

# Is Your Pirated Premium Content Available on Telegram?

By Ted Rose, Chief Intelligence Manager, Synamedia



Telegram is a popular, free instant messaging platform that has been a hub for pirate activity since its inception. Users can easily find premium content on Telegram, because it is readily accessible in channels and groups, globally. While movies and drama are the most popular pirate content on the platform, it is also a way to distribute links to pirated streaming events, such as live sport events.

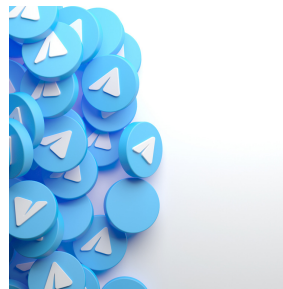
We recently undertook research on Telegram's role in video piracy in Asia. We started by looking at the reason why Telegram is so popular for pirate video content, and it comes down to these key factors:

## PRIVACY

Pirates can easily hide their identities on Telegram. Even users who are a member of a closed group or subscribe to a broadcast-only channel can't tell who the pirate is behind the content being served. In many instances, the content is actually served from a bot.

## EASE OF USE

Users really appreciate several aspects of Telegram's design. It is easy to navigate and find content. The content is validated so there is minimal risk of downloading malicious content and no need for technical understanding as there is with downloading torrents or files from cyberlockers.



## BROADCAST INSTEAD OF NARROWCAST

Unlike WhatsApp, Telegram allows unlimited subscribers to its channels and some contain millions of users. A group, which allows members to chat, can contain up to 200,000 individuals. Telegram supports large files, up to 2GB, making it suitable for video content.

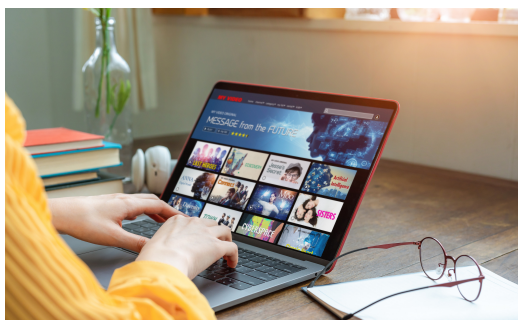
## SPEED

Pirated dramas and movies typically appear on Telegram just a few minutes after their release.

## SLOW TAKEDOWNS

The process of removing content on Telegram can take several days or longer and is nowhere near as automated as other social platforms such as Facebook and YouTube.

## HOW DO PIRATES MAKE MONEY ON TELEGRAM?

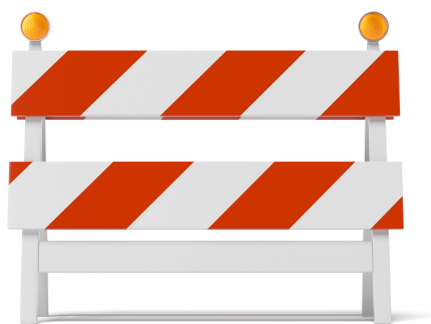


While Telegram has no ads, pirates have found workarounds to monetize their stolen content, including redirecting users to websites and cyberlocker sites with ads. Users can also pay to join closed Telegram groups, or they can pay a subscription to a pirate and in return get access to a catalogue with thousands of movies. This is done using M3U8 links that allow users to view linear channels on pirate IPTV networks. These links are often distributed on Telegram.

Pirates also make money by selling subscribers' stolen credentials to legitimate streaming services over Telegram. Users are willing to pay a fee that is cheaper than buying a legal subscription.



## ROADBLOCKS

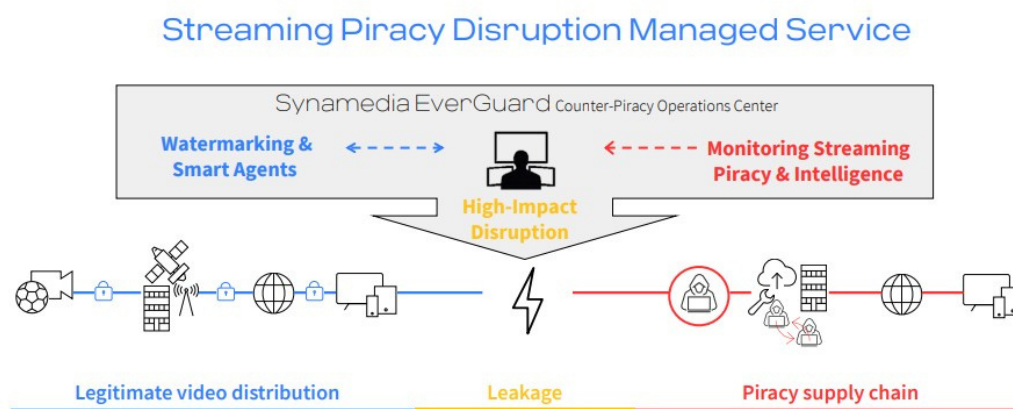


Many operators think removing illegal content from Telegram is as quick and as easy as it is for other social media platforms, but it's not. Telegram presents huge operational challenges. Through Facebook's Rights Manager and YouTube's CVP tool, service providers can get pirated content removed almost immediately. As Telegram is not a public company, Telegram doesn't seem to have the same level of motivation to take immediate action.

Some service providers have dedicated teams in place to detect and remove content found on Telegram. Some of these providers process tens of thousands of links per day. As this requires an extraordinary amount of manpower, without tools to automate, track and report on the impact of their efforts, it is difficult to justify the business case for this activity. A more cost-effective approach is to outsource this to a security specialist with relationships with Telegram.

Telegram's growth is relentless as it supplants most other forms of piracy consumption in the Asia Pacific region. A layered anti-piracy approach using AI and our large team of anti-piracy teams is the only effective way to monitor, disrupt and take down pirated content with a measurable return on investment.

Synamedia can also track the IPs to locate pirates' servers and work with service providers to block them or serve take down notices.



Synamedia's **Streaming Piracy Disruption (SPD)** is a managed service suite for detecting and disrupting streaming piracy across broadcast and OTT services. Using best-in-class monitoring techniques and operated by anti-piracy experts, SPD collects hard data and synthesizes it with human intelligence to effectively combat pirates.



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