sector but also results in losses to the U.S. economy. Research shows that 26.6 billion viewings produced movies and 126.7 billion viewings produced TV episodes, mostly from outside the U.S., are pirated digitally each year.

As stated earlier, consumer piracy is prevalent in the United States and widespread in other countries. Researchers conducted a study and discovered that the amount of revenue lost in Europe and other countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Sweden due to movie piracy by internet users has been substantial. Herz and Kiljański (2018) asserted that unpaid movie viewings significantly impacted revenue loss in Europe, Germany, and Spain but varied depending on the country. Based on their findings, although the revenue loss was significant, the authors found that more

than 20% of consumers were the cause of movie piracy. The correlation between digital

piracy and unemployment is intricate and influenced by various factors.

Innovation at Risk

The decline in income jeopardizes the financial viability of the media industry,

creating challenges in funding innovation, supporting creatives, and maintaining the

sustainability of businesses within the media industry. Bradley and Kolev (2023)

suggested that consumer digital piracy hinders innovation and the willingness to take

risks within the industry. Creators and distributors deserve fair compensation for their

work, and piracy undermines the incentive to create new content. Illicitly accessing or

distributing creators' works without charge reduces the motivation to engage in creative

risks and invest in innovative projects. Miric and Jeppesen (2020) agreed that concerns

about piracy and its adverse effects on revenue could result in a more cautious approach

to content creation, impeding the threat to the industry's capacity for pioneering new

work.

Indications show that the widespread diffusion of technological innovations in the

digital age has allowed piracy organizations to thrive, extend their influence among users,

and emerge as a substantial and potentially inevitable threat to all companies whose

content can be digitized, copied, and effortlessly transferred. Media industry managers

are uncertain when wanting to innovate. Media content producers may hesitate to

embrace innovations if they are concerned about the potential piracy of their digital

content (Ifeduba, 2021). Ratten (2019) highlighted that the lack of management of online

theft continually hinders innovation. Therefore, media industry managers must be creative in developing strategies to reduce consumer digital piracy.

Strategies to Reduce Consumer Piracy

Managers within the media industry actively participate in efforts to reduce consumer piracy and minimize revenue losses. Anonymous (2020) stated that effectively addressing consumer piracy necessitates concise and intelligent management from a few sources that can guide and resolve issues. Numerous effective strategies exist for media industry managers to implement to reduce consumer piracy. Offering consumers a fair price, education or public awareness campaigns, deterrence technology, and copyright infringement laws are some strategies media industry managers can use to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss.

Effective strategies related to pricing can help limit digital piracy engagement. Bayraktar and Tomczyk (2021) highlighted that, from an economic standpoint, one commonly characterizes digital piracy based on one's viewpoint. The rationalization of engaging in risky behaviors related to intellectual property violation links to the income level, enabling or hindering the acquisition of specific software, movies, or music files. The economic aspect of piracy primarily connects to income and the cost of digital files. Taleizadeh et al. (2022) suggested that the effective management of consumer piracy will heavily depend on the implementation of pricing strategies. For example, if younger consumers, such as college students, have limited resources, they are likelier to engage in piracy. The authors found that if media industry managers choose a fair pricing strategy for unethical consumers, it will reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. Zhang et al.

(2021) investigated pricing strategies and optimal piracy control to reduce the impact of consumer piracy and explained that managers need to prioritize strategies to combat piracy. Kukla-Gryz et al. (2021) agreed that offering to pay what you want subscription will provide readers with the option to reduce piracy. The authors showed evidence that the willingness to engage in digital piracy was related to the perception of unfair pricing.

When consumers believe they are overpaying for a digital resource, digital piracy increases. Giving readers the option to pay what they want allows them to pay a fixed amount and access the resources at a more affordable rate. Often, readers place a value on books after reading them. The authors found that price points perceived as fair may reduce digital piracy. Kukla-Gryz et al.'s (2021) results confirmed that the fair pricing strategy allows digital media readers to read more books, listen to music, and watch films and television shows from legal sources.

Media industry managers can also implement digital rights management (DRM) technologies. Using DRM is an additional layer of protection from internet pirates illegally downloading media content. To combat digital piracy, industries embrace DRM technologies, which exert control and restrictions on utilizing various forms of online content. DRM incorporates various functions, including the application of digital encryptions, prevention of the registration of illicit content, obstruction of illegal content access, and the detection and monitoring of user environments (Wu et al., 2020). The objective behind enforcing DRM restrictions is to elevate the cost of piracy, making digital piracy more challenging and ultimately reducing piracy engagement.

Using DRM technology is more beneficial for streaming platforms than traditional movies in theaters and music. Applying DRM technology to music applications prevents pirates from gaining access without subscription services. Some media industry managers using DRM technology are Netflix, Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube TV, and Amazon Kindle. Zhang et al. (2021) found that DRM strategies are more beneficial in the digital music and film industry than in the video game industry. The authors confirmed that implementing digital rights management is a better strategy when pirated products are high priced, and the government enforces copyright law.

Media industry managers also use preventive control strategies. Preventive controls refer to providing consumers with educational literacy on piracy prevention. Educating consumers by including the proper framing and evidence and intentionally focusing on the performance risk will deter viewers from illegally downloading media content. This educational strategy resulted in increasing overall revenue streams. There are two types of messaging: positive and negatively framed, and each type of messaging targets a different kind of participant (Jeong et al., 2020). Low-piracy-involved participants respond best to positively framed messages, which include anecdotes and statistical data. In contrast, negatively framed messages yield the most significant level of persuasion among high-piracy-involved participants.

The messaging can include educational literacy and notifying participants and viewers of the benefits of proper downloading, as random downloading can cause viruses and the installation of malware on computers and systems. Additionally, notifying participants of the consequences of their actions on content producers can appeal to the

piracy participants (Jeong et al., 2020). Piracy takes away revenue from companies and the creatives creating the media sources. Consequences of piracy include loss due to malfunctioning products and systems, identity theft, legal action, negative social pressure, impact on personal devices, or poor performance of illegally downloaded files.

Several ways exist to share educational literacy. It should begin in schools. Teaching children their right to use free downloads and media clearly explains the consequences of digital media piracy (Pham et al., 2020). Often, children imitate what happens in their own homes. Educating them will help reduce the number of illegal downloads occurring in schools and homes around the United States. Television commercials can also promote educational literacy, providing real-life consequences for individuals who violate piracy laws. Some consumers may need to become aware of what is considered to be piracy. Ravi et al. (2018) found that the results from this study are beneficial to networks in helping to reduce movie piracy in the future through awareness of this phenomenon. Educating them on this topic will provide clear explanations.

Another strategy that would benefit industry managers is increasing deterrence technology and providing an open-source policy. Pham et al. (2020) postulated that deterrence technology includes security methods, encoding, encrypting, and certifications that will prevent pirates from gaining access to online content. Devarhubli and Tomar (2021) agreed that artificial intelligence, watermark technology, and digital encryption would assist in reducing consumer piracy. While increasing the security measures for digital media sources will prevent piracy, there will be an increase in cost and education for the media industry managers. Companies can also provide open-source access to

digital media products to allow viewers access to limited content. This will give viewers access to some of its content for a minimal price or no price to show the viewers the value of what they will receive from subscribing to the media outlet. Notifying potential participants of the legal ramifications of their actions will help decrease the amount of piracy.

The watermarking technique used to reduce digital piracy and revenue loss is securing content. Watermarking implementation is to protect creator films and TV shows. Using a transparent and resilient watermarking scheme in each video frame hinders internet pirates. The method of embedding the watermark demonstrates heightened correlation values and displays resilience against a range of video-specific attacks (Agarwal & Husain, 2021). This makes it well-suited for practical applications in the media industry. Watermarking protects digital media content by embedding images within the content. Darwish and Hassan (2021) stated that individual watermarks must align with their properties, such as robustness, imperceptibility, capacity, and security, to fortify security measures. Adhering to watermark properties enhances its ability to protect digital media content from illegally downloading.

The strategy's effectiveness hinges significantly on how technology is conceived and enforced. Government copyright protection agencies and media industry partners restrict access to websites hosting illegally downloaded media industry content through domain name system (DNS) website blocking. Implementing DNS blocks on piracy sites reduces internet traffic, signaling decreased piracy activities and increased viewership (Reis et al., 2024). Increased legal viewership reduces revenue loss, thus improving

media industry profits. Danaher et al. (2020) conducted a study in the United Kingdom where the government agency used DNS blocking technology for several pirate websites. The study's results aligned with Reis et al.'s (2024) in decreasing piracy engagement and improving legal viewership. The authors also revealed that paid subscriptions also increased. When piracy channels attract heavy traffic, media industry managers and government agencies must aggressively find each access point to the website for blocking.

Implementing more vigorous copyright enforcement is a strategy that will help media industry managers reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. Having the regulated support of its government has proven to be successful. Penalties for digital piracy, also known as copyright infringement, can vary depending on the jurisdiction and the severity of the offense. Government agencies can create a fine for all participants involved in digital piracy. Creating a relatively high fine will limit the participants from engaging in digital piracy. According to Zhang et al. (2021), when a monopolist sells a pirated product, they increase cost to cover the high expense of the fine, preventing the consumer from purchasing the pirated material as it would be higher priced than the cost from the company. Having stronger copyright infringement laws reduces digital piracy. After the enforcement of copyright laws, digital piracy leads to the shutdown of some piracy streaming sites. Aguiar et al. (2018) conducted a study in Germany after the government enforced copyright infringement laws. The results showed that digital piracy levels declined significantly.

Government and law enforcement play an essential role in reducing the digital piracy phenomenon. Filing lawsuits and following through with prosecution against pirates are additional strategies media industry companies use to enforce copyright infringement laws. The threat of prosecution can sometimes deter individuals from engaging in digital piracy. Holt et al. (2019) stated that how law enforcement handles offenses can shape individuals' perceptions of potential punishment. If internet users believe punishment is inevitable, severe, and prompt, the cost associated with engaging in digital piracy rises, leading the individual to abstain from participating (Jayasundara, 2022). Many internet users fear arrest; therefore, the associated risks make prosecution an effective strategy for reducing consumer piracy.

This will reduce the profit the monopolist will make on the digital media. Yue (2020) conducted a study and found that government anti-piracy campaigns helped to reduce revenue loss by 60%. However, the findings suggest that government antipiracy initiatives can only temporarily halt the supply of online piracy in the short term. Without institutional changes to safeguard intellectual property, new piracy channels will likely consistently emerge over the long term, filling the void left by such interventions. A helpful way to display anti-piracy messaging is when consumers can view the warning. According to Grolleau and Meunier (2022), movie producers commonly show antipiracy warnings at the start of movies. On the internet, pirates frequently remove these messages before sharing the content. Therefore, media industry managers must remain diligent in creating strategies.

Increased consumer piracy remains a challenge for media industry managers. Media industry companies need a response to digital piracy. Employing effective strategies can assist media industry managers in reducing consumer digital piracy and improving profitability. Devarhubli and Tomar (2021) mentioned that the Indian film industry has failed due to the lack of organization to fight piracy, lack of sustained actions to combat piracy, and insufficient funds from the media industry to reduce piracy. To tackle the inadequacy in eliminating consumer digital piracy, managers in the media industry need to formulate effective strategies and implement them diligently for meaningful impact. Combining any of these strategies is often more effective than relying on any single approach. Media industry managers must ensure strategies consistently evolve and robust to address new challenges of digital piracy and changing technologies.

Transition

In Section 2, I presented a professional and academic literature review on consumer digital piracy. The literature review critically analyzed themes and existing knowledge related to consumer piracy. The literature review focused on applying the TPB and supporting theories such as ethics and deterrence. I further explained why I chose the TPB and not the other theoretical frameworks discussed. Additionally, I shared strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. I also discussed contributing factors of digital piracy and the impact it caused. Finally, I addressed strategies media industry managers use to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss.

In Section 3, as the researcher, I will define my relationship with the participants and the research topic. I will explain why I chose qualitative pragmatic inquiry over other

research methods and designs. The researcher will also describe ethical guidelines

outlined by the IRB and the *Belmont Report*. I highlight the process of obtaining

informed consent, establishing relationships, and how to protect the participants'

confidentiality. In Section 4, I will present findings from data collected through

semistructured interviews, publicly available documents, and peer-reviewed articles.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

The research methodology is an imperative part of the research process. The research methodology is the process and set of principles employed in the design, planning, and execution of a research study (Scholtz et al., 2020). This section includes a discussion of the techniques, procedures, and tools used to effectively gather and analyze data to address the specified research question. In this section, I describe the overall strategy for this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, including the methods for data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of findings. I also discuss the nature of the study, how I contacted potential participants, and how I established a relationship with the participants and made them feel comfortable. Furthermore, the guidelines and ethical protocols from the *Belmont Report* and the Walden University IRB that were followed to ensure participants' protection during and after project completion are presented. Section 3 served as a framework and guidance for ensuring the reliability, validity, and credibility of the study findings.

Project Ethics

The role of the researcher is imperative in qualitative research. As the instrument, the researcher is responsible for data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). I was the primary instrument for data collection in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research project. As a researcher, self-examination ensures there is no contribution to influencing the research (Collins & Stockton, 2022). I researched media industry managers' strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss and followed proper guidelines without creating researcher bias. Researchers must

create a strategy; design, gather, and analyze data; and communicate the results (Yin, 2018). I served as a participant recruiter, developed interview questions to answer the research objective, interviewed participants, and processed the data.

As the researcher, I had a professional relationship with some participants but not all. Building rapport and trust is extremely important for the research process and should start prior and continue throughout (Gabbert et al., 2021). According to McGrath et al. (2018), rapport helps participants share detailed and informative experiences contributing to the phenomenon studied. One way that I had rapport with the participants was by leveraging my personal network. The data collection process may be more manageable if researchers interview people they know (Dunwoodie et al., 2022). By interviewing individuals I knew within the industry, the participants could be more transparent and not withhold information. Having family involved in media, I was familiar with and had a relationship with the research area.

I adhered to the ethical guidelines provided by the *Belmont Repor*t. The *Belmont Report* outlines three principles researchers should abide by to maintain ethical standards during the research process (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections, 1979). I applied the *Belmont Report* protocol of respecting persons, beneficence, and justice in selecting human participants and informing them about informed consent and the risks and benefits involved. By following the *Belmont Report* protocol, researchers can remain honest and cause no harm to participants.

The informed consent process in a research study is a critical component of ethical research. I followed the code of ethics set by Walden University's IRB by

obtaining approval for data collection. Resnik (2021) explained that valid informed consent for research should give participants all the necessary information to ensure they understand the process and know their participation is voluntary. Explaining the purpose, procedures, and time commitment to potential participants without coercion was necessary. After receiving this information, the participants could decide if they had the time and were willing to participate in the research project. There was no penalty if participants failed to comply with the protocol guidelines. Saunders et al. (2019) stated that informed consent is continuous throughout the research process, not only with participants but also with gatekeepers who permit access.

I sent participants an informed consent form before the data collection phase. After verifying that the participants had signed and returned the consent forms, the interview process began. Saunders et al. (2019) suggested that researchers should be open and operate with integrity when gaining informed consent. With the informed consent form, I informed participants of the risks and benefits involved in taking part in the study to ensure the following of ethical guidelines.

Participants could withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process by notifying me in writing. I assigned a PIN code to each participant. Yin (2018) explained that if the need arises for a withdrawal, the participant can give the assigned PIN from their informed consent form. I would then have been able to identify and access the participant's data and remove it. Handa et al. (2022) explained that sometimes, offering monetary incentives can motivate potential study recruits to participate and,

other times, create a conflict of interest. However, I did not offer any incentives for participation in the current study.

To ensure the ethical protection of participants was sufficient, I followed the principles and guidelines of the *Belmont Report*. Maintaining respect, justice, and the well-being of humans enables ethically sound research (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections, 1979). I conducted a reliable study by maintaining the confidentiality of participants. When reporting findings, the researcher also maintains confidentiality and protects participants from financial and reputational harm (Paxton, 2020). Heaton (2022) suggested using pseudonyms and codes, such as R1, R2, for participants and Owl1 and Owl2 for organizations, as name replacements to de-identify participants. I protected participants from harm by removing personal identifiers from the networks and names of participants in the collected and analyzed data. Protecting the confidentiality of participants and the networks they are a part of is essential and should always be a priority for the researcher (Putra, 2023). I secured the collected data by storing them in a locked file cabinet where they will remain for 5 years, and the digital data will be protected with password-encrypted security. After 5 years, I will destroy the paper files and digital data. For this research project, the Walden IRB approval number is 02-02-24-1184319.

Nature of the Project

The selected methodology for this study was a qualitative pragmatic inquiry. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods are the three methods used in research (Yin, 2006). The qualitative method is used to explore real-world problems when the research

needs describing and a researcher seeks a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The qualitative method was appropriate for exploring successful strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss because it allowed me to answer "how" and "in what way" questions as well as offer educational measures.

I used a pragmatic inquiry as the research design. Researchers using the pragmatic inquiry design explore existing research studies and frameworks for guidance and new discoveries to answer the research question. Researchers using a pragmatic approach offer strategic decisions and support reliable and focused research (Ramanadhan et al., 2018). This inductive research project was focused on individual media industry managers' experiences addressing consumer digital piracy.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The participants of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry consisted of media industry managers. The first eligibility criterion was that media industry managers successfully implemented strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. Eligible participants must also have worked in the media industry for at least 5 years. Another eligibility requirement for participants was to work for a traditional network or a streaming platform. Lastly, eligible participants had to know and experience consumer piracy and revenue loss within the industry.

I gained access to participants by contacting media industry managers within my network via Facebook, Instagram, and email. Saunders et al. (2019) stated that one way to gain access to respondents for data collection is to educate yourself about the group or organization. I used the template provided by the Walden University IRB to discuss with

possible participants the research study and the benefits of their participation in the media industry. Informed consent is a fundamental principle that adheres to ethics and protects human beings in research (Bazzano et al., 2021). The recruitment message included an informed consent form for participation. Once potential participants agreed to participate by returning the informed consent form, I called each participant and began a working relationship. Since participants expressed their willingness to be interviewed, I scheduled Zoom meetings and phone calls to answer questions regarding the data collection process.

The target population for this pragmatic inquiry project included media industry managers from traditional networks and streaming platforms. I used the purposive and snowball sampling methods to recruit participants. Researchers using purposive sampling can ensure their samples are a match to answer the research question, which improves the trustworthiness of the study's results (Campbell et al., 2020). In the media industry, networking, which is similar to snowball sampling, is one of the most common ways to meet individuals with similar interests. Snowball sampling is common, connects the researcher with the target population, and allows the researcher to use their connections to recruit eligible participants (Leighton et al., 2021). Snowball sampling was beneficial because it is a form of networking since the method uses referrals as a recruitment technique. Using the purposive sampling and snowball sampling methodologies was deemed optimal because they significantly enhanced the probability of recruiting qualified participants for my research purposes.

The sample size for this study included at least six media industry managers from traditional networks and streaming platforms in southern California. Andrade (2020) highlighted that a sample size that is too big is unnecessary and can be seen as unethical. Mthuli et al. (2021) further explained that researchers using only knowledgeable stakeholders in the study justifies a smaller sample size. In accordance with my experience as a researcher, I found that opting for at least six participants was suitable for this research project. Choosing at least six media industry managers who were experienced, knowledgeable, and understood the research objectives enhanced the robustness of the study.

When recruiting participants, researchers should take into consideration the time invested in seeking out participants. Bekele and Ago (2022) emphasized that a researcher should examine the scope, nature, and research design to justify the sample size necessary for achieving saturation. Saturation is when insights into the data are exhausted, and no new themes or codes exist in data collection (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). Achieving data saturation is not determined by sample size only but also by the quality of information participants give during interviews. I assessed the quality of participants' responses based on the usefulness and relevance of the information in addressing the research question. I continued interviewing knowledgeable media industry managers until the data were repeated.

Data Collection Activities

I was the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative pragmatic inquiry. As the instrument, the researcher is responsible for data collection, analysis, and

presentation of findings (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). As the primary instrument, I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data from media industry managers to understand their strategies for reducing consumer piracy and revenue loss. Tenny et al. (2022) stated that qualitative data collection methods include interviews, focus groups, and observations. I used an interview protocol to aid the interview process and have a clear understanding of procedures. Jordan et al. (2021) explained that a solid interview protocol is crucial for gathering valuable qualitative data. A clear interview protocol guides researchers in ensuring all participants are asked the same questions. The interview protocol guided my actions before, during, and after participant interviews.

I began the interview by introducing the research topic and explaining procedures to the participant. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) stated that researchers should inform participants of the length of time needed for the interview and the purpose of the research. I clarified the informed consent form and explained that the interview would last up to 60 minutes. I also reiterated that I would use a recording device and ask predetermined questions. The questions consisted of targeted, open-ended questions and follow-up questions, when necessary, based on the participant responses. Researchers choose semistructured interviews for data collection to gather information from participants regarding their experience, knowledge, and perceptions of the phenomenon (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). By conducting semistructured interviews, media industry managers contributed to answering the research question in this study.

I requested permission from Walden University's IRB to begin the data collection process. After receiving IRB approval, contact information was obtained from potential

participants using purposive and snowball sampling. I leveraged my personal network, Instagram, Facebook, and publicly available documents to locate possible participants. Messages were then sent through social media and email to obtain their informed consent (see Appendix). Participants who agreed to interview responded, "I consent," to my message. At that time, I scheduled Zoom interviews on a date when participants were available. The interviews were conducted via Zoom and were audio recorded digitally. Rutakumwa et al. (2019) explained that digital recording during interviews helps to prevent researcher bias and enhances data verification. I transcribed each interview as well as searched for publicly available documents and peer-reviewed articles related to consumer piracy and revenue loss.

Qualitative researchers must ensure that the data collection process is valid and reliable (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). I employed member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the current study. Member checking is when researchers have participants validate the interpretations of the interviews (Candela, 2019). Stenfors et al. (2020) explained that researchers allow participants to verify findings using member checking, which enhances credibility. I emailed participants my interpretation of the interview responses so they could confirm the accuracy of my interpretation.

Interview Questions

1. How do you track digital piracy in the media industry?

2. How has consumer digital piracy impacted affected your work?

3. What strategies did you use to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss?

4. What challenges, if any, did you experience implementing the strategies used to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss?

5. How did you address challenges involved with strategy implementation?

6. How did you measure the effectiveness of strategy implementations to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss?

7. How has the rise of the internet affected the strategies implemented to address consumer digital piracy and revenue loss?

8. What additional information can you share regarding effective strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss? What advice would you suggest for other media managers dealing with these effects of consumer digital piracy?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

In qualitative research, researchers gather a substantial amount of data, so keeping track of information and data organization is essential. I used reflective journaling and research logs to keep track of hard and electronic copies of data. Organizing data helps researchers limit errors and makes it easier for analysis (Broman & Woo, 2018). There are many proven systems and techniques used to track and organize data successfully. Lester et al. (2020) recommended a computerized or printed filing system for storage and security measures in case information gets lost. I started filing the information at the beginning of data collection and used Microsoft Word and Excel spreadsheet systems to organize data. Keeping the identity of the participants private is essential to maintain their confidentiality. Babchuk (2019) explained the importance of appropriately labeling and storing data to maintain participants' confidentiality. I will securely store all data for 5

years after completing the research study. I have also stored written notes from my reflective journal and physical research logs in a locked file cabinet. I transferred digital data from Microsoft Word and Excel and secured it with password-protected encryption on a USB drive. After 5 years have passed, I will erase digital files and shred written information.

I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process for this qualitative pragmatic research project. Thematic analysis is an approach to identifying, analyzing, and interpreting themes and produces rigorous and quality examinations of data. The thematic analysis approach comprises six stages: (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating codes, (c) consolidating codes into themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) interpreting themes, and (f) reporting findings.

1. I familiarized myself with the data. Repeatedly reading the data until researchers are familiar with the depth of the information happens during this stage (Byrne, 2022). As the researcher, I transcribed and reviewed the collected data several times and took notes of my initial thoughts by entering them into a reflective journal. By listening to the audio and re-reading the transcripts, I gained a greater understanding and familiarity with the data. I used a MUSO report to gather data regarding yearly piracy visits.

2. I created initial codes. In this second phase of the analysis, researchers investigate what is interesting inside the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Coding involves highlighting text phrases and creating abbreviated labels that characterize the content using software systems. I manually analyzed data

which allowed me to examine and recognize initial codes corresponding to the research question and conceptual framework.

3. I searched for themes. Braun and Clarke (2022) suggested that researchers must search for themes and not expect the information to emerge. Lochmiller (2021) explained that researchers should look for repetitive phrases or information and classify similar patterns. After identifying similar patterns, I grouped them as relevant themes and subthemes that contributed to answering the research question.

4. I reviewed all themes that were identified. Step 4 of the analysis ensures that themes are relevant enough to answer the research question. de Klerk and Pretorius (2019) explained that researchers re-read the data to ensure themes correspond with research objectives. At this stage, researchers review to make sure themes accurately reflect the data collected and can combine, eliminate, or separate themes.

5. In Step 5, I defined and named themes. During this analysis phase, researchers will determine how each theme is helpful to the research question. Braun and Clarke (2019) consider this step as the "define and refine" section of analysis that tells what each theme is about. Also, researchers develop creative, concise, and catchy names for themes during this step. Byrne (2022) suggested that theme names inform the readers of what information the researcher captured from the data. I analyzed key themes from the literature

that corresponded with the conceptual framework and contributed to answering the research question.

6. I created a report of the findings. Researchers write up a compilation of findings in the final stage of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that step six is to share the data story, which convinces readers that the analysis is high quality and valid. The researcher addresses each of the previous themes by discussing their meaning and frequency within the collected data. I included how the analysis answered the research question and confirmed alignment with key themes, the literature, and the conceptual framework, including new studies.

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Reliability and Validity

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Reliability

Reliability is important because the more reliable the study is, the higher the accuracy of the research. If the data is inaccurate, it is hard for the audience to trust your research findings. Reliability ensures that if a researcher repeats a case study, the findings and conclusion will be the same (Yin, 2018). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability contribute to achieving reliability in research (Amin et al., 2020). Both reliability and validity contribute to robust research and a solid study. When researchers succeed in replicating data, reliability improves (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). If reliability in research is not realized, it could cause the analysis to remain in doubt. Reliability refers to your research being consistent and dependable. I employed member checking to establish and ensure meeting reliability. Candela (2019) stated that member checking is a

validation technique required to achieve the rigor of a study. Member checking is the process where researchers have participants to substantiate if data collected during interviews is authentic.

Dependability

Dependability mirrors reliability in a quantitative study. The dependability component is achieved through credibility, replication, and auditing (Adler, 2022). Dependability in research describes the procedures in detail and is defined as consistent work (Janis, 2022). I used an audit trail to enhance dependability for this qualitative pragmatic inquiry. Amin et al. (2020) explained that an audit trail is a compilation of records such as notes, recordings, and other documents researchers use for data collection. Carcary (2020) further stated that an audit trail refers to keeping track of all documentation, including their thoughts, at every stage of the research process. I kept a reflective journal to note observations, themes, activities, and decisions made during data collection. I kept a comprehensive research log throughout the data collection and analysis phrases to systematically organize data and address dependability.

Validity

The validity of the research study ensures that a test measures the quality or behavior it aims to measure (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). To bolster validity, I concentrated on achieving credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation. Dobakhti (2020) suggested that researchers apply triangulation to achieve validity and reliability. I performed member checks during the data collection process. Member checking is when researchers return given information to participants to check for accuracy and validation.

Peer examinations are another technique I employed and refers to other experts reviewing the research data and findings for validation. Audit trails are also application methods to achieve reliability and validity.

Credibility

Establishing credibility in qualitative research enhances trustworthiness. Ensuring the researcher's actions align with the initial intent is a criterion for credibility, similar to validity. Researchers achieve credibility when the information is imparted to readers, and the results represent participants' authentic views (Johnson et al., 2020). There are several techniques available for qualitative researchers to improve credibility. Member checking, triangulation, persistent observation, and adequacy are all characteristics of this component (Bekele & Ago, 2022). To establish credibility, I employed member checking and reflective journaling in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry. Member checks are robust and allow researchers to obtain participant feedback (Motulsky, 2021). I performed member checks with participants through data analysis write-ups or in-person to ensure the transcribed information is accurate. By using member checking, I improved the trustworthiness of the data.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability involves transferring a researcher's findings to another setting or person (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2020). Additionally, Johnson et al. (2020) explained that readers decide if findings apply and are transferable. One method to enhance transferability is when researchers put the findings in context. I described the results in detail and provided a clear picture for readers, such as location, number of

participants, timeframe, and analysis for context. After contributing detailed information, readers are informed enough to determine if a transfer should happen. Stahl and King (2020) suggested that transferability is only possible when researchers clearly describe how the study applies to other's circumstances. Sharing detailed information with readers supports the chances of transferability.

Confirmability

Another technique to achieve and maintain validity is confirmability. Confirmability occurs when others confirm and endorse the study's findings (Langtree et al., 2019). Confirmability refers to participants' narratives instead of researcher biases. I interviewed and transcribed data as given without influencing the information with my perspective. Johnson et al. (2020) stated that confirmability happens when researchers assure the audience that the findings reflect the statements participants gave, not personal interpretations. Consistency is essential when strengthening confirmability. I ensured confirmability by remaining neutral, documenting procedures, and keeping notes for review throughout the process. Lastly, I performed member checks to verify findings, enhancing confirmability.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is critical in indicating if a sample is adequate for the phenomenon studied. Researchers achieve saturation when the data collected are sufficient to answer the research objective (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). Researchers reach data saturation when they can no longer identify new themes or codes. Chitac (2022) explained that determining saturation is based on the emergence of new codes. Further interviews are

unnecessary in qualitative research when researchers reach data saturation and achieve validity. The sample size is essential in reaching data saturation. Guest et al. (2020) suggested a minimum of six participants to meet the data saturation threshold. If researchers continue data collection, there is a risk of saturation, losing its coherence and potency, and conceptualization being outstretched (Saunders et al., 2019). To obtain data saturation for this research project, I interviewed participants using the interview protocol (Appendix) until information or themes seem repetitive. Data saturation is critical in achieving validity and answering the research question in qualitative research.

Transition and Summary

I used a qualitative pragmatic inquiry to explore media industry managers' strategies used to reduce consumer digital piracy and revenue loss. In Section 3, I explained the researcher's role and ensured I followed ethical procedures set by the IRB and the *Belmont Report*. I explained why qualitative inquiry was the best option to answer the research objective. I also discussed data collection and analysis techniques. I justified why snowball and purposive sampling methods were beneficial for the study. I completed Section 3 by highlighting techniques that enhance reliability and validity and improve trustworthiness.

In Section 4, I will discuss the data analysis results, including themes, and tie the results to the conceptual framework. Addressing how the study impacts positive social change and the presentation of the study's conclusion will also be discussed. I will explain limitations and what areas benefited from future research of the phenomenon. To

conclude, I will summarize how media industry managers could apply findings to

professional practice.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of the qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore and understand how media industry managers describe the strategies used to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. I collected data from interviews with music media industry managers from traditional networks and streaming platforms in southern California as well as secondary data. The overarching research question for this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was: What strategies do media industry managers use to reduce consumer digital piracy and revenue losses?

I conducted semistructured interviews via Zoom and telephone with media industry managers who had implemented strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. I also reviewed peer-reviewed articles and publicly available reports. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis method was used to identify and interpret themes and patterns from the collected data. For data analysis, I manually searched the data for codes and themes. After thoroughly examining the data obtained from the interviews and accompanying documentation, three main themes emerged: (a) detection, monitoring, and prevention methods; (b) consumer education and awareness; and (c) enforcement measures.

Theme 1: Detection, Monitoring, and Prevention Methods

The first significant theme identified after data analysis was consumer piracy detection, monitoring, and prevention methods. The elements of this theme were a critical process for media industry managers to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. All the

participants discussed the importance of detecting piracy, monitoring piracy traffic, and implementing prevention methods. P2, P3, and P4 spoke about leveraging third-party vendors to scan known piracy sites for unauthorized uploads. P4 stated that the company provides the vendors with a list of titles that they should protect. The third party then uses metadata to scan the top 10,000 sites for piracy to identify potential infringements. P3 explained how platforms like YouTube and Facebook actively use fingerprint detection technology to detect and prevent unauthorized uploads in real time. According to Megías et al. (2020), fingerprinting technology entails the integration of unique identifiers within individual copies of content to trace piracy.

If pirated content is detected on these platforms, companies like Owl1 can remove the content if it exceeds 30 seconds, as per their agreement with these platforms. P2 said, "We have a couple of programs to go out there and proactively look for pirated sites." Collaborating with other major platforms helped to reduce and prevent consumer piracy to a degree. P5 emphasized how important collaboration among managers and media companies are in effectively combating consumer piracy. Three of the participants mentioned the collaboration of multiple networks known as the Alliance of Creativity and Entertainment (ACE). ACE stands as the foremost global entity dedicated to combating online piracy, safeguarding the ingenuity and originality that fuel the expansion of fundamental copyright and entertainment sectors (Gruenwedel, 2017). Together, this collaboration ensured the detection, monitoring, and prevention of consumer piracy in many cases.

Monitoring was another element included in this theme. Pl attributed the ease of digital piracy to advancing technology but also stressed the importance of staying ahead with proactive strategies and adaptation. The media industry managers advocated for continuously monitoring technological trends and investing in specialized teams to combat piracy effectively. Reis et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of embracing focused monitoring of consumer piracy threats. P1 stated, "As we grow in technology, then it can always make a position for individuals to share or to download illegally, so you just want to make sure that you keep your eye on it." Additionally, P3 agreed that media industry managers should actively monitor popular sites and apps that engage in piracy to stay ahead of emerging technological trends essentially.

Continuously investing in antipiracy teams also emerged as a prevention method. Zhang et al. (2021) stated that antipiracy teams inform the piracy publisher to remove illegal content in identifying pirated movies and videos. P2 and P3 shared that not only do these teams work to prevent consumer piracy, but they also try to understand the connection between piracy and financial loss. Allocating resources towards technology, antipiracy teams, and strategies exemplifies a proactive stance in addressing piracy and safeguarding revenue streams.

The primary theme of detection, monitoring, and prevention methods aligns closely with existing literature on technology-based antipiracy strategies. Pham et al. (2020) highlighted deterrence technology's key components, including security techniques, encoding, encryption, and certifications, all aimed at thwarting pirates' access to online content. By integrating these insights into their antipiracy initiatives, media

industry managers can effectively combat digital piracy while safeguarding their revenue streams and intellectual property rights.

Theme 2: Enforcement Measures

Enforcement measures are the second theme that emerged from the data collection process. Each participant shared strategies their media company used as enforcement measures to reduce consumer piracy. P1 highlighted that implementing restrictions to stop credential sharing with friends and family was beneficial in increasing subscription services, thus reducing piracy. Frick et al. (2023) stated that although there are more than 188 million individuals subscribed to a streaming service, digital piracy continues to spread and needs relief. P1 further added that the company initiatives to crack down on password sharing outside of personal households and lower subscription prices have demonstrated tangible impacts on profitability. These findings corroborate existing literature emphasizing the role of affordable pricing strategies in deterring piracy and maximizing revenue. By leveraging a combination of technological solutions, consumer education efforts, and strategic pricing adjustments, companies can effectively reduce the threat of digital piracy while enhancing their financial performance and maintaining a competitive edge in the market. The newfound success of Owl2 now serves as a blueprint as other networks in the media industry attempt to follow their lead.

Another element of enforcement measures participants mentioned was friction creation and disruption. One aspect of creating friction is issuing takedown notices for infringing videos identified online. P4 described that, "There are millions of takedown notices related to individual infringing videos uploaded to the internet that we send or

vendors send on our behalf every year." Zhang et al. (2021) shared that in order to safeguard Taylor Swift's album from piracy, Universal initiated approximately 144,000 protective measures to prevent unauthorized distribution of the music on platforms, like YouTube and SoundCloud, alongside issuing over 500,000 requests for the removal of illegal content. Injecting friction into the piracy experience through measures like takedown notices makes piracy less user friendly.

Another example of friction disruption shared by P2, P3, and P5, which I also shared in my literature review, was site blocking. Reis et al. (2024) emphasized that in contrast to litigation or civil suits, which entail prolonged legal processes, this approach allows for prompt intervention and offers a more economical solution by eliminating the costs associated with legal disputes. Employing measures like site blocking to restrict access to piracy sites and deter users from engaging in piracy sometimes frustrates consumers and forces them to watch legal content. P6 accentuated, "Studios do quite a bit of site blocking, which is issuing an order that says, 'All major ISPs, you need to block user access to this site.'" Media industry managers are disrupting major piracy operations by utilizing site blocking and shutdowns. Using forensic watermarking also helps to trace pirated accounts back to the sources for site blocking and shutdowns to enable the site for further investigation. P5 shared that one disadvantage of site blocking and shutdowns is that there is more surfacing as soon as one site gets shut down.

Media industry companies are also using prosecution and other legal actions as enforcement measures. Legal actions and initiating criminal investigations or civil suits are employed against persistent infringers. Reis et al. (2024) added that providers may be

subject to legal actions, such as litigation, while users may encounter graduated response laws, such as the Three Strikes Law in the United States. Legal action includes engaging in investigations to determine the source of piracy in order to begin prosecution. P3 stated, "We do that through a coalition that we are in with the other studios." P2 suggested that the criminal prosecution of major pirate site operators could deter piracy by targeting the black market around pirated content. P2 acknowledged the limitations of civil lawsuits in deterring piracy because financial penalties may not outweigh the profits gained from operating pirate sites.

The second theme of enforcement measures is related to the literature discussing legal action and copyright protections. The current study findings aligned with those of Aguiar et al. (2018) who showed that implementing enforcement laws showed a significant decline in consumer piracy. The collaboration and legal action theme also underscored the importance of partnerships with law enforcement agencies, governmental bodies, and international organizations. By working together, these entities can pool resources, share intelligence, and coordinate enforcement efforts to combat piracy more effectively across jurisdictions. Moreover, collaboration facilitates the development and implementation of robust legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms tailored to addressing the evolving nature of digital piracy. This approach extends to sharing best practices, capacity-building initiatives, and public awareness campaigns aimed at promoting respect for intellectual property rights and deterring illicit activities.

Furthermore, engaging in legal action against prominent piracy entities sends a strong deterrent message and reinforces the consequences of infringing on copyrights and

trademarks. Overall, collaboration and legal action represent integral components of a

comprehensive strategy to combat digital piracy and safeguard revenue streams in the

digital age. Legal measures, such as prosecution and litigation against entities engaged in

piracy, served as deterrents and sent a clear message about the consequences of infringing

copyright laws.

Theme 3: Consumer Education and Awareness

Consumer education and awareness was the third theme that emerged. All

participants suggested educating consumers about the negative impact of consumer

piracy as another way to help the media industry combat the phenomenon. P6 stated,

"Educating consumers about piracy raises awareness among individuals, particularly

young people, about the ethical and practical implications of piracy, including the risks of

financial fraud and malware associated with piracy sites." P4 added, "I think it is

important to educate people about what piracy is and what its consequences may be.

There is a real tangible risk to your financial security by engaging in this behavior."

These findings align with the results of Jeong et al. (2020) who stated that piracy can lead

to considerable financial loss due to the need for hardware or system reinstallation or the

requirement for data recovery services. If consumers were more aware of the implications

not only to the media industry but also to their personal security, it could deter them from

engaging in consumer piracy.

Personal security risks, like the distribution of malware on personal computers

and communicating risks, were also involved in the consequences. Education and

deterrence play a crucial role with efforts aimed at raising awareness among consumers

about the ethical and practical implications of piracy and communicating the risks associated with engaging in illegal activities. P1 confirmed that positive messaging surrounding consumer piracy awareness campaigns contributes to lower piracy risks. P5 suggested that the media industry frame messaging around the financial impact on artists and content creation. The messaging focused on the enforcement of consumer piracy proves beneficial as a strategy. Consumer education and awareness initiatives should be centered on promoting alternative, legal avenues for accessing content.

By highlighting the availability and benefits of legitimate streaming services, licensed downloads, and other authorized distribution channels, consumers are empowered to make informed choices that support content creators and rights holders. Moreover, such initiatives can emphasize the broader societal impact of piracy, including its adverse effects on job creation, innovation, and the overall health of the creative industries. By framing piracy as a collective concern with far-reaching consequences, consumer education efforts can effectively mobilize support for antipiracy measures and encourage responsible consumption habits. This consumer education and awareness theme aligns with the literature on education and public awareness. Educating both consumers and industry stakeholders cultivates a deeper comprehension of the ethical, legal, and financial consequences of piracy, leading to a reduction in unlawful activities.

Although there was a decline in consumer piracy for one particular network I researched, there was an increase in piracy overall in the media industry. P4 suggested that I research a company named MUSO to gather additional data. According to an Anonymous (2022) MUSO report, film piracy increased by 36.4%, and TV piracy

increased by 8.8% from 2021 to 2022. The report also indicated that in 2022, unlicensed streaming websites accounted for 95% of TV content and 57.1% of film content accessed worldwide. The MUSO report also estimated that there were more than 13 billion visits to pirated sites in the United States alone. According to the report, music piracy also increased substantially by 13% in the first quarter of 2022, with more than 17 billion visits that year. Table 1 is a depiction of the data acquired from the MUSO report.

Table 1

Piracy Visits in Billions by Year

Categories	2021	2022	2023
Film	20.4	27.8	29.6
TV	91.6	99.6	103.9
Overall	182	215	229.4

Note. Data from 2021–2023 MUSO reports.

Media industry managers implemented several strategies to address piracy, including detection, monitoring, and preventive measures. Recognizing the urgency, managers in the media industry allocated resources and established specialized teams to actively combat piracy. Media industry managers made substantial financial investments in antipiracy technologies, personnel, and strategies to effectively identify and counter piracy. Emphasizing the importance of awareness, managers focused on educating consumers and industry stakeholders about piracy's impact, underscoring its historical context and industry-wide repercussions. Media industry managers also acknowledged the challenges posed by piracy's widespread nature and the emergence of new pirating

entities, leading to the creation of ACE, a collaborative effort among industry players to combat piracy nationally and internationally. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of legal prosecution as a deterrent, demonstrating a commitment to enforcing antipiracy laws.

Relevance to Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative pragmatic research project was the TPB by Ajzen (1991). I used the TPB to assist media industry managers in understanding the reasons individuals act in specific ways. As a result, media industry managers can use the current study findings to craft interventions or develop antipiracy tactics aimed at reducing consumer piracy and minimizing revenue loss. The emergent primary themes aligned with the conceptual framework: (a) detection, monitoring, and prevention methods; (b) consumer education and awareness; and (c) enforcement measures. The enforcement measure theme confirmed the findings of Holt et al. (2019) and Jayasundara (2022) that if individuals perceive that potential punishment is severe, quick, and costly, it will serve as a deterrent from engaging in piracy. The consumer education and awareness theme demonstrated that teaching consumers about digital piracy can reduce their susceptibility to environmental influences.

Attitudes

Understanding consumers' perspectives on piracy and legal content consumption is essential for crafting effective antipiracy tactics. Media industry managers can tailor communication and interventions to encourage favorable views toward legal content consumption and discourage piracy by pinpointing the beliefs and principles guiding

consumer attitudes. In line with the attitude component of the TPB, P3 and P5 spoke about proper messaging for framing, which helps shape consumer attitudes and could lead to a reduction in consumer piracy. Clear communication is critical in this instance.

Social Norms

The second element of the TPB is the influence of social norms. Acknowledging the impact of social norms on piracy behavior enables efforts to reshape societal perceptions and standards concerning piracy (Cho et al., 2015). Media industry managers can harness social influence by disseminating antipiracy messages through social networks, influencers, and community initiatives, fostering a culture that values intellectual property rights. P3 discussed enforcement measures, such as peer-to-peer sharing of passwords and illegal content, and highlighted how family and friends influence each other to engage in consumer piracy. Tackling obstacles to legal content consumption, such as cost, accessibility, and usability of legitimate platforms, enhances consumers' perceived control over behaviors and inclinations toward legal alternatives.

Perceived Behavior Control

Enhancing the user experience of legal content distribution channels, offering competitive pricing, and expanding content availability can make legal options more appealing and convenient. All of the participants discussed fair pricing and how if customers perceive they are getting quality content at a fair price, that could lead to lower consumer piracy engagement. Kukla-Gryz et al. (2021) emphasized that unfair pricing leads to acquiring illegal content. P4 highlighted that making content more accessible, meaning putting all the locations in one convenient location, could also encourage

individuals not to engage in piracy. P4 added, "There is a group of people that are just not going to pay for content. They want it to be free." In conclusion, the TPB offered insights into the psychological drivers behind piracy and informed strategies to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss in the media industry by addressing attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavior control.

Previous researchers often assumed that reducing piracy would automatically boost profitability and improve business practice, but this belief overlooks the intricate dynamics at play. Various factors influence the relationship between piracy reduction and profitability, necessitating a nuanced evaluation of anti-piracy efforts. Firstly, while decreasing piracy can theoretically enhance legitimate sales and revenue, the actual impact varies based on factors like market competition and consumer behavior. Piracy reduction may yield limited profitability gains in highly competitive markets, as consumers have ample alternative options. P4 emphasized that decreased piracy does not always increase sales. The participant gave the example that if a million people stream a film illegally but then the website is blocked, there is no way to determine if all those people would have gone to a movie theater to watch it.

Furthermore, stakeholders must carefully weigh the costs associated with implementing antipiracy measures against potential benefits. Investments in technology, anti-piracy teams, and legal enforcement can offset gains from reduced piracy, requiring managers to assess the cost-effectiveness of their strategies. The effectiveness of antipiracy measures fluctuates, and the complete eradication of piracy is often unattainable. Despite efforts, determined pirates may circumvent security measures,

leading to continued unauthorized content distribution. Moreover, broader market dynamics, such as shifts in consumer preferences and technological advancements, significantly influence the piracy-profitability relationship. Changes in these factors can impact the efficacy of antipiracy efforts and subsequent financial outcomes.

In conclusion, while managers aspire to link piracy reduction with increased profitability, a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved is essential. By evaluating antipiracy strategies' costs, benefits, and effectiveness within specific market contexts, managers can make informed decisions to safeguard intellectual property rights and optimize financial performance.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

Reducing consumer piracy and revenue loss is a significant concern for many businesses, particularly those in the entertainment, software, and publishing industries. This qualitative pragmatic inquiry research project aimed to research strategies media industry managers used to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. Studying consumer behavior in piracy can offer valuable insights into their motivations and actions. By grasping the reasons behind piracy, businesses can customize their antipiracy approaches to tackle fundamental issues like cost, convenience, or perceived worth, thus better serving their target audience. To improve business outcomes, media industry managers can invest in robust DRM technologies, which are crucial for safeguarding digital content against unauthorized copying, distribution, and access, thereby thwarting piracy and preserving content exclusivity for paying customers. Educating consumers on the importance of intellectual property rights is vital in discouraging piracy.

Offering legal and cost-effective alternatives to pirated content, such as subscription-based streaming services, digital downloads, or cloud-based access, helps to make legitimate options more attractive and accessible. Enhancing the value proposition of legal content through exclusive bonus material, early access, or personalized recommendations can further incentivize consumers to choose legitimate sources over pirated ones. Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of current measures and adapt strategies as necessary to combat piracy effectively and minimize revenue loss. Regularly solicit consumer, stakeholder, and legal expert feedback to ensure anti-piracy efforts align with business goals and legal standards.

This research project could close gaps in understanding and effective business practice by identifying emerging piracy threats and trends, including new technologies, distribution channels, and consumer behaviors. By staying abreast of these developments, businesses can proactively adjust their antipiracy strategies to counter evolving threats effectively. Analyzing successful partnerships and best practices allows the media industry to strengthen industry-wide efforts against piracy and reduce revenue loss. Research on reducing consumer piracy and revenue loss in the media industry yields valuable insights and evidence-based recommendations for media industry managers, policymakers, and stakeholders. Ultimately, this research project contributes to a more informed and effective approach to combating piracy and safeguarding the interests of content creators and distributors.

The results of this study can be spread through focused educational initiatives via social media, websites, and printed material. P4 shared that in the past, some companies

distributed public service announcements highlighting piracy effects on creators, businesses, and the economy. Offering concise explanations of copyright laws and piracy repercussions, along with captivating stories and testimonials, can captivate audiences. Partnering with influencers, content creators, and legal professionals can magnify the message and promote ethical consumption. By nurturing comprehension and reverence for intellectual property rights, the industry can enable consumers to make knowledgeable decisions and endorse legal channels for content access.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential to promote the moral standards of individuals in today's society, by encouraging them to pay for services and products such as films, TV shows, and music released. The impact encourages a cultural shift in encouraging individuals to respect creators and improves individual ethics since stealing content would no longer happen or at minimum decreased. According to de la Sablonnière (2017), social change is the process of creating and applying strategies to promote the development of individuals and communities, cultures, and societies. By diminishing piracy, creators stand a better chance of receiving fair compensation for their efforts, which in turn could inspire them to generate more content and explore fresh ideas. There is also potential to reshape digital media consumption habits. With time, these efforts might also shape societal perceptions and norms regarding the significance of intellectual property and the necessity of upholding copyright laws. By addressing this phenomenon and incorporating these strategies, media industry managers could reduce consumer piracy and job losses within the media industry.

Additionally, profitability could improve, eliminating costs, ultimately improving the economy.

Recommendations for Further Research

In conducting a qualitative pragmatic research project on strategies media industry managers use to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss, I found some areas for further research. Future researchers can alleviate the geographical limitation by targeting networks in other states. Since consumer piracy is now a worldwide phenomenon, additional research could expand to countries outside the United States. Expanding research globally, researchers could examine different cultural differences, legal frameworks, and socioeconomic factors. Another area that researchers could focus on is conducting a quantitative approach to survey different groups of individuals regarding consumer piracy engagement. By doing this, media industry managers could understand consumer motivations and what punishment would deter pirates from engagement.

Identifying relationships among certain variables could help examine the moral and ethical dilemmas that shape individuals' choices to partake in piracy. Future research studies could explore how consumer piracy affects incentives for artists, filmmakers, and musicians, especially independent artists. Lastly, research projects could delve into digital piracy's social and psychological dimensions, encompassing its normalization within peer circles and online communities. By addressing these recommendations, scholars and the media industry can deepen their understanding of consumer piracy in the

media industry and develop more effective strategies to reduce consumer piracy while ensuring the sustainability of creative industries.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies that media industry managers used to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss. Upon concluding the data analysis, it became evident that specific strategies employed by media industry managers to reduce the detrimental effects of digital piracy have proven successful. However, the effectiveness of these strategies varies. For instance, efforts to shut down pirate sites are often futile, given the continuous emergence of new sites online. Consequently, my stance on the selected business problem remains unchanged: Managers face considerable challenges in combating digital piracy to safeguard their profitability. The exponential growth of digital piracy underscores the urgency of this issue. Using a structured and comprehensive approach at each stage of the process provided more profound insights into the inadequacies of existing strategies to curb the adverse impacts of digital piracy (Boblin et al., 2013). Overall, the data collection and analysis phase of my qualitative research project proved to be both informative and enlightening.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Interview Preparation:
After receiving approval to begin data collection, I will email potential participants requesting their participation. Included in the email is an explanation of the research topic and how their input can be beneficial to the industry. I will further explain the purpose of the study and how important it is to the media industry and society.

Informed Consent/Setting:
Once an individual has agree to participate, I will ask the participant to sign a prepared consent form. Once the participant returns the consent form, i will request a time and date for the interview to be completed. I will inform the participant that the interviews will be recorded and held via Zoom teleconference.

Opening Interviews:
I will reintroduce myself to the participant and thank them for their participation. I will reiterate the purpose of the study and inquire if the participant has any questions before beginning. I will address any questions and then begin the recording device. At that time, I will proceed with the interview. While conducting interviews, I will use a reflective journal to take field notes of ideas or follow-up questions.

Interviews:
I will conduct semistructured interviews related to my research question by asking the 8 questions listed below:

1. How do you track digital piracy in the media industry?

2. How has consumer digital piracy affected your work?

3. What strategies did you use to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss?

4. What challenges, if any, did you experience implementing the strategies used to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss?

5. How did you address challenges involved with strategy implementation?

6. How did you measure the effectiveness of strategy implementations to reduce consumer piracy and revenue loss?

7. How has the rise of the internet affected the strategies implemented to address consumer piracy and revenue loss?

8. What additional information can you share regarding effective strategies to reduce

consumer piracy and revenue loss?

Wrap Up/Closing:

After the interview, I will express gratitude to the participant for their time and insights. I will also emphasize that I will reach out to them in the future to verify the information received during the interview. I will reiterate the confidentiality of the discussion, assuring the participant that neither their name nor their company's name will be disclosed. Lastly, I will inform the participant I will share the final study upon completion.