

AN ANALYSIS OF CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS TOWARDS PIRATED PRODUCTS.

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ABSTRACT

The costs of product piracy towards knowledge creation and innovation are enormous. It hampers the development of knowledge and innovation because piracy can greatly reduce the economic benefits for the original creators of products and ideas. Widespread piracy and weak intellectual property regulations and enforcement, particularly in developing countries, will undermine development and the growth of local industry, and threaten local knowledge. In terms of the business environment, this can lead to loss of competitive advantage because the measure of competitiveness among firms is driven by the firm's ability to innovate and create new types of economic assets built from knowledge capital. If piracy is widespread, businesses are de-motivated to invest in R&D of new products/services since it will be difficult to recoup the high cost of these investments. Thus, the aim of this study is to analyse the consumer's attitude in purchasing pirated products and their purchase intention. The finding of this research could help organizations in understanding piracy issues and consequently, enable them to have better knowledge in the formulation of anti-piracy strategies. Malaysian public universities' students were used as sample since they constitute an important market segment of generation Y, that is, an emerging generation with powerful aggregated spending. The findings confirmed that novelty seeking factors have a significant influence on the tendency to buy pirated goods. The implications of this study and directions for future research are also discussed.

Keywords

Product piracy, intellectual properties, consumer attitudes, anti-piracy strategies, Malaysia

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Pirated product refers to copied item, but they are produced with the knowledge that the consumer will be aware that the item is pirated, so it will usually sold at lower price (Lai and Zaichkowsky,

1998; McDonald and Roberts, 1994; Wee *et al.*, 1995). Piracy or counterfeiting is a serious matter that affects not only high branded products such as clothing and accessories but also products which involve a high level of R&D such as software, pharmaceuticals, aircraft parts, etc., (Wee *et al.*, 1995; Bush *et al.*, 1989; Phau and Prendergast, 1998). Products with high-status logos such as software, audio and video compact discs are especially prone to product piracy (Prendergast *et al.*, 2002). In this study, the focus is on optical discs piracy such as compact discs (CD), video compact discs (VCD), digital video discs (DVD) and computer software.

Asia countries, including Malaysia, are considered as the world's worst violator of intellectual property rights (Phau & Prendergast, 1998, Patrick, 2005). For instance, from April 1999 to June 2005 there are 34,529 cases of piracy in Malaysia (Ministry of Consumers Affairs and Domestic Trade, 2006). Despite the seriousness of the problem, there are limited researches, particularly in the area of understanding the Malaysian attitude towards piracy. Previous researches had been conducted in countries like China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, USA, (Ang *et al.*, 2001; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Moores and Dhillon, 2000; Swinyard *et al.*, 1990). These researches results may help to understand consumer's attitude towards piracy but it cannot substitute for research on Malaysian consumers. Different social values, culture, regulations and business environment in the Malaysian context may have an impact on the research finding. Furthermore, to design effective piracy protection strategies, analysing the rationale and motivation behind the demand is important (Bloch *et al.*, 1993; McDonald and Roberts, 1994). Lastly, university students were used as sample in this study because they constitute an emerging generation (Generation Y between 19-26 years old) with powerful aggregated spending (Cui *et al.*, 2003), optical disk and other high-tech products' users (Tapscott, 1998) that also have been identified as a user group of pirated products (Cheng *et al.*, 1997).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Consumer's attitude toward piracy

Attitude is a learned predisposition, to behave in a consistently favorable/unfavorable manner towards a given object (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). As a learned predisposition, attitude might influence a consumer toward, or push a consumer away, from a particular behavior (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). Thus, if a consumer has a favorable attitude toward piracy, it will influence the consumer to buy pirated products and vice versa.

Social Influences: Social influences have a major influence on consumer's decision making (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). Consumers' attitudes can be influenced by social pressure depending on their susceptibility level. Consumer susceptibility is "the need to identify with or enhance one's image in the opinion of significant others through the acquisition and use of product and brands, the willingness to obey the rules to the expectations of others regarding purchase decision, and the tendency to learn about products by observing others or seeking information from others" (Bearden *et al.*, 1989). There are two forms of susceptibility; informative and normative susceptibility (Bearden *et al.*, 1998). Informative susceptibility is consumer susceptibility to social influence, it concerns purchase decisions based on the expert opinions or others (Wang *et al.*, 2005). Information susceptibility usually occurs when consumers are not knowledgeable of the product category (Ang *et al.*, 2001). Normative susceptibility concerns purchase decisions based on the expectation of what would impress others (Ang *et al.*, 2001). It differs from informative susceptibility in the sense that normative susceptibility is expected to have a negative outcome on attitude towards pirated product. Buying fake products will bring a bad impression from others, thus people with high normative susceptibility will have a negative attitude towards piracy.

Personality Influences: Personality can be defined as those inner psychological characteristics that determine and reflect how one's responds towards the environment (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). Among the factors that influence personality are value consciousness, personal gratification, and novelty seeking. A value consciousness consumer is a person who will look for a product that they will only pay at a lower price subject to some quality constraints (Ang *et al.*, 2001; Lichtenstein *et*

al., 1993). In economics perspective, when price goes down, demand will rise. Pirated products provide great cost saving to consumers; although some compromise in quality, the perceived value is high (Dodge *et al.*, 1996). Previous research had proved that when a counterfeit has a distinct price advantage over the legitimate product, consumers will choose the fake products (Bloch *et al.*, 1993). It is predicted that a person who has more value consciousness will have positive attitudes towards piracy compare to less value consciousness.

Personal gratification concerns the need for a sense of accomplishment, social recognition, and to enjoy the finer things in life (Ang *et al.*, 2001 and Wang *et al.*, 2005). Consumers with low personal gratification will value the pirated version of products more than the genuine product. Personal gratification is not important for a person who values pirated products. Thus it is predicted that a person who has less personal gratification will have more favourable attitudes towards piracy.

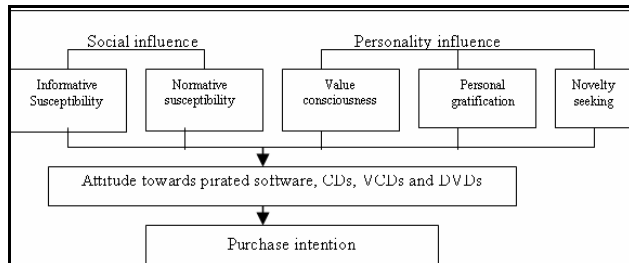
Novelty seeking refers to the human interest in looking for variety/differences (Hawkins *et al.*, 1980). It may arise out of consumers' dissatisfaction with product attributes, or with the brand they frequently repurchase, particularly for products with low purchase risk (Jeuland, 1978; McAlister and Pessemier, 1982). Thus novelty seekers are more likely to purchase pirated products as these are low cost means of satisfying their curiosity and need of experimentation towards certain things (Wee *et al.*, 1995) for example video games software and movie recording. It is predicted that a person who has a high novelty seeking level will have more favourable attitudes towards piracy.

2.2 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a cognitive component in attitude. It is concerned with the tendency of an individual with regard to the attitude towards an object (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). Purchase intention is routinely used for purposes such as tracking products in a market (McNeil, 1974) and product testing (Silk and Urban, 1978). Purchase intention may provide better forecasts compared to past sales trend analysis (Armstrong *et al.*, 2000). Thus, understanding consumer purchase intention in purchasing pirated optical discs is important in designing effective prevention strategy towards piracy. Based on Figure 1 of conceptual framework of this research, attitudes toward piracy is the destination construct.

3.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The framework is adapted and modified from Ang *et al.*, (2001) and Wang *et al.*, (2005). It examined the factors that influence consumers' attitude towards piracy and relationship between consumer's attitudes and purchase intention.



Sources: Adapted from Ang *et al.* (2001); and Wang *et al.* (2005).

Figure 1. A model of consumer response in purchasing pirated optical discs

The framework is used as a guidance to formulate and test the hypotheses below:

- H1: Information susceptibility has negative effect on attitudes toward piracy.
- H2: Normative susceptibility has negative effect on attitudes toward piracy
- H3: Value consciousness has positive effect on attitude towards piracy.
- H4: Personal gratification has negative effect on attitude towards piracy
- H5: Novelty seeking has positive effect on attitude toward piracy.
- H6: Consumers attitude toward piracy will leads to their purchase intention.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The population for this study was undergraduate students of Malaysian public universities, in order to examine their attitude towards pirated optical discs. Five public universities in Malaysia agreed to participate in this study. Based on Luck *et al.* (1987)'s formula, minimum sample size is identified at 400. Research assistants were used to distribute a total of 400 questionnaires, and respondents in this research were selected through convenience sampling. The instrument used was a pilot-tested questionnaire method adapted from the work of Wang *et al.*, 2005; Ang *et al.*, 2001 and Wee *et al.*, 1995. The questionnaire consist of three parts; part A looked at the respondents' demographic information; part B measured respondent's attitude towards optical discs piracy

and part C measured respondent's social and personal characteristic. Alpha value for the variables in the questionnaire ranges above 0.8 and therefore it is considered reliable and valid.

5.0 FINDINGS

Out of 400 questionnaires that were distributed to the students, 367 usable questionnaires were returned (97% response rate). The respondents' demographic characteristics are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Respondents' demographic characteristics (n=367)

Demographic characteristic	Frequency	Percentage		
Gender	Male	106	28.9	
	Female	261	71.1	
Age	19 – 24 year old	332	90.5	
	25 – 30 year old	31	8.4	
	31 – 35 year old	2	0.6	
	36 – 41 year old	2	0.5	
Religion	Buddhism	48	13.1	
	Christian	57	15.5	
	Hinduism	28	7.6	
	Islam	233	63.5	
Others	Others	1	0.3	
	Race	Chinese	63	17.2
		Iban	18	4.9
		Indian	32	8.7
		Malay	220	59.9
Others		34	9.3	
Marital status	Single	349	95.1	
	Married	14	3.8	
	Divorced	2	0.5	
	Others	2	0.5	
Source of income	Family	137	37.3	
	PTPTN	203	55.3	
	Own Saving	7	1.9	
	Others	20	5.4	
Monthly income	< RM500	245	66.8	
	RM501 – RM1,000	58	15.8	
	RM1,001 – RM1500	15	4.1	
	RM1501 – RM2000	17	4.6	
	Others	32	8.7	

There were 106 male and 261 female respondents. This unbalance situation happened because here were twice as many female university students compared to male students. Most of the respondents' age ranged between 19 to 24 years old. Majority of the undergraduate students were single and most of respondent's sources of allowance were from Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (PTPTN) that consisted of 55.3%, while from family 37.3%. Besides that 5.4% respondents were getting their

monthly allowance from Jabatan Pentadbiran Awam and also from various states government. 66.8% of respondents have an allowance of below RM500 per month. There were 4.6% of respondents who get their monthly allowance between RM1501 to RM2000. This is because either they were doing part time jobs or they got additional funding from family.

5.1 Relationship between Social and Personality Factor and Attitude towards Optical Discs Piracy.

Factor analysis was done before regression analysis procedure was carried out. Under the dependent variables there is only one variable found to be the most important factor in influencing consumer's attitudes towards piracy. It is novelty seeking with Regression Coefficient, *B* values of 0.142 and accounted for R^2 of 0.025. While informative susceptibility, normative susceptibility, value consciousness and personal gratification are found not important in influencing consumer's attitude. Thus, novelty seeking has a positive effect on attitude toward piracy (H5), information susceptibility has negative effect on attitudes toward piracy (H1), normative susceptibility has negative effect on attitudes toward piracy (H2), and personal gratification has negative effect on attitude towards piracy (H4) are accepted and value consciousness has positive effect on attitude towards piracy (H3) is rejected. The research findings also show that value consciousness has a negative effect on consumer's attitude toward piracy.

The results are consistent with past research done by Ang *et al.*, (2001) which stated that novelty seeking influences consumer's attitudes towards piracy (H5) and information susceptibility and personal gratification has a negative effect on attitude towards piracy (H5 and H4). This study's finding is also consistent with Wang *et al.*, (2005) which found that novelty seeking does influence attitude towards piracy. But different from Wang *et al.*, (2005) study, value consciousness is not found as an important factor in influencing consumer's attitude (H3).

Table 2: Regression Result on Factor Influencing Attitude

Regression equation	<i>B</i> value	Standard error	Standardize regression coefficients	<i>t</i> value	Significance level
Novelty Seeking	0.142	0.046	0.159	3.076	0.002
Constant	-0.371	0.131		-2.827	0.005
Notes: $R^2=0.025$, $F=9.459$					

5.2 Relationship between Attitude towards Optical Discs Piracy and Purchase Intention.

In analysing the relationship between attitude and purchase intention, stepwise regression was used. The intention was to identify the most important measures in attitude towards optical discs piracy. Dependent variable is purchase intention and independent variables are ten measures of attitude construct. Table 3 shows that six independent variables accounted for adjusted R^2 of 0.238 of the purchasing intention of pirated optical discs. There are six measures that were identified as influencing purchase decision which is product similarity (0.137), social concern (0.175), perception (0.187), product reliability (0.125), legal judgement (-0.96) and product functionality (0.110). Those six measures were identified as factors in influencing consumers to purchase pirated optical discs. Consumers' attitude toward piracy will influence and lead their purchase intention (H6) is supported.

Table 3: Regression Result on Attitudinal Measures that Influence Purchasing Intention

Regression equation	<i>B</i> value	Standard error	Standardize regression coefficients	<i>t</i> value	Significance level
Product similarity	0.137	0.051	0.161	2.694	0.007
Social Concern	0.175	0.040	0.208	4.412	0.000
Perception	0.187	0.050	0.178	3.717	0.000
Product Reliability	0.125	0.053	0.141	2.344	0.020
Legal Judgment	-0.096	0.039	-0.114	-2.431	0.016
Product Functionality	0.110	0.047	0.126	2.339	0.020
Constant	-1.971	0.272		-7.255	0.000
Notes: $R^2=0.250$, $F=20.047$					

6.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDING

Based on the finding of this research, the researcher has accepted the Null Hypothesis (H0): Ho1, Ho2, Ho4, Ho5, and rejected Ho3. Alternative Hypothesis for Ho3 is H3. Thus, the hypotheses of this research are H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 as shown below:

H1: Informative susceptibility has negative effect on attitude toward piracy

Based on the finding, informative susceptibility was not considered a factor that influenced consumer attitude toward optical discs piracy. In other word,

it is not a significant predictor of attitude. This result is consistent with Ang *et al.*, (2001) and Wang *et al.*, (2005). That is, consumers are not dependent on expert advice or depend on others peoples' opinion before purchasing pirated optical discs. This is because the price of pirated optical discs are relatively lower than the original optical discs, thus, the cost of purchasing the wrong product is at minimum level. Due to this, the focus should be on the functional and also financial risk involved in purchasing pirated optical discs when devising any anti-piracy strategies.

H2: Normative susceptibility has negative effect on attitudes toward piracy

Normative susceptibility was not considered as a factor that influenced consumer attitude toward optical discs piracy. This shows that when making purchase decisions, customers are not concerned about other peoples' expectation or the impression that others have on them. This indicates anti-piracy strategies such as 'shaming' techniques might not work within this age-group or if the anti-piracy bodies still want to use this technique, a more effective education advertisement showing the shameful aspect of piracy should be developed.

H3: Value consciousness has negative effect on attitude towards piracy

Consumer's value consciousness is found not to be a major factor influencing consumer's attitude. This is consistent with past research that showed price is not the only determinant in consumer's decision on purchasing pirated products (Wee *et al.*, 1995). Consumers purchased pirated products for their functionality, rather than because they are cheaper. Buyers of pirated products make a purchase when they feel that these products possess important attributes similar to genuine products. When a pirated version can serve consumers at the same level as the original product, consumers are more likely to purchase pirated version. For example, students usually purchased pirated software to help them in completing their assignments and after they had completed their tasks, they might be not using the software anymore. Thus, manufacturer of original products should put an effort to differentiate their genuine version product with the pirated version so that consumer can value the genuine version more.

H4: Personal gratification has negative effect on attitude towards piracy

The findings shows that that consumers who put a high emphasis on a comfortable life, sense of

accomplishment and value social recognition did not differ from those that are not, in terms of purchase in intention towards pirated goods. It shows that consumers who buy pirated version product do not buy the products for its quality but its functionality. That is, pirated products are not products for personal gratification and consumers do not view buying pirated product as affecting their sense of value or self-accomplishment.

H5: Novelty seeking has positive effect on attitude toward piracy

Novelty seeking is found to be an important factor that determines consumer's attitude to optical discs piracy that then will lead to their purchase intention. Generally, generation Y is a generation that always want to try new things in life, and they will find ways to fulfil their curiosity-needs about certain things (Cui *et al.*, 2003). Thus, Generation Y members will always look for alternative ways to get what they want. The motivation of exploring new things in life leads to their purchase decisions. For example, by buying pirated software, that is the way that consumers can try out new software/program. Most consumers want to know the best things about a product before making any purchase, thus the solution is to buy a pirated version before buying the real thing. Due to this, manufacturer should consider this situation where consumers actually want to experience the products before making any purchases. Manufacturers can consider producing a trial version which is originally from authorizing manufacturer.

H6: Consumers attitude toward piracy will influence and lead to their purchase intention.

This research identified that attitude towards pirated products was a significant predictor of purchase intention. Consumers who had more favourable attitude toward piracy were more likely to purchase pirated product themselves, buying for others as well as recommended them to friends and family. In this research, consumer's attitude toward pirated optical discs concerns consumer's evaluation toward original optical discs products. Consumers are more concern about product attribute's variables rather than concern about issues like the ethics or morality of buying pirated goods. This is inline with Nia and Zaichkowsky's (2000) observation that consumers who owned pirated products had a positive image of piracy and did not believe that pirated products were inferior.

Executive Summary and Managerial Implication

From this research and previous research (Wee *et al.*, 1995; Ang *et al.*, 2001; and Wang *et al.*, 2005), it shows that businesses and government bodies should play an increasing role in changing the attitude and beliefs of consumers toward piracy. A change in consumer's perception and mindset regarding intellectual property rights and pride in originality in works is vital as the first step towards fighting piracy. The finding of this research on attitude is important for anti-piracy organizations, policy makers and manufacturers to design anti piracy strategies:

Education Perspective: Large scale and continues campaigns are needed in educating the public about the implications of piracy. Economics and social consequences should be highlighted in educating the publics, starting from early adulthood such as in secondary schools. Through education, moral issues of piracy and information about the trading problems, employment and social welfare losses can be highlighted. This education will become effective if it can shows that in long term and indirectly, consumer's welfare also can be affected. When consumers realise that in the long term they also may become the victim, then they will be more reluctant to purchase pirated products. It is important here to instil moral and ethical values to the public so that they can realise buying pirated products is not an acceptable behaviour.

Legal Perspective and Enforcement: Strong enforcement of the law in protecting intellectual and property rights should be taken into account. Legal action should been charged to the producer or retailer of pirated products, but it should also strengthen the legal action against buyers. Piracy should be seen as a crime and it is hindrance of the development of successful music, films and software industries. Demand from consumers should be reduced because the supply of it simply mirrors demand. This is the root of the piracy issue problem. Ang *et al.*, (2001) discovered that consumers do not see purchasing pirated and products that stole other people's intellectual property as unlawful and unethical.

Strategy for Manufacturers: Original brand manufacturers should look at their marketing mix strategy in combating pirating of products. They should carefully segment their customers into several segments, and strategize the pricing to suit each subgroup. For example, software companies can segment their customers and produce suitable

software or separate offers for each group. Trial version can be launch to fulfil consumer's curiosity need. Other than that, manufacturer also can apply modern technologies such as hidden magnetic or microchip tags, disappearing-reappearing inks, holographic images and digitised fingerprint labels (Mason, 1985). Most computer users now are accessing Internet service; with robust technology, manufacturers are able to identify computers that are using pirated software and that program can be terminated immediately.

7.0 CONCLUSION, LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Novelty seeking is found to be an important factor in influencing the public universities' students to buy pirated optical discs. Most of them were not bothered about the price they paid in purchasing a product. This is contrary to previous research that found that value consciousness had significant effect in determining consumer's attitude (Ang *et al.*, 2001). According to Cui *et al.*, (2003) at this age range (i.e. 19 to 24 years old), the curiosity level in individual is high. Buying pirated good are viewed as an alternative ways to fulfil their curiosity. That is why most of the respondent has positive effect of novelty seeking and attitude toward pirated optical discs. Social concern, product similarity, product functionality, product reliability, legal judgment and perception are measures of attitude that influencing consumer's purchase intention. Consumers who have a positive attitude of the six measures of attitude had a favourable attitude toward pirated optical discs and will lead to their purchase intention. They are more likely to buy pirated optical discs for themselves, buying for others and also recommended it to other people.

In term of the research's limitation, the survey was conducted in five major public universities and using students as the sample. Although the use of students as a sample is supported (Calder *et al.*, 1981; Peterson, 2001), the generalizability to the whole population of consumers may be limited. Response of students might slightly be homogenous than those of non-students. It may influence how they evaluate each construct and relationship between construct (Wang *et al.*, 2005; Peterson, 2001). Furthermore, this study focuses only on optical disc piracy issue. Other categories of product and type of piracy may draw different responses from the subject, and thus this research finding may not be reliable in determining piracy issues of different products. For future research,

replication with other products and populations are essential. Comparison between groups and demographic characteristics can also be done to provide more determinants of each factor that influences attitude toward piracy.

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