

INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF YOUTH PIRACY BEHAVIOR IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract

Digital piracy is a pervasive and persistent problem in the modern digital economy, with significant economic and social implications. The main aim of the paper is to find out the methods of analysis and factors of youth piracy behavior as well as investigate the main causes of youth piracy behavior in Lithuania. The objectives are to discuss theoretical models of consumer piracy behavior; to introduce the methodological background of the research; to investigate Lithuanian youth opinion and reasons of piracy behavior. An absolute majority of respondents find reasons to justify violation of author rights. The most popular reasoning is “why should one pay if it is possible to find anything free of charge on the internet?” and “it is too expensive to pay”. Having studied the problem from different aspects (by gender, place of residence, nature of activities), the results showed that there is no big difference between individual groups.

Key words: digital piracy, youth, consumer behavior, Lithuania.

Introduction

Digital piracy is a pervasive and persistent problem in the modern digital economy, with significant economic and social implications. According to recent reports, piracy costs the global economy billions of dollars each year and has a profound impact on the livelihoods of content creators, distributors, and other stakeholders. While the rise of digital technologies has revolutionized the way we consume and share information, it has also facilitated the spread of illegal copies of copyrighted content such as music, movies, software, and e-books. Despite the efforts of industry stakeholders and government agencies to combat piracy, it remains a major challenge, with new forms of piracy emerging all the time. As such, it is essential to understand the underlying factors that drive individuals to engage in digital piracy and to develop effective strategies to address this issue.

Information progress has facilitated the simplification of the procedure for copying information, minimizing the cost and speed its distribution. This causes undeniable contradictions between two constitutional rights – the right to own property and the right to freely use information. The active development of digital technologies has exacerbated the conflict between a person's desire to profit from the production/work and the use of copyright objects, as well as related rights and the desire to receive information freely. Every time a person wants to receive a product, be it a film, a book, music or software, they have an alternative – to purchase the content of interest legally or to use it for free without authorization, to steal it.

The main aim of the paper is to find out the methods of analysis, the factors of youth piracy behavior and to investigate the main causes of youth piracy behavior in Lithuania.

The objectives are:

- to discuss *theoretical models of consumer piracy behavior*;
- to introduce *methodological background of the research*;
- to investigate Lithuanian youth opinion and the reasons of piracy behavior.

Piracy behavior theoretical background

In the scientific literature, specific models from different branches of science are used to study piracy behavior. Most researchers who study piracy behavior choose models from theories of psychological sociology: the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Model of Goal-Directed Behavior (MGB), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), etc.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is a psychological model that explains and predicts human behavior by examining the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that influence an individual's decision-making process. In the case of digital piracy, the TRA suggests that an individual's intentions to engage in digital piracy are determined by their attitudes towards piracy, their subjective norms, and their perceived behavioral control (Yan & Liu, 2018; Gao & Wang, 2019; You & Lee, 2020).

Attitudes towards digital piracy are shaped by an individual's beliefs about the consequences of engaging in piracy. For example, someone may believe that piracy is wrong and that it harms the creators of the content. On the other hand, others may think that piracy is harmless and everyone does it, therefore no damage is caused. These attitudes influence an individual's overall disposition towards piracy.

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to engage in or avoid a particular behavior. In the case of digital piracy, an individual's subjective norms may be influenced by their social environment, such as peers, family, or media. For example, if someone's friends frequently engage in piracy, they may feel more

pressure to do the same. On the other hand, if someone's family has a strong moral code against piracy, they will most likely avoid it.

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of their ability to engage in or avoid a particular behavior. In the case of digital piracy, an individual's perceived behavioral control may be influenced by their technical expertise and the availability of legal alternatives to piracy. For example, someone who is technically proficient may find it easier to engage in piracy than someone who is not. Additionally, someone who has access to legal alternatives to piracy, such as streaming services, may be less likely to engage in piracy.

Overall, the TRA suggests that an individual's intentions to engage in digital piracy are influenced by their attitudes towards piracy, their subjective norms, and their perceived behavioral control. By understanding these factors, researchers and policymakers can design interventions to discourage digital piracy and promote legal alternatives.

Later, the theory of reasoned action was refined to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The primary theory is supplemented by the factor of perceived behavioral control. It is a belief about the possibility (internal and external resources) of personal control that exists now. Perceived behavioral control affects actual behavior itself indirectly. This means that even two individuals with the same intentions but different assessments of their ability to control behavior may act differently (Ajzen, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2019; Yulianti, Hidayatullah & Yuliawan, 2021).

The Model of Goal-Directed Behavior (MGB) is a theoretical framework used to understand how individuals make decisions and take actions based on their goals and intentions. In the context of digital piracy, the MGB can be used to understand why individuals engage in illegal downloading and sharing of copyright materials (Lin, 2018; Chang & Tsai, 2019; Riaz, Nawaz & Raja, 2020).

According to the MGB, behavior is influenced by three key factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes refer to an individual's evaluation of the behavior, or whether they see it as positive or negative. Subjective norms refer to the influence of social norms or the opinions of others on the behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's belief in their ability to demonstrate such behavior.

In the case of digital piracy, an individual's attitudes towards the behavior may be influenced by factors such as the perceived benefits of piracy (such as access to content), the perceived harm to copyright holders, and moral or ethical considerations. Subjective norms may be influenced by the social acceptability of piracy among peers or within a community. Perceived behavioral control may be influenced by factors such as technical knowledge or the availability of alternative legal sources of content.

The MGB also suggests that the strength of an individual's intention to engage in a behavior is a key predictor of their actual behavior. Therefore, reducing digital piracy may require changing attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in order to weaken an individual's intention to engage in piracy.

To do so, it may be necessary to provide legal alternatives to piracy that are perceived as more convenient or affordable, increase awareness of the harm caused by piracy, and promote social norms that discourage piracy. Additionally, actions such as legal enforcement or technological measures may be used to increase the perceived risk or decrease the perceived behavioral control associated with piracy.

Overall, the MGB provides a useful framework for understanding the complex factors that influence an individual's decision to engage in digital piracy and for developing interventions to reduce piracy.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a theoretical framework used to explain how individuals perceive and adopt new technologies. In the context of digital piracy, TAM can be used to understand why individuals engage in illegal downloading and sharing of copyright materials (Kim, Park & Lee, 2019; Mohd Zaini & Hassan, 2019; Zhang, Liao & Lu, 2021).

According to TAM, the two key factors that influence an individual's intention to use a new technology are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which an individual believes that a technology will improve their performance or productivity. Perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which an individual believes that a technology is easy to use and understand.

In the case of digital piracy, individuals may perceive illegal downloading and sharing of copyright materials as useful because it provides them with access to content that they might not otherwise be able to afford or obtain. Additionally, they may perceive it as easy to use because it is often readily available through peer-to-peer networks or file-sharing sites.

However, TAM also suggests that other factors, such as social influence and perceived risk, can influence an individual's intention to use a technology. In the context of digital piracy, social influence may include the influence of peers who engage in piracy or the belief that piracy is socially acceptable. Perceived risk may include concerns about legal consequences or the risk of downloading malware or other harmful software.

Therefore, to reduce digital piracy, it may be necessary to address these factors by providing legal alternatives to piracy that are perceived as useful and easy to use, promoting social norms that discourage piracy, and increasing awareness of the risks and consequences of piracy.

On the other hand, all the reasons which influence people's behavior towards digital piracy can be divided into such relative groups: ethical, cultural or psychological; technological; political-economic.

Ethical-cultural-psychological reasons according to some researchers (Deek & McHugh, 2019; Javed, Li & Abdullah, 2019; Salo & Karjaluoto, 2021) can be as follows:

Lack of awareness: some people may engage in piracy because they are not aware of the legal alternatives or the consequences of piracy. This is why education and awareness campaigns are important in reducing piracy behavior.

Lack of enforcement: people may engage in piracy if they perceive that there is little risk of getting caught or facing consequences for their actions.

Personal beliefs: people may engage in piracy if they believe that it is morally justifiable or if they do not consider it to be a serious crime.

Peer pressure: peer pressure can also play a role in piracy behavior, as individuals may feel pressure from their social circles to engage in piracy or may be exposed to pirated content by their friends.

Desire for exclusivity: some individuals may engage in piracy because they want to access content that is not available in their region or is only available to a select group of people, giving them a sense of exclusivity.

Desire to share: some people engage in piracy because they want to share content with others, either because they believe the content should be freely available or because they want to share their interests with others.

Technological factors are, for example (Kukhareenko, Kucher-Kuts & Kucher-Kuts, 2019; Yasseri et al., 2021):

Access to content: one of the main reasons people engage in piracy is to gain access to content that they may not be able to afford or access through legal means. For example, people may pirate movies, TV shows, and music that are not available in their region or are too expensive to purchase.

Convenience: piracy can be more convenient than legal alternatives, as it allows people to access content quickly and easily, without having to go through the process of purchasing or renting it legally.

Time constraints: piracy can be a time-saving option for people who do not have the time to wait for legal alternatives, such as waiting for a show to air on TV or waiting for a DVD to be released.

Quality of content: in some cases, people may pirate content because they believe that the quality of the legal alternative is poor.

Technological barriers: some people may have difficulty accessing legal alternatives due to technological barriers, such as slow internet speed or outdated devices, leading them to engage in piracy instead.

Availability of older content: older content may not be readily available through legal channels, leading people to engage in piracy to access it.

Limited access to previews: legal alternatives may not offer previews of content, leading people to engage in piracy to preview the content before purchasing it.

Political-economic causes, as it is written in the scientific literature (Chen, Chen & Shu, 2020; Chen & Lee, 2022), can be:

Political beliefs: some people may engage in piracy for political reasons, such as a belief in the free flow of information or opposition to intellectual property laws.

Dislike of DRM: Digital Rights Management (DRM) is a technology used to prevent piracy, but some people may dislike DRM because it limits their ability to use the content they have purchased. As a result, they may turn to piracy to avoid these restrictions.

Perception of value: some people may engage in piracy if they do not perceive the content to be worth the cost of purchasing it legally. This may be due to a variety of factors, such as the quality of the content or the perceived value of the content in relation to its price.

Cost: piracy can be a more affordable option than legal alternatives, as it allows people to access content for free or at a lower cost than legal options.

Lack of options for payment: some people may not have access to legal options for payment, such as credit cards, which can limit their ability to purchase legal alternatives and lead them to engage in piracy instead.

Research methodology

The research presented in this paper was carried out during the period of September-November of the year 2022 as part of the project "I am a Citizen: Responsible Consumption of Online Content". The project

was conducted by a group of researchers from the Faculty of Business Management at Vilniaus kolegija / Higher Education Institution.

The purpose of this research was to identify what influences the illegal usage of online content and what motivates young people to pay for the use of copyright products online.

The research objectives were to identify the reasons behind the decision to pay or not to pay for copyright works on the internet; to determine whether this behavior depends on gender, place of residence and social status.

The study population consisted of young people aged between 10 and 35 living in Lithuania. According to the data of the State Data Agency, there were 813031 inhabitants in this population group at the time of the survey. The research sample was counted with the help of the portal “Apklauso.lt” calculator. In order to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, 384 respondents had to complete the survey. The data analyzed in the survey were collected from the answers of 382 respondents. Since the conducted research was related to the behavior of the respondents on such a sensitive issue as illegal consumption, the respondents could not provide answers to some questions. For this reason, the reported sample size varies from the data of respondents' answers.

The quantitative research was conducted in two phases: the development of the questionnaire took place in September and October, a two-week survey was conducted in November. The design of the questionnaire was created with Google Forms tool. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions - 4 questions reflecting the demographic characteristics of the respondent's portrait and the rest related to the problem of the study. All the questionnaires completed by the respondents were deemed suitable for further use in the study.

The research data analysis was based on descriptive statistics and graphical representation of the data, using Microsoft Excel and SPSS data processing software. The results of the research were presented at the final event of the project. The event hosted representatives of the research population, creative industries and public sector interested in improving the state of copyright regulation.

The research complied with ethical requirements. The respondents were invited to take part in the study voluntarily, answered the questionnaire freely, thus ensuring the principle of goodwill. The right to receive accurate information was guaranteed to the respondents by the purpose of the research named in the preamble of the questionnaire and the invitation to openly present their opinion on this relevant and sensitive topic. Respect for the dignity of the respondents was expressed by not necessarily requiring all questions to be answered and by giving the respondents the opportunity to provide their own answer choice. The principle of confidentiality was ensured by the commitment of the researchers to protect the information obtained and not to disclose it to third parties, as well as to use de-identified research data in the presentation of the results.

Youth opinion about piracy: research results description

The findings suggest that young people's decisions are shaped by a complex interplay of economic, cultural, and social factors. The survey reveals that the majority choose not to pay for music, films, and other works of authors because they can find these resources for free on the internet. Economic concerns and the absence of a tradition of paying also play significant roles in their decision-making. The majority— nearly two thirds (63.9 %) answered “why should one pay if it is possible to find anything free of charge on the internet?”. 40.3 % of young people chose to answer “it is too expensive to pay”. Nearly a quarter (22.7%) answered “there is no such tradition”. 10.4% indicated “nobody around pays why should I pay?”. 14.6% of answers mentioned other less popular reasons. (Figure 1)

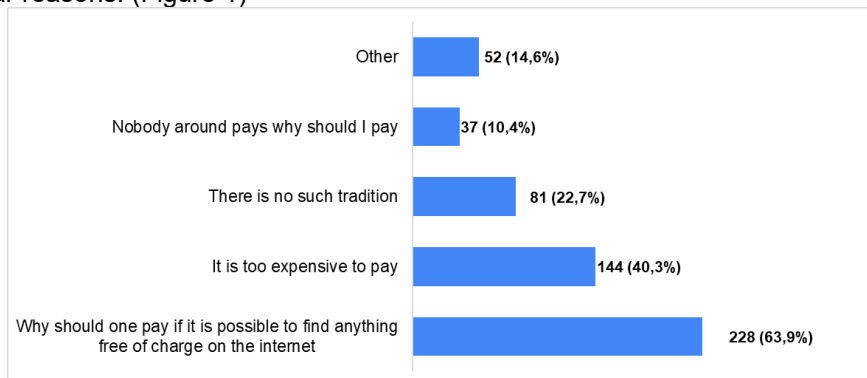


Fig. 1. Reasons for not paying for music, films and other works of authors (n=357)

Regarding the reasons why men and women, as well as residents of different regions (cities, towns, and villages), do not pay for music, films, and other works of authors, it can be mentioned that both men and women responded to the question in relatively similar ways. Moreover, respondents from villages, towns, and cities displayed similar habits in their responses. (Figure 2)

9.1% of women and 12.3% of men pointed out that “nobody around pays why should I pay?”. 20.3% (women) and 28.1% (men) responded they do not pay because “there is no such a tradition”. Around two fifth (38.8% of women and 41.2% of men) answered “it is too expensive to pay”. The answer “why should one pay if it is possible to find anything free of charge on the internet?” was the option to explain unwillingness to pay by nearly two thirds of both genders - 66.4% of women and 58.8% of men.

20.0% of village inhabitants, 10.2% of towns and 8.3% of cities emphasized that “nobody around pays why should I pay?”. 27.5% of village inhabitants, 19.7% in towns and 24.4% in cities pointed out that “there is no such tradition”. 30.3% of village inhabitants, 42.9% of towns and 41.1% of cities admitted “it is too expensive to pay”. The answer “why should one pay if it is possible to find anything free of charge on the internet?” was the selected option by nearly two thirds in all the regions: 57.5% in villages, 68.0% in towns and 61.3% in cities.

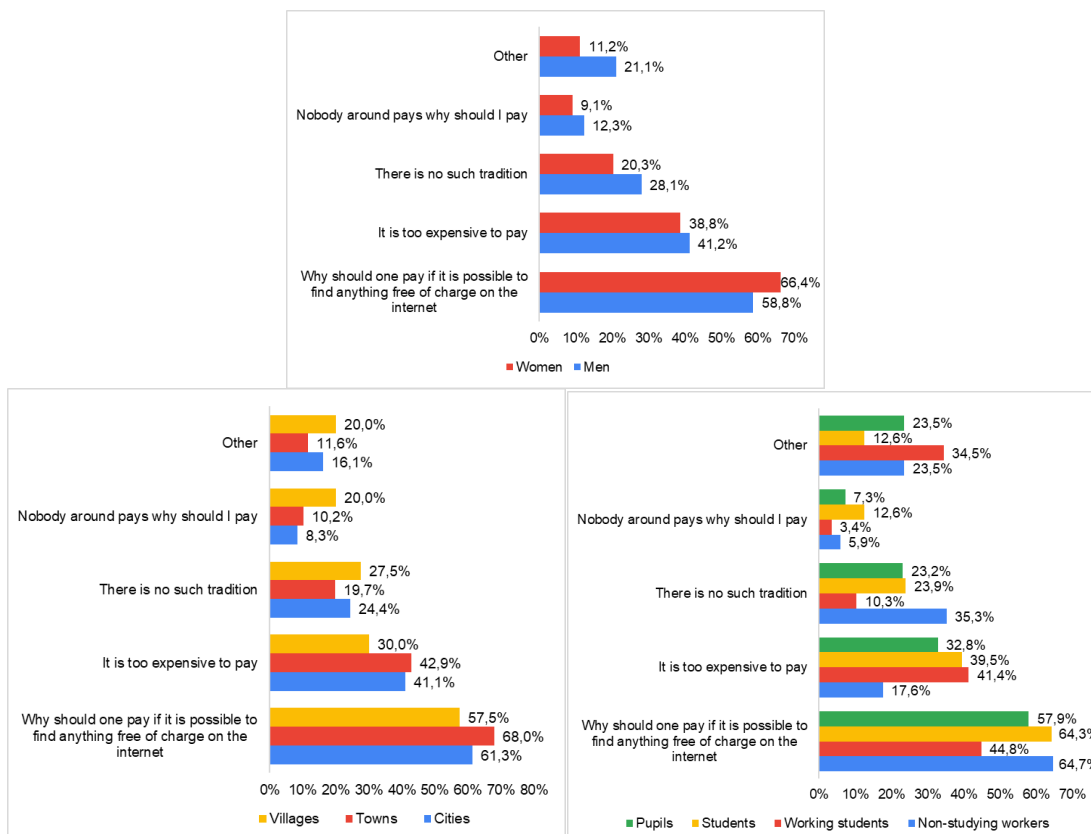


Fig. 2. Reasons for not paying for music, films and other works of authors by different aspects (by gender, place of residence, nature of activities) (n=357)

Only a few respondents (7.3% of pupils, 12.6% of students, 3.4% of working students and 5.9% of non-studying workers) did not pay for films, music, etc., by reasoning “nobody around pays why should I pay?”. Significantly more indicated just not paying traditionally - 23.2% of pupils, 23.9% of students, only 10.3% of working students and even 35.3% of non-studying workers answered “there is no such tradition” (to pay). The answer “it is too expensive to pay” was rather popular in all four respondent groups, but pupils (32.8%), students (39.5%), and working students (41.4%) chose this option more often compared to non-studying workers (only 17.6%). The option “why should one pay if it is possible to find anything free of charge on the internet?” was the most popular explanation not to pay for intellectual property for pupils (57.9%), students (64.3%), working students (44.8%) and non-studying workers (only 64.7%).

Responses to a question about the factors that determine young people's willingness to pay for films, music, and other works of authors are distributed similarly. 29.9% of young people indicated they pay because they “respect author rights”. Nearly the same portion (28.2%) “are used to paying for all services”. The biggest part of respondents (37.8%) answered they pay “when they use products of intellectual property in public, for example, in an event”. The least part of respondents (6.9%) said they pay, otherwise they “feel uncomfortable in front of other people”. 18.2% indicated other reasons for choosing to pay. (Figure 3)

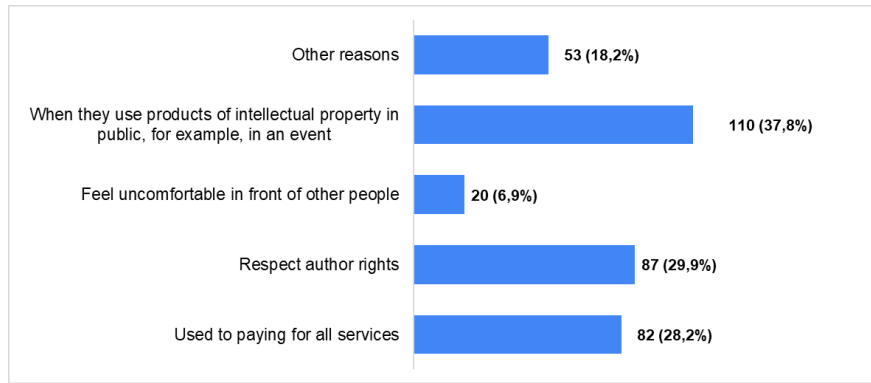


Fig. 3. Reasons for paying for music, films and other works of authors (n=357)

Women and men have slightly different motivations for paying. Women pay slightly more often (39.2%) than men (35.2%) when they use intellectual property in public events. Only 5.2% of women and 10.2% of men pay because they feel uncomfortable in front of others. A similar percentage of women (29.4%) and men (30.7%) pay because they respect author rights. Men (31.8%) are somewhat more likely than women (26.3%) to be "used to paying for all services". (figure 4)

More than a third of young respondents in villages (41.4%), towns (38.7%) and cities (36.2%) pay for intellectual property "when they use products of intellectual property in public, for example, in an event". Nearly a third of respondents (27.6% in villages, 31.1% in towns and 29.1% in cities) say they pay as they "respect author rights". Fewer people in villages (24.1%) than in towns (26.1%) and cities (31.2%) "are used to paying for all services". Only 3.4% in villages pay because otherwise they "feel uncomfortable in front of other people". In towns (8.4%) and cities (6.4%) this percentage is slightly higher.

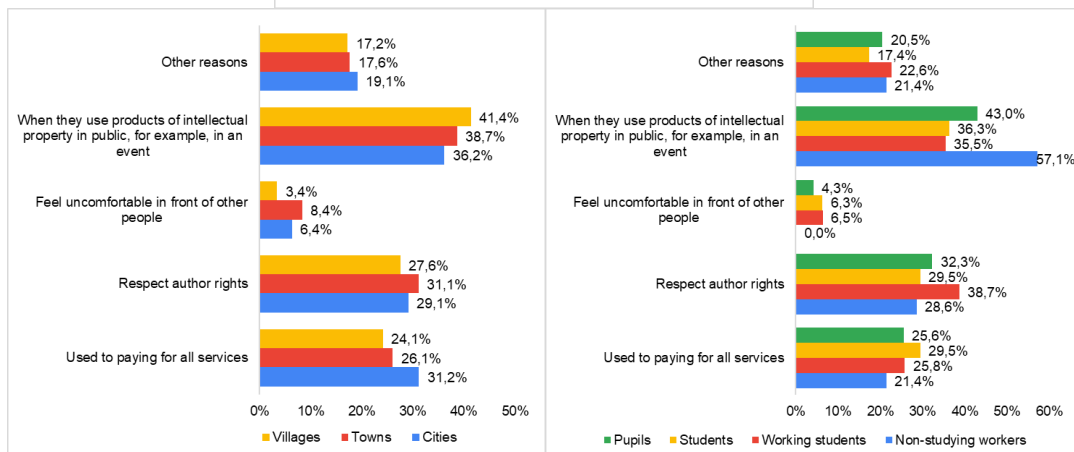
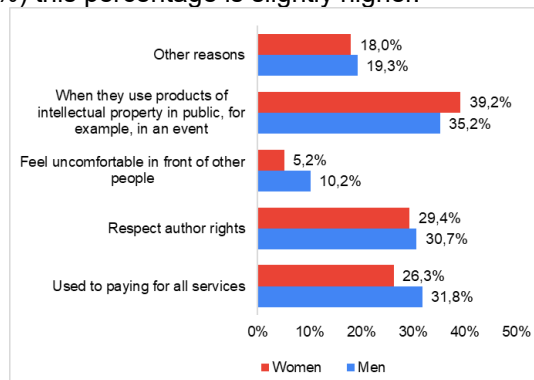


Fig. 4. Reasons for paying for music, films and other works of authors by different aspects (by gender, place of residence, nature of activities) (n=357)

More than half of non-studying workers (57.1%) pay for intellectual property "when they use products of intellectual property in public, for example, in an event"; pupils (43.0%), students (36.3%) and working students (35.5%) indicated this reason less often. Only a few "felt uncomfortable in front of other people" for not paying (pupils 4.3%, students 6.3%, working students 6.5%, non-studying workers 0.0%). Nearly a third of all respondents pay because they "respect author rights" (pupils 32.3%, students 29.5%, working students 38.7%, non-studying 28.6%). Almost a quarter of all admitted they "are used to paying for all services" (25.6% of pupils, 29.5% of students, 25.8% of working students and 21.4% of non-studying workers).

Conclusions

In the scientific literature, specific models from different branches of science are used to study piracy behavior. Most researchers who study piracy behavior choose models from theories of psychological sociology: the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Model of Goal-Directed Behavior (MGB), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), etc. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is a psychological model that explains and predicts human behavior by examining the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that influence an individual's decision-making process. The Model of Goal-Directed Behavior (MGB) is a theoretical framework used to understand how individuals make decisions and take actions based on their goals and intentions. According to the MGB, behavior is influenced by three key factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a theoretical framework used to explain how individuals perceive and adopt new technologies.

The aim of the quantitative study conducted by the researchers of Vilniaus kolegija / Higher Education Institution in September-November 2022 was to identify what influences the illegal online content usage and what motivates young people to pay for the use of copyright-products online. This study answered the following questions: to identify the reasons behind the decision to pay or not to pay for copyright works on the internet; to determine whether this behavior depends on gender, place of residence and social status.

The survey of 357 young respondents reveals that the majority (63.9%) choose not to pay for music, films, and other works of authors because they can find these resources for free on the internet. Economic concerns (40.3%) and the absence of a tradition of paying (22.7%) also play significant roles in their decision-making. Additionally, social influences (10.4%) and various other less common reasons (14.6%) contribute to their choices. Overall, the findings suggest that young people's decisions are shaped by a complex interplay of economic, cultural, and social factors.

The analysis shows that gender differences in responses are relatively minor, with both men and women sharing similar reasons for not paying for content. Regional differences are present but not extreme, with some variation in the importance of peer influence, cultural traditions, and cost concerns across different types of communities. However, the availability of free online content appears to be a common and dominant factor influencing people's unwillingness to pay for media across gender and region.

The analysis shows that young people's willingness to pay for intellectual property is influenced by a combination of factors, including respect for author rights, habituation to paying for services, using intellectual property in public, and social discomfort. While there are some gender and regional variations, the reasons for paying are generally consistent across these groups, with a focus on respecting author rights and using intellectual property in public being the primary motivators for payment.

Overall, the study of the problem in different aspects (by gender, place of residence, nature of activities) showed that there is no big difference between the results of individual groups. Men and women responded in a nearly similar way to both questions regarding why they pay and why they do not pay for intellectual property. Responses of city, town and village inhabitants did not significantly differ while answering those questions ("why don't you pay <...>?" and "what determines your will to pay <...>?"). There are no clear and repetitive regularities or tendencies among responses of pupils, students, working students and non-studying workers.

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