Examination of Digital Piracy Behavior through the Lens of Cultural and Non-Cultural Variables

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Extended abstract

Nowadays, the highly competitive environment has prompted intensive efforts for sustaining competitive advantages of enterprises around the globe. One of the particularly vulnerable areas is intellectual property protection, and especially the music, film, and software industries have been coping with the challenge of preventing piracy actions. Digital piracy is a phenomenon which continues to perplex managers as well as researchers. A large body of digital piracy literature sheds light on its demand side and illuminates various predictors of digital piracy behavior on an individual level. Despite these efforts, very little attention has been devoted to applying international perspective in investigating digital piracy across different countries.

This paper examines the role of cultural variables (uncertainty avoidance and collectivism) in shaping non-cultural variables: individual’s perception of negative piracy consequences (personal risk and moral intensity). The latter are hypothesized to affect digital piracy behavior, as well individual’s use of rationalization techniques, which is also impacted by digital piracy behavior. The authors use self-administered mail questionnaire to collect data in three EU countries (Slovenia, Italy, and the UK). The construct measures were derived from the existing literature.

To establish a meaningful comparison of the conceptual model across the three countries, cross-national invariance is also tested. In accordance with previous research, this study indicates that consumers who score highly on uncertainty avoidance tend to perceive more risk. Similarly, this study demonstrates a significant relationship between collectivism and moral intensity. Digital piracy behavior is less likely to occur in situations when consumers perceive higher levels of personal risk and higher levels of moral intensity. Additionally, the results of this study support indicate a negative influence of personal risk and moral intensity and the positive influence of piracy behavior on consumer’s use of rationalization techniques. However, the personal risk effect was non-significant in Slovenia, which might result from the sensitivity of the topic.

The findings of this study offer useful implications for various affected industries by highlighting two relevant areas: perceived negative consequences for an individual (perceived risk) and perceived negative consequences for the society (moral intensity). Another cross-cultural marketing implication rests on two cultural orientations, uncertainty avoidance and collectivism. The individual-level measurement of cultural dimensions is worth applying when companies aim to determine levels of digital piracy across different groups of consumers. Despite its limitations, the authors hope that the study offers a springboard for future research.