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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 ACM 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 ACM CoNEXT conference at the end of November

Read more:

: [Is Content Publishing in BitTorrent Altruistic or Profit Driven](#)

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Some keywords that define us: 5G, Big Data, blockchains and distributed ledgers, cloud computing, content delivery networks, data analytics, energy-efficient networks, fog and edge computing, indoor positioning, Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, millimeter-wave communication, mobile computing, network economics, network measurements, network security, networked systems, network protocols and algorithms, network virtualization (software defined networks – SDN and network function virtualization – NFV), privacy, social networks, underwater networks, vehicular networks, wireless networks and more...

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