

# Digitalization in Music and Piracy\*

\*How has digitalization impacted the change piracy through music streaming platforms?

1<sup>st</sup> Efe Ali Mert  
ali.mert.bk.07@istek.k12.tr

2<sup>nd</sup> Recep Kaan Erdoğan  
kaan.erdogan.bk.09@istek.k12.tr

## I. RESEARCH QUESTION

How has digitalization impacted the change piracy through music streaming platforms?

## II. INTRODUCTION

Digitization is arguably the biggest change the music market has undergone over the last decades. In 2016, digital sales already accounted for more than half of the revenues of the music industry (Coelho and Mendes, 2019). It is an undeniable fact that music streaming platforms make it easier for us to access different genres of music with the digitalization of music. In addition to that, different genres of music carry diverse cultures as well. This means that accessibility of music has influenced other cultures with the other genres of music. Furthermore, music streaming platforms can be termed as platforms that include multiple music genres and artists and makes access to music easier by taking advantage of the digitalization of music. But everything comes with drawbacks(?). With the digitalization of music, piratation of music become more popular than usual. This study is going to analyze the change in piracy through music streaming platforms.

## III. SECONDARY RESEARCH

### A. Piracy Culture

Piracy culture is a phenomenon that has been around for centuries. The desire for something more affordable, even free, has always been a priority due to human utilitarianism. This has also impacted music culture with the digitalization of music. Ease of accessibility to music is affecting the phenomenon of ‘piracy culture’. The Norwegian music industry, labeled ‘Piracy kills music,’ was met with the counter-campaigns ‘Piracy kills no music’ and ‘Piracy creates music’. The same, of course, holds true for the popular Swedish torrent site Pirate Bay (see Allen-Robertsen 2013; Burkart and Andersson Schwartz 2015). (Nowak, Raphaël.) The digitalization of music contributed to the spread of unlicensed music worldwide. To obviate this situation, different platforms have been put forward, a few of which are Apple Music, Spotify, Weezer etc.

IB DP Digital Society

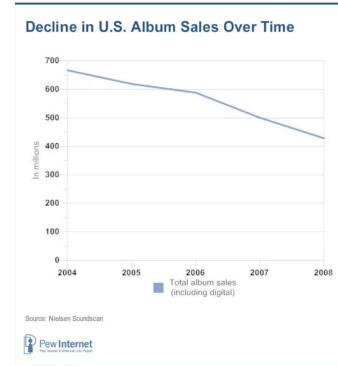


Fig. 1. Decline in U.S. Album Sales Over Time

### B. History of Pirate Music : Napster

With the emergence of MP3 files, which is an audio coding format developed largely by the Fraunhofer Society in Germany under the lead of Karlheinz Brandenburg, piracy of music has become more accessible than ever. (“Karlheinz Brandenburg”, 2025) Napster was an American proprietary peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing application primarily associated with the distribution of digital audio files. (“Napster”, 1999). With the emergence of an increasingly pirated music culture, album sales were directly affected. According to Nielsen Soundscan, there is a steady decline in album sales in the USA from 2004 to 2008, a 42.86 percent decline. Which started from approximately 700 million and ended up with nearly 400 million. Furthermore, the 2008 British Music Rights survey depicts that 80 percent of people in Britain wanted a legal P2P service. Also, it can also be observed that, according to the Recording Industry Association of America, there was a decrease of 8.2 million in music sales in the 10 years after Napster’s emergence. (Derek Thompson, Atlantic). After Napster, platforms like PeopleSound followed... In conclusion, Napster was a milestone to the pirate music industry. In addition to that, people confuse about which is ethic or pirate because of these platforms.

## IV. PRIMARY RESEARCH

### A. Data Collection 1 - Google Form Survey

- Have you ever used a music platform that you suspected or knew was pirated or unlicensed? - percent of the participants submitted yes and - percent of the participants submitted no.

- If yes, what was the name of that platform? - percent of the participants submitted that they used -, - percent submitted that they use - and - percent use other platforms.
- Are you still using it? - percent of the participants submitted yes and the other - percent submitted no.
- If you are still using it, for approximately how long have you been using it? The average of the participants answers are -
- Which legitimate, licensed music platforms (e.g., Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube Music) are you currently using or have used in the past? - percent of the participants submitted that they use - and - percent of them submitted that they use -
- Which platforms have you used that you were unsure about their ethical standing or licensing? - percent of the participants used - and - percent of the participants used -
- What was the primary reason for initially using a potentially unlicensed platform? (e.g., cost, accessibility, specific content) - percent of the participants answered -, - percent answered -, and - answered -
- What would be the main factor that would make you switch completely to a licensed platform? (e.g., lower price, better features, ethical concerns)
- On a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important), how important is it to you that artists are compensated fairly for their work?
- Did you transition from using an unlicensed platform to a licensed one? If so, what prompted the change? - percent of the participants answered -, - percent answered - and - percent answered -

#### B. Data Collection 2 - Street Survey

- Do you currently pay for any music streaming services? If so, which ones? - percent use Spotify premium, - percent use Youtube Music, - percent use other platforms and - percent don't pay for any music streaming services.
- Have you ever used websites or apps to download music for free without paying? - percent submitted yes and - percent submitted no
- What factors would make you consider paying for a music service instead of using free alternatives? - percent answered - and - percent answered -
- How important is music quality (e.g., high-bitrate, lossless audio) in your choice of platform? - percent answered -, - percent answered - and - percent answered -
- Are you aware of the legal consequences of using pirated music platforms? - percent answered yes, - percent answered no/ not much.
- Do you believe that using free music platforms affects artists' income significantly? - percent submitted yes and - percent submitted no.
- Would you be willing to pay more if you knew a larger percentage went directly to artists? - percent of the participants submitted yes and the other - percent submitted no.

- How has your music consumption changed over the past 5 years?
- Do you discover new music mainly through algorithms/recommendations or through personal connections? - percent submitted yes, - percent submitted no.
- What's the maximum monthly fee you would consider reasonable for unlimited music access? - percent of the participants find 5-10 dollars is reasonable, - percent find 10-15 dollars is reasonable and - percent don't find it reasonable at all.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The digitalization of music has changed the music industry a lot. In 2016, more than half of music incomes came from digital sales. Streaming platforms like Spotify, Youtube and Apple Music made music much more easier to access and share across a lot of cultures and countries. However, digitalization also increased music piracy as people wanted free music. Napster, a file sharing site, became a huge example by spreading pirated music and causing album sales to drop a ton. This raised questions about what is legal or ethical in music sharing and led to the creation of legal streaming services.

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