INTERPOL

DIGITAL PIRACY METHODS

PROJECT I-SOP

ONLINE CRIMES TARGETING CONSUMERS GOVERNMENTS
AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Digital or online piracy relates to intellectual property rights offenses and refers to the illegal access, download and/or distribution of digital content such as software, music, TV series, films, video games, webcomics and books.

This crime has a serious economic impact, resulting in financial losses for the creative industries and tax revenue loss for government authorities. It also opens up security risks to consumers such as malware and viruses, ID theft or exposure to inappropriate content.

7 KEY DIGITAL PIRACY METHODS:

INFRINGING APPS

Infringing apps have become the most prevalent emerging digital piracy method reported by police services and private sector actors. They allow users to stream or download copyrighted content without proper licensing or authorization. These apps are widely accessible as they are designed to work on popular mobile operating systems or smart TV platforms.

THEFT OF PRE-RELEASE CONTENT

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a sharp increase in home digital entertainment. Digital pirates took advantage of this transformation to steal content and post it on various forums or sell it on their own websites and different IT and social media platforms. Content made available prior to an official release causes significant financial damage for creators, producers and investors.

OFFSHORE HOSTING PROVIDERS

Offshore hosting means that a server is based in a country that differs from the actual business operations. The anonymous nature of hosting and poor intellectual property regulations in the country of registration facilitates piracy activities.

STREAM RIPPING

Stream ripping means extracting or capturing audio or video content from a streaming platform and converting it into a downloadable file. This enables users to illegally listen to or watch the content offline or share it across multiple devices without proper authorization. This phenomenon has a particular impact on the music industry and right holders.

CYBERLOCKERS

Cyberlockers are online data hosting services that provide remote storage space. Unlike legitimate file-sharing services, cyberlockers do not have the internal frameworks to prevent the hosting of illicit content. They earn revenue from advertising, such as banner and 'pop-up' advertisements. Cyberlocker administrators may also gain additional profit for premium download speeds.

CRYPTOCURRENCIES

Illicit financial flows often fuel serious transnational criminal activity. Their scale makes it challenging for law enforcement agencies to prosecute offenders and recover criminal assets. The issue has become more complex with the introduction of cryptocurrencies. Criminals behind pirate sites are increasingly exploiting these virtual assets to mask the flow of illegal funds as part of money laundering schemes.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Powered by a broad range of technologies, including virtual reality (VR), the Metaverse aims to enable people around the world to access shared 3D virtual environments.

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) are a unique digital asset that represent ownership or proof of authenticity for a specific item or piece of content. They are hosted on decentralized platforms such as blockchains and are increasingly used in cybercrimes.

NFTs and the Metaverse represent a series of challenges including intellectual property infringement. Specifically, users can upload unauthorized visuals or media content on to these platforms with no checks being carried out by content filtering or image recognition software.

Project I-SOP

INTERPOL Stop Online Piracy

Project I-SOP was launched in 2021 in response to the rising threat of digital piracy. This five-year project helps raise awareness of intellectual property crimes, improve information exchange, support transnational cases, and build the capacity of law enforcement authorities.

In collaboration with:

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
Republic of Korea

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