



INSIGHT: NORTHEAST ASIA

Operation Anime: the global crackdown on pirated Japanese entertainment



THE TAKEAWAY

On April 21, a [study](#) released by a Japanese anti-piracy trade group suggested that Japan lost an estimated C\$20 billion (2 trillion yen) in 2022 from the global online circulation of pirated Japanese entertainment content. As a cross-border issue, Japanese firms are working alongside similar groups and governments worldwide to crack down on the piracy of popular Japanese content such as anime, manga, and video games.

IN BRIEF

A [PwC study](#) commissioned and released on April 21 by Tokyo-based anti-piracy trade group Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA) revealed that in 2022, Japanese media companies lost an estimated C\$19.7 billion (1.95 trillion yen) to C\$22.2 billion (2.20 trillion yen) from pirated content circulated online. Compared to a [similar survey](#) conducted in 2019, the most recent figures indicate a fivefold increase in estimated damages.

CODA was formed in 2002, with support from the [Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry](#) and the

[Agency for Cultural Affairs](#), to promote Japanese content overseas and implement anti-piracy measures. Currently, CODA has [32 Japanese corporate members](#) including Aniplex, Shueisha, Studio Ghibli, and Toei, and is responsible for a range of [activities](#) to combat piracy, such as content monitoring and educational outreach.

From February to March 2023, CODA accomplished two major international achievements in its crackdown on Japanese content piracy. In China, authorities removed one of the largest pirated Japanese anime websites, [b9good.com](#), and investigated several individuals involved in website operations after receiving a formal complaint from CODA. CODA's filing of a criminal referral against pirating sites in Brazil led that country to implement "[Operation Anime](#)," an offshoot of the country's "Operation 404" created in 2019 to crack down on pirating websites. On April 20, CODA revealed that Brazilian authorities successfully shut down [36 websites](#) publishing pirated Japanese content.

IMPLICATIONS

CODA has ramped up its global efforts to crack down on piracy in part due to the international appeal of Japanese entertainment and the growing [ease of pirating](#) and distributing content online. For example, in February 2022, CODA signed a [memorandum of understanding](#) (MoU) with the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines to counter piracy. Similar MoUs have been signed with authorities from [Korea](#), [Hong Kong](#), and [China](#), to foster strategic alliances and counter the unauthorized distribution of content.

Such international co-operation mechanisms were expanded in April 2022 when CODA led the creation of the [International Anti-Piracy Organization](#) (IAPO) with members — including the U.S. Motion Picture Association, which encompasses popular streaming companies such as Netflix, Disney, and Paramount — hailing from 13 jurisdictions. IAPO [streamlines co-operation](#) to achieve “borderless anti-piracy measures” and collect piracy-related information, which is given to local authorities.

Japanese content companies have taken legal action at home and overseas to shut down pirating websites since 2017. In 2021, several petitions filed in the U.S. by Japanese companies prompted internet operators such as Google to [disclose information](#) about U.S.-based pirating firms. And [criminal proceedings](#) over piracy have unfolded in Japan: in 2019, the Philippines deported a Japanese national suspected of operating illegal websites from the country. The man was subsequently convicted and sentenced to three years in jail in Japan.

WHAT'S NEXT

1. Educational outreach for young audiences

In April, CODA launched a new project-based learning program called, “[digital etiquette for teens](#),” which consists of two 50-minute classes. CODA also provides learning materials for free on its [website](#). With the widespread use of smartphones and other devices with internet access, learning initiatives for those born into the internet age are bound to expand.

2. Improved global access for Japanese entertainment services

Non-English speakers abroad have less access to formal Japanese entertainment services, with many fan-run initiatives to translate and upload content in different languages. With the popularity of manga, anime, and other Japanese entertainment content throughout the world, Japanese companies could expand their reach in global markets and reduce pirating by creating accessible and efficient websites to accommodate the diversity of their audience.

3. Increased cross-border co-operation

Since 2017, Japan has tightened its [anti-piracy law](#) and escalated its domestic crackdown on [Japan-based servers](#). As a result, many individuals and groups have moved abroad to continue operating pirating websites while avoiding prosecution. The international nature of Japanese content pirating necessitates even greater co-operation, not only between like-minded anti-pirating organizations, but also between Japan and local governments and court systems abroad.

Original, anti-pirating manga shorts by popular artists can be accessed [here](#).

Produced by CAST's Northeast Asia team:
Dr. Scott Harrison (Senior Program Manager) scott.harrison@asiapacific.ca; Momo Sakudo (Analyst); Tae Yeon Eom (Analyst); Sue Jeong (Analyst).