CultureCase

Reduce piracy through fairer pricing

This research was conducted by **Anna Kukla-Gryz, Joanna Tyrowicz** and **Michał Krawczyk** at the **University of Warsaw, Poland**

Summary

This paper is based on an experiment inside a large Polish e-book store. It tested the hypothesis that people are more willing to illegally download cultural content when they perceive that it is over-priced. They found that levels of piracy were ‘related to the perception of price fairness, not necessarily the level of prices themselves’. This was not just about individual artists pricing their work at one level and incurring a lot of piracy as a result but a ‘general attitude toward the entire creative industry’. As a result of their findings the authors suggest that piracy would be reduced if cultural goods were priced in a way that was perceived as more fair.

Ethical concerns about piracy are one reason why people do not download from unauthorised sources

The study attempted to explain the logic that links perceived unfairness and the act of piracy (since it is quite possible to think prices are unfair without deciding to pirate content). One explanation is that people feel negative reactions from being prevented (in this case by price) from accessing something they want, this negativity in turn heightens the desire and leads to more extreme actions to placate it. Another explanation is that people acquire a kind of moral licence, believing that they are undoing unfairness, allowing them to justify the action to themselves.

The research looked at e-books since there is no discernible difference in quality between the legal and illegal versions

They collected over 1,000 surveys from customers at the largest online bookstore in Poland. Although the study attempted to get at a truthful picture of piracy and attitudes to prices it is possible that people were not entirely honest in their responses, and that the fair price of a book is something people arrive at after reading it.

Keywords

ebook **literature** **price** **piracy** **Poland** **survey**

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