

PRESS RELEASE

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STUDY INDICATES BITTORRENT PUBLISHERS DOMINATED BY PROFIT MOTIVE

A new study has found that the distribution of largely copyright files on major BitTorrent portals, such as The Pirate Bay, is dominated by about 100 publishers.

According to a new study, around 40 profit-making content publishers are responsible for 40 percent of BitTorrent downloads of content largely subject to copyright, such as TV series or Hollywood movies. Furthermore, 25% of downloads are associated to fake content published by either antipiracy agencies or malicious users.

The study "Is Content Publishing in BitTorrent Altruistic or Profit Driven?" is due to be presented at the AMC CoNEXT conference at the end of November. It was carried out by Ruben Cuevas, Michal Kryczka, Angel Cuevas, Sebastian Kaune, Carmen Guerrero and Reza Rejaie. Michal Kryczka is a Research Assistant at the Institute IMDEA Networks, where Reza Rejaie was a Visiting Researcher at the time of the study.

The authors conclude that "Content publishing in BitTorrent is largely driven by companies with financial incentive. Therefore, if these companies lose their interest or are unable to publish content, BitTorrent traffic/portals may disappear or at least their associated traffic will significantly reduce".

This large-scale study targeted Mininova and The Pirate Bay, the two leading BitTorrent portals, compiling data over three different periods from 2008-2010. The final dataset comprised over 300GB of data, more than 35 million IP addresses and more than 55,000 published files.

The study found that around 100 publishers upload two-thirds of the content files analyzed, which account for three-quarters of downloads. However, 30 % of this content (25 % of downloads) was fake, seeded by antipiracy agencies or malicious users. About half of the publishers of the remaining "non-fake" files maintain profit-driven websites.

According to the figures, around 40 profit-driven publishers publish 37 % of non-fake content and generate 54 % of this kind of downloads. Profit-driven publishers use portals like The Pirate Bay to promote their own websites, for instance by publishing a URL in BitTorrent file web pages, and thereby gain income through ads, donations or charging for VIP access. Some major content publishers motivated by altruistic reasons do exist, but accounted for only 11.5 % of the downloads analyzed.

The paper's conclusion provides real food for thought: "The removal of these financial-driven publishers (e.g. by antipiracy actions) may significantly affect the popularity of major BitTorrent portals as well as the whole BitTorrent ecosystem. If this happens, will BitTorrent survive as the most popular file-sharing application?"



The study will be presented at the AMC CoNEXT conference at the end of November

ABOUT INSTITUTE IMDEA NETWORKS

Institute IMDEA Networks is an international research institute supported by the Regional Government of Madrid and the European Union. The Institute brings together distinguished and young scientific researchers to develop cutting-edge science and technology in the field of networking. In order to ensure a truly international perspective, the Institute's working language is English. Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, the Madrid-based Institute works in partnership with leading businesses and scientists from around the globe. By generating new knowledge and understanding through its activities, the Institute supports the continued development of Madrid and Spain as a centre for international scientific and technological research.

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CONTACT - FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

We ask you kindly not to publish the following contact details. Thank you for your cooperation.

If you would like more information about this topic, please call or email:

Contact:
Rebeca De Miguel, Operations Support Manager

Tel: +34 91 481 6977
Email: rebeca.demiguel@imdea.org

General enquiries:
Tel: +34 91 481 6210
Email: info.networks@imdea.org

Institute IMDEA NETWORKS
Avda del Mar Mediterráneo, 22
28918 - Leganés - Madrid (Spain)

Press release

www.networks.imdea.org