

## Psychological Reactance to Anti-Piracy Messages Explained by Gender and Attitudes

**Authors :** Kate Whitman, Zahra Murad, Joe Cox

**Abstract :** Digital piracy is costly to creative economies across the world. Anti-piracy messages can cause people to pirate more rather than less, suggesting the presence of psychological reactance. Gender differences in message reactance and the moderating impact of attitudes have not been explored. In this paper, we examine whether messages based on real-world anti-piracy campaigns cause reactance and whether this effect is explained by gender and attitudes. An experiment compares two threatening and one prosocial message against a control group, with changes in piracy intention from past behavior for digital TV/film analysed. The results suggest that the prosocial message is ineffective for both genders. However, the threatening messages have significantly opposing effects on men and women. One threatening message influences women to reduce their piracy intentions by over 50% and men to increase it by 18%. Gender effects are moderated by pre-existing attitudes, with men and women who report the most favorable attitudes towards piracy having the most polarised changes in piracy intentions. The results suggest that men and women process threatening messages differently and that the creative industries should take care when targeting their messages.

**Keywords :** piracy, reactance, persuasive-messages, TV/film, gender

**Conference Title :** ICSIPAC 2024 : International Conference on Social Influence, Persuasion and Attitude Change

**Conference Location :** Barcelona, Spain

**Conference Dates :** February 05-06, 2024