

You're blasting the radio in the car when you hear a catchy song that just might become your back-to-school anthem. But you eventually get around to listening to Taylor Swift's entire album *1989* and immediately regret it. There's no way you're going to purchase the track on iTunes and support her celebrity, so you make the choice to convert a YouTube video featuring the song into an MP3 file. Was this legal? No. Was this ethical? Probably not.

In the past decade, the music industry has taken a hit from the numerous technologies that have developed, inadvertently popularizing the illegal distribution of copyrighted material. Listening to specific songs and even entire albums has become a very simple and convenient process, for people no longer have to go to music stores to buy entire albums, go online and wait for a CD to arrive, or spend any money at all to stream and download the exact content they want. In Sanjeev Dewan and Jui Ramaprasad's study, "Social Media, Traditional Media, and Music Sales," the researchers examine the effects of old and new media on music sales. They make the clear distinction between traditional media, primarily in the form of radio play, and new media, or more specifically the "blog buzz" type of social media, and their effects on the sales of a singular song versus an entire album. The major issue the results and conclusions of this study raises is that existing laws and systems do not adequately protect the rights of the owners of copyrighted information goods and the obvious ethical issues on the consumers' side has consequently become, for the most part, irrelevant.

The study shows that many factors contribute to the current decline of music sales. Traditionally, users found music through set outlets such as the radio or through recommendations made by friends and consumed it by purchasing artists' albums (101). This mainstream music tended to consistently receive radio play and, therefore, did well, accordingly,

in album sales. More recently, new technologies and sites, including Napster, Pandora, Spotify, Last.fm, and YouTube, all disrupted the music industry by giving users the power to share the information about music and the content itself with one another (101). New media allows the consumers to decide which music they want to popularize and is, therefore, typically more successful in garnering attention for niche music as opposed to mainstream. When users post about content to their personal blogs, they create blog buzz, which is not related to album sales but definitely capable of causing negative impacts to the sale of individual songs and less popular or lesser known songs on albums. Because blogs are a space where users can and do not only share opinions about music and other information goods but also share the materials themselves, the data reveals a significant negative effect on individual song sales. On a short-term level, while radio play positively affects the individual song and declines rapidly over time as well, song buzz on the Internet for single songs has mostly negative effects and becomes increasingly negative over time. In terms of albums, radio play and blog buzz both have consistently positive effects on sale (118). In short, old media was the way by which users learned about new products and services and how they then consumed them, while new media is driven by user-generated content that allows them to share the content more directly.

In the concluding remarks of the study, the researchers state what has become increasingly apparent for the music industry in this digital age. While it has become easier to spread the awareness of and advertise information goods and the amount of possible exposure of songs and albums alike have significantly increased, the free access to the content has become the inevitable result (120). People no longer have to go out to buy albums, order new CDs online, or even make use of the credit cards linked to their iTunes account because stealing music has become much more common and, to many, the norm. The study can also be applied to other

information goods that do not have the added complication of sampling content and the song versus album issue, such as films, print, and software.

While the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 was created to criminalize the dissemination of copyrighted materials, it does not do an adequate job in providing protection, for the law is only put into effect when a copyright holder is affected and creates a formal complaint. For example, when users are uploading a video on their YouTube accounts, they are prompted to state, not prove, that they are not illegally using copyrighted material and are using materials with the appropriate permissions. The rules are relatively lax, as the responsibility of burden lies with the copyright owners who must peruse the site for themselves to find any accounts of infringement. However, due to the number of YouTube users out there on the World Wide Web, it is quite difficult for a copyright holder to find and remove all illegally uploaded content without, at the very least, a team of hired people on the job. It is more or less impossible to rid all the accounts of infringed material out there on the Internet, due to the sheer size of the world population that is online.

In order to alleviate this wrongdoing against the music industry, and other similar industries of information goods, strict changes must be made to music-sharing sites and programs. Sites like YouTube must make the decision to better protect copyright holders for the process to run more efficiently and effectively. At the very least, the record companies and labels behind the certified accounts should continue to better encrypt their uploaded content files so that people are unable to rip them off even if they attempted to do so. Some companies have begun to use this tactic, making converting their song files more difficult, and for the average not-tech-savvy person, impossible. But to get to the root of the problem, media producers must first redefine what music distribution is and what they aim for it to be in the future. When they sell an

album or a song, are they selling the ownership of that particular song or album file to the consumer as well? If not, stricter encryption must be used in this case as well, so people are blocked from uploading their purchased music files despite the fact that they made the purchase. Some film companies release digital copies of their feature films along with the Blu-Ray or DVD versions so those who paid a bit extra for the Blu-Ray or DVD can save a file of the film to upload onto their mobile devices or tablets. These digital copies limit the number of times the user can save the files and come with an expiration date for completing the process. While this system is a good in-between to allow legal consumers to receive a better benefit, it is essentially similar to making an iTunes purchase of the film in accompaniment with the Blu-Ray or DVD.

In the end, who owns the content if it has been purchased in some way? What does having ownership of music content mean? Until resolutions to these questions come forward and are put into effect, the music industry will continue to take the hit, and the Taylor Swifts of the world will continue to be cheated by the mildest anti-fans.