



Protecting Anime and Manga Creators Against Piracy

The Japanese Manga industry lost a shocking \$12.5 billion to piracy in 2023. Of this, about \$800 million was lost in May alone to English platforms streaming translated content illegally. Manga, the unique Japanese comics, is loved worldwide and key to the country's cultural exports. With 3D animations and AI-powered comic generation giving stiff competition, the industry's intensifying struggle against piracy has raised concerns about its future.

However, Japan isn't alone in struggling to protect its content from pirates. After a complaint from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPA), the US government has listed HiAnime as a threat to the industry. An MPA report listed "hianime.to" and "animeflv.net" as well. The association of media powerhouses called for support from all stakeholders to combat piracy and protect the industry's revenues and integrity. However, this may contrast with the findings of recent research.

Piracy Boosts Anime Consumption

While the US and Japan have sworn to curb piracy at all costs, a UK study has produced startling results. Strategy Professor Wendy Bradley of SMU Cox has explored how piracy could actually be benefitting the anime industry in a paper titled "Avengers Assemble! When Digital Piracy Increases Box Office Demand." Bradley, along with a team of co-authors, highlighted that creative goods demand is not as straightforward as it may seem. Do you recall Sheldon from *The Big Bang Theory* passionately proposing to Leonard to re-watch *Star Trek*? Similarly, the passion for a certain segment of anime movies is immense worldwide. This is exactly what Bradley proved.

The research highlighted that "spectacle" films, when watched via pirated websites, attract more audiences to theatres. This translates to as much as a 24% uptick in box office revenues. However, the same research found that story-driven movies are less likely to be watched in theatres once viewers have seen them on pirated platforms. This raises several questions:

- Should spectacle-based anime content be released on piracy platforms first?
- Should anime producers and distributors limit piracy prevention to story-based movies?
- And the most important one: How to combat piracy in the segment where revenues are being drained?

Choosing Between Bad and Worse

One thing clear from the report is that consumers prefer exceptional experiences. When a theatre visit offers those, viewers are ready for theatre viewing even if the movie is available for free. However, this may put undue pressure on anime creators to generate high-spectacle content only. This may also limit their client base as buyers of other genres drift away due to a lack of content.

Leaving out loopholes in the security posture to allow spectacle-based content to be copied and reproduced is achievable. In fact, this can be done on a piece-by-piece basis as well. However, its long-term impact on content consumption patterns is still unknown. How it will change expectations from other industries and lead to a mindset shift among consumers can only be speculated on. More importantly, will this not open doors for a more widespread attack? Instead, opting for more creative ways, such as releasing previews or behind-the-scenes, could help create curiosity among viewers. Anime creators and distributors are well aware of what can boost box office revenues.

Combating Anime Piracy

Piracy is unethical. It impedes creators from getting the dues of their hard work. Disrespecting the creator's efforts robs the industry of creative zeal and fairness in appreciation. As an anti-piracy organisation that stands for keeping intellectual property ownership with the rightful owners, Mediastalker recommends using innovative ways to bolster revenues and fight content theft.

Improving Content Traceability

Digital content spreads faster than wildfire. It can be difficult to trace. Leveraging blockchain-based distribution technologies can instil traceability through the distribution chain. A popular technique among anime creators is embedding dynamic watermarks in the content. These near-invisible watermarks work as a content owner's stamp. Advanced web crawlers identify the watermarks and report the source of illegal access by tracing the distribution pipeline. These are most popularly used to identify re-streaming via social media channels.

Trusting Artificial Intelligence

The Japanese Culture Protection Agency has stated that Manga and anime piracy is an epidemic. The agency has urged stakeholders to employ automated tools. Manga is based on comic strips. This is effectively non-motion content, much like eBooks. This type of content is often not streamed but distributed via downloadable links, which makes it harder to detect. Manually tracking eBook rights and moderating user access is next to impossible with the proliferating use of the internet across mobile devices. AI-powered site scraping to investigate text and images on various sites can uncover if they are hosting pirated content.

Preserving the Legacy of Japanese Manga and Broader Anime

Thanks to digital media, Manga fandom is growing worldwide. So much so, that the global Manga market is forecasted to reach \$53.5 billion, exhibiting a CAGR of 16.5% from 2024 to 2032. All processes, from creation to publication and distribution, require tremendous hard work from diverse stakeholders. For Japan specifically, the unique anime format has cultural significance. The popularity of merchandise, comic books, movies, and memes is a source of income for thousands of anime creators worldwide.

Mediastalker's proprietary solutions track unfair use and technology malfunction to protect the intellectual rights of all digital media owners. We are a member of prestigious organisations tackling piracy head-on, such as ACE (US) and AAPA (EU). We leverage cutting-edge technologies, such as AI/ML, and insights from global data to provide top-of-the-line security for all types of online assets.

Our AI-powered piracy antidote reduces vulnerability to digital threats and optimises returns for the hard work of all stakeholders. The end-to-end online asset protection solution ensures digital rights management, cybersecurity and content theft prevention. We also participate in diverse collective initiatives to elevate security and stay a step ahead of the pirates. [Speak to the experts](#) at Mediastalker to learn how our AI-powered digital asset protection can fortify security across your development and distribution pipelines.