
**Combatting Copyright
Infringement in the
Global Webtoon Industry:
White Paper**

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Executive summary

1. Introduction

While Korean cultural content has increasingly been in the spotlight in the global marketplace, the issue of piracy has also become a significant problem with content such as Korean webtoons and web novels being translated and distributed illegally. Copyright infringement has become widespread and the problem is increasingly getting worse, causing losses to profitability and stability of the industry.

This white paper sheds light on this issue by ascertaining the current state of copyright infringement in the webtoon and web novel industry across various channels of distribution both in and outside of Korea. It also aims to provide countermeasures and identify key approaches to uncovering, reporting, and preventing acts of piracy and illegal distribution.

1) Copyright infringement by language

Table 1 Infringement by language and region

Language	Details
English-speaking regions	Illegal translation groups actively upload webtoons by chapter on user-upload websites such as MangaDex and Bato.to, and share release updates via Discord. Many other illegal aggregator websites distribute illegally translated chapters through bots, and individuals post pirated content on their social media accounts.
Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking regions	As China’s “Great Firewall” has restricted global social media platforms, most illegal distribution takes place on Chinese social media platforms, including Weibo and WeChat. In Taiwan, most illegal translations are distributed in simplified Chinese with distribution through Taiwanese websites being relatively limited.

Indonesian-speaking regions	Illegally translated files and Google Drive links are actively shared in large volumes through instant messaging platforms or via personal blogs. In addition, many users profit illegally by accepting payments on local donation platforms such as Saweria, Trakteer, and Nyawer. These users quickly relocate and set up new accounts on other platforms if their accounts are suspended.
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2) Types of illegal translators

Table 2 Types of illegal translators

Justification	Details
Seeking attention	People who actively look to gain prominence in online communities related to pirated content.
Seeking financial gain as pseudo fans	People who reap profits from other readers by asking for donations for their work despite acknowledging that the copyright and profits belong to the original creator.
Providing access to titles unavailable officially	Those who translate content that has not officially been published and claim that pirated content provides more visibility for the title.
Aiming to lower costs for readers	People who believe there is a universal right to enjoying content. They claim that illegal distribution is justified as those with low purchasing power should also have the means to enjoy content.

2. Performance and progress

1) Content keyword searching across multiple languages

Searching online for pirated content is complex because there are multiple terms, keywords, and titles used to describe the same content even within the same language. By identifying and cataloging these search terms, efficiency can be enhanced in the automated search engine reporting process.

2) Establishing takedown methods by infringement type

(A) Illegal websites and user-upload platforms

- Types of infringement
 - Illegal platforms such as Newtoki (Korean) and 1stKissManga (overseas). Their servers are often based in other countries, which allows them to switch to new domains and reopen within hours of being taken down.
 - Individuals uploading illegally translated chapters on various social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.).
- Filing for takedown

DMCA notices can be sent to email addresses listed on each website and block results on search portals. For social media, platform-specific forms must be filled to place an official takedown request.

(B) Donation platforms

For platforms which collect donations from users, such as Paypal, Patreon, Trakteer, Saweria, and Nyawer, appropriate forms must be filled out in order to send a DMCA notice. The respective platform reviews the post or account involved and decides whether to delete the post and account.

3) Creating manuals for each language

Table 3 Language-specific response manuals

Language	Details
English-speaking regions	Upon discovery of pirated content being distributed on social media, a DMCA notice and a warning letter are sent to individuals while also raising awareness about the issue within the community involved.
Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking regions	As illegal content is mainly distributed via Chinese websites, reports are filed in collaboration with PODO Manhua. Currently enhancing the foundation for copyright infringement violations through continuous exchange of information.
Indonesian-speaking regions	Reporting templates were updates for local platforms. Social media and marketing campaigns were established to eradicate illegal distribution of pirated content.

Kakao Entertainment is collaborating with local offices and affiliates worldwide to improve awareness about copyright infringement and create a systematic enforcement strategy based on a comprehensive understanding of local languages and cultures.

3. Anti-piracy global task force key results

1) Quantitative

(A) Copyright infringements removed by Korean enforcement bodies

Table 4 Copyright infringements removed by platform (Nov. 24, 2021 - Apr. 23, 2022)

Platform	Cases blocked
Major social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.)	111,889
Google	311,438

Bing	78,861
Yandex	2,765

(B) Copyright infringements removed by global enforcement bodies

Table 5 Copyright infringements removed (Nov. 24, 2021 - Apr. 23, 2022)

Titles	Cases removed
107	1,853,412

(C) Added keywords for better automated reporting

Table 6 Number of keywords added by language

Language	Number of keywords
English	558
Simplified Chinese	408
Traditional Chinese	363
Indonesian	621

2) Qualitative

(A) Large-scale takedown on Discord

- Carried out a wave of large-scale takedowns across multiple piracy groups on Discord on Feb. 4, 2022.
- Reported approximately 30 popular English translation groups on Discord, leading to the shutdown of group servers housing more than 100,000 members.
- Servers which were not shut down during this takedown voluntarily deleted links connected to pirated content.
- The takedown served as a warning to the illegal translation community and raised awareness about copyright infringement.

(B) Response from blocked users on various social media platforms

- Some responded directly to DMCA notice emails, asking that their accounts be unblocked.
- Others expressed their disdain towards copyright strikes on their social media accounts.
- Users also halted the distribution of pirated content and deleted their channels.

4. Analysis: Data diagnosis and implications

1) Quantitative

Appointing personnel dedicated to global monitoring in specific languages led to the establishment of keyword lists used for specific titles in each language after five months. The number of reported cases on each platform increased significantly compared to before the introduction of these members.

Table 7 Reports filed before and after global monitoring

Platform	Before (Sep. 1, 2021 - Nov. 23, 2021)	After (Nov. 24, 2021 - Apr. 23, 2022)	Percentage increase (%)
Social media outlets	31,457	111,889	255%
Google	101,866	311,438	205%
Bing	41,282	78,861	91%

Yandex	352	2,765	685%
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2) Qualitative

- Illegal translators began to “flag” actively monitored titles in fear of getting their accounts banned due to copyright strikes.
- Platform migration patterns by language were discovered for blocked users.

5. Conclusion

1) Challenges in enforcing copyright

(A) Limitations of DMCA notices

- While the copyright holder can ask platform service providers to delete illegal content posted on their site by sending a DMCA notice, this request may not be processed if the email address provided by the illegal website is not properly maintained or is invalid.
- Each platform operates differently with respect to sending out DMCA notices, meaning the automation process must also be established specific to each platform.

(B) Limitations in Investigation

- As most illegal websites operate on servers located overseas, enforcement requires close international coordination in order to be effective.
- According to the Korean Act on Promotion of Information and Communications Network Utilization and Information Protection, the only measure of enforcement available is to block access to the website.
- Compared to other crimes, cases of copyright infringement are rarely investigated and resolved. Even when charges are filed, indictments are frequently suspended as identifying suspects is often difficult.

2) Improvements

(A) Stronger global anti-piracy response system established at Kakao Entertainment

- Improvements seen after the foundation of our global task force
 - Systemized language-specific reporting forms and enforcement strategies established
 - Search engine statistics by webtoon title and website added
 - Increased copyright awareness among fans and users of pirated content
- Improvements to be made
 - Technical measures that will help prevent illegal distribution on a fundamental level
 - Expansion of titles available in diverse languages and active local marketing

- Task-force-led communication efforts to raise awareness about the importance of eradicating copyright infringement