

Pirate Creativity on Pirate Screens: The Localization and Distribution of Pirate Media in Pakistan

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Abstract

Though DVD stores are in decline today, historically they have been and, for many people, continue to be the dominant mode through which Pakistani consumers access films and other media. In *Shadow Economies of Cinema*, which this paper draws heavily upon, Lobato analyzes informal distribution systems for film and other media by approaching them “as a complex of networks with their logics, strategies, and ambitions” (3). This paper attempts to analyze the system through which film and other media is distributed in Pakistan – its structure, working, and limitations – by closely examining the role played by Pakistani CD and DVD store owners in producing and distributing pirated content, as well as the practices adopted in the Pakistani film industry to respond to the widespread presence of piracy. Using interviews with Pakistani DVD store owners and a case study of a videogame modification available in Pakistan called “GTA Karachi,” this paper studies piracy in Pakistan by examining the extent to which it is a formalized system, and its legal status. It analyzes how pirated content is transformed through the distribution process as it suffers audio and visual degradation, and as additional paratextual elements inform the ways in which it is interpreted. Finally, the paper looks at the potential for content to be created uniquely in the Pakistani pirate distribution system through a case study of GTA Karachi.

Keywords: Piracy; paratext; GTA; Karachi; localizing; audio; video; distribution

Introduction

Despite limited access to internet and technological innovation, there is a vast audience for international audio-visual content, including films, television shows, music, and games in Pakistan. A lot of such content is consumed through its pirated versions. Yet, piracy in Pakistan remains a largely understudied phenomenon. This is of concern given its sheer prevalence. In a country with median income too weak to allow the purchase of original content for a majority of the population, the distribution of significantly cheaper, pirated content remains widespread. From computer softwares to movies and television shows, pirated content is widely consumed in Pakistan (Khan). However, the pirate distribution process has its own implications for all media that passes through it. Such media is changed in the process, and the audience consuming it is

subject to an experience that is vastly different from that of the consumption of original media. Given that DVDs have been the main medium through which pirated content has been distributed for the past decade and a half, this paper seeks to advance an understanding of the structure of pirated DVD distribution in Pakistan and theorize the ways the pirated object is transformed. The paper will also investigate the unique potential for creating creative content that exists within pirate distribution.

Much of mainstream discourse on piracy starts with the premise that piracy is illegal, working to either theorize new ways to combat it or understand the reasons for its prevalence. A recent meta-analysis of research done in piracy, for example, preoccupies itself with explaining the motivations of individuals who take part in digital piracy while citing “possible revisions to antipiracy measures” as its main contribution, which could aid in “confronting the global threat of piracy” (Eisend 659). However, very little attention has been paid to the study of piracy as a distribution system with its own merits. There is also a dearth of work on the structures and mechanisms of pirate distribution systems, and their implications beyond financial loss for intellectual property right holders.

However, many scholars have attempted to theorize and understand informal film distribution. Lobato’s *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* studies the merits of informal film distribution without the previously mentioned focus on piracy’s illegality. Lobato introduces the notion of a “shadow economy” which exists in relation to the formal structure, a concept that this paper will develop in the context of Pakistan’s pirate distribution system. Furthermore, Brian Larkin provides a history of media in Nigeria in “Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Nigeria”, focusing on the introduction of radio broadcasting and cinema, and the creation of a local film industry, supported by the infrastructure of pirate film distribution already present in the region. The last few sections of this paper analyze a similar creative potential in the pirate distribution structure in Pakistan. Additionally, works like *Postcolonial Piracy: Media Distribution And Cultural Production in the Global South* and Ravi Sundaram’s “Pirate Modernity: Delhi’s Media Urbanism” analyze the cultural implications of piracy as well as the way it assists societies in the global south in accessing global modernity.

Methodology

The research in this paper is based primarily on visits to five different stores in Islamabad that stock and sell pirated media. The stores are located in different areas of the city. At these stores, I collected observational data about the products available, their quality, recent changes in the store, prices, and also conducted interviews with the employees. At each location, I tried interviewing the workers who were in charge of the sale of pirated DVDs. These interviews were semi-structured. The data collected from my observations and interviews informs my argument in the “pirate intermediaries’ section” and “enmeshed context” sections of this paper. For the latter part of this paper, I downloaded and played “GTA Karachi” (a modification of GTA San Andreas, released by Rockstar Games). Since I was already familiar with the original games, I spent several hours going through each to spot and document changes. I compared this with screenshots found on the game’s Facebook page and data given out by the developers to complete a comprehensive list of changes made.

Locating Piracy in Pakistan

The distribution of pirated media, while clearly illegal under Pakistani law (Naqvi), is rarely enforced for most of the pirated media distributed in Pakistan, claimed a DVD store owner. The result of this is that the sale of pirated media (including films, music, software, and video games) happens in brick-and-mortar stores across Pakistan; each sector in Islamabad usually has one present in its marketplace, for example. In no way do these stores attempt to hide their sale of the pirated product either; they are openly displayed on shelves that often run from floor to ceiling, visible from outside. In Pakistan, piracy is not something that needs to be hidden away. In fact, it is mainstream to the point where original or non-pirated versions of some content are rarely available, limited to only a few stores where special DVD box sets or original copies of certain video games are available.

There is no separate formal sector which solely distributes non-pirated or original media. Rather, it is the distribution of original media which is rarely present in the spaces where pirated media is sold. An exception to this is the sale of video games for the seventh generation of consoles, including the PS4, Nintendo Switch, and Xbox One. One shopkeeper reported that there are little to none pirated copies of games for those video game consoles which were released in the last decade and a half and predicted this to be the future for videogame console piracy. This seems to be the future for videogame piracy in Pakistan, given that recent videogame consoles are equipped to resist the hacking that enables software piracy on consoles (Husain). Additionally, the interviews revealed that most pirated DVD stores in Pakistan get their supply from the same location: Rainbow Center in Karachi, which mass produces pirated DVDs. This center is widely known, and in contact with DVD stores in every major Pakistani city. The DVD stores get a steady supply of pirated DVDs from Rainbow Center through a bulk order that is shipped across Pakistan, starting from Karachi and steadily moving up North through Lahore and then Islamabad. For the DVD stores, there is a set expectation of when each order will arrive, and what each order might contain based on new movie releases or specific orders that have been requested due to consumer demand. In this sense, there is a level of stability and structure to the distribution process across the entire country and the expectation that the supply will remain constant. These are all hallmarks of a system that is somewhat structured and formalized across the country.

These stores, despite technically taking part in illegal activities through the sale of pirated content, are almost never investigated by law enforcement and can thus exist within the public sphere with impunity. This gives the DVD stores, present on almost every street corner, a sense of normalcy and security, which does not exist in economies with a stronger formal sector when it comes to pirate distribution. DVD stores do not advertise whether they sell pirated DVDs or original DVDs. The implication that most, if not all, material will be pirated is obvious and unquestioned. Piracy in Pakistan is hence almost entirely a banal act, outside of the discourses of copyright laws and illegality which have dominated media and mainstream discussions of piracy globally. The act of purchasing a pirate DVD is as innocuous as that of purchasing groceries. One shopkeeper doubted whether any consumer in Pakistan cared about copyright infringement at all. He stated that the vast majority of people can afford pirated content because of the flat fee shared across all the pirated content sold which is just rupees 100 for a DVD, and rupees 150 for a videogame.

Unlike with foreign content, the piracy of Pakistani media can still be regulated as film and television producers do have a degree of control over their copyright enforcement through the release of official DVDs. Dramas produced by Hum TV, for example, are produced and sold in Pakistan with official box sets that can cost upwards of double what pirated DVDs would cost for the same, though this is still not comparable to the price a US imported DVD would have in Pakistan. 200-500 rupees worth of an original Hum TV disc set vs. the \$10-\$40 cost of the former, which would translate to 1500-4000, by a shopkeeper's estimate. Official DVDs are typically released right after a film finishes its theatrical run, as happens in countries such as the US. DVD store stocks are often checked by the publisher to make sure they have not acquired a copy of the DVD yet, pirated or otherwise. The interviewee also informed that after the DVD set is shipped (which can take years after the run of a Pakistani television show), the publisher continues to check on DVD stores to ensure that they are not stocking pirated copies of the content released by them. This means that the publisher is at the same time willing to overlook all the other pirated content stocked by DVD stores. Hence, even though copyright laws are present, they are only enacted to crackdown upon the piracy of Pakistani films and teledramas; all other pirated content – including Pakistani music – is freely distributed.

Lobato makes a distinction between formal and informal (which he uses interchangeably with shadow, i.e.: formal economy vs. shadow economy) systems of distribution. He identifies formality as “the degree to which industries are regulated, measured, and governed by state and corporate institutions” (4). He defines informal distributors as those that exist outside this sphere, “or in partial articulation with it” (4). Beyond this, he provides a list of features that identify each category, with formal films involving “revenue-sharing business models, complex systems of statistical enumeration and a ‘windowing’ releasing pattern driven by theatrical premier” with the informal/shadow sector primarily being characterized by “handshake deals, flat fee sales, and piracy” (4). However, Lobato warns against applying these definitions universally and intends the use of the terminology as mentioned above to be more of a heuristic device rather than a strict definition. This is in recognition of the many diverse ways in which informal media economies operate around the globe.

This warning is apt for Pakistan, where pirate distribution exists in a unique formulation between formality and informality. Its status as an illegal practice by the law which qualifies it as an informal distribution mechanism is complicated by the lack of policing and sheer normalcy with which piracy operates in Pakistan. The fact that a structure of countrywide distribution exists which allows DVD store owners certainty in terms of their supply, and the lack of a separate formal sector which deals exclusively in unpirated content make it appropriate to consider Pakistan's informal distribution system a complex, well-developed system of its own, regardless of its legal status.

Paratexts and Interpretation

This section and the one that follows broadly argue that the changes in the pirated object, as well as the para-texts created and modified by pirate distribution, affect the way that the audience interprets the pirated object. It affects the context in which the interpretation happens, the social-cultural connotations attached to the object, as well as the different features of the object. For media, this means that the larger social context and the specific situation of consumption heavily

affect how a text is interpreted, and that multiple different interpretations are possible. Jonathan Gray argues that paratexts guide the audience towards a particular interpretation. According to him, “paratexts often tell us how producers or distributors would prefer for us to interpret a text, which audience demographics they feel they are addressing, and how they want us to make sense of their characters and plots” (72). Paratexts give you the information about a text which is used in the process of interpreting it. He emphasizes the impact of the aforementioned in reference to how advertisement, trailers, online discussions, and reports from the set affect the way people consume and understand a text. He argues that “such entities change the nature of the text’s address, each proliferation either amplifying an aspect of the text through its mass circulation or adding something new and different to the text” (3).

The transformations that piracy brings out in the media hence affect the process of interpretation; piracy results in original contexts being entirely dispelled or reconfigured. The succeeding section analyzes different ways in which the pirated object is transformed and how the original paratexts change as the process of pirate distribution attaches new paratexts and meanings to the object.

The Transformation of Media Under Pirate Distribution: Audiovisual Degradation

When a picture is copied multiple times, each subsequent copy is likely to lose some detail, resulting in lower quality with each copy. If done enough times, you can end up with a picture that is different from the original. Similarly, with piracy, each step of the distribution process alters the media in some way. This process occurs on multiple levels at multiple stages during the process of piracy. Larkin argues that pirated videos have their own particular aesthetic which is “marked by blurred images and distorted sounds” (14). These come together to create a “particular sensorial experience of media marked by poor transmission, interference, and noise” (14).

This loss of quality can be very literal. Official DVD releases have a set format and high quality. The high video and audio quality as intended by the directors and producers is preserved in the DVD release. Pirated films, however, are typically available in several different “prints”, a DVD store clerk in Islamabad revealed. The word “print” here, as used by DVD store owners, refers to varying audio and visual qualities of a pirated DVD of the same content, with high-quality prints being closer to the version in the official DVD. When a film first releases in the cinema, pirated DVD producers immediately supply the first print even before the film has an official DVD release. This is colloquially referred to as the “cam” or “camera” print as the video file in these pirated DVDs is a recording someone has made from their camera while viewing the film in a cinema and then shared online, typically to a P2P file-sharing site. This is the lowest quality of the prints available. Given that it is recorded on a camera, a lot of visual detail is lost. The colors change massively; the darks become darker, the vibrant colors become more vibrant, often more painfully so. The original resolution of the film is completely ruined; first, the distance between the camera and the screen limits how much of the film’s detail can be captured, second, the camera used to record has low resolution. This means that the picture is less sharp, its edges less defined, and any text harder to read. The fact that you are viewing a recording of a congregation with other people is obvious too; it is common for people to walk in front of the camera and

block the screen. Sometimes the heads or shoulders of people are visible throughout the movie even when they are seated, obscuring parts of the cinema screen.

Besides this, the audio quality tends to suffer immensely since the camera is not only situated far from the cinema's speakers but because the sounds of the audience are recorded too. Often, the sound of applause drowns out the audio of the movie during key scenes. Even with a quiet audience, sound quality is lost. Cheap microphones attached to cameras fail to capture detail in the sound and often miss out on low volume sounds completely. High volume sounds – such as gunfire or explosions often become distorted. Sounds of the lower end of the frequency spectrum (such as the low thud of a kick drum or the bass track in the movie's soundtrack) become muddy, while higher-pitched sounds turn shrill. The acoustics of the cinema do the sound no favor either, adding a lot of reverb and echo that is reproduced and increased whenever the recording is replayed on any other speaker.

The experience of watching a low-quality print can be seen as a degraded viewing experience, given all the audio and visual distortions mentioned above. Yet, quite a few DVD stores reported that many consumers impatiently await the release of a camera print since the excitement of seeing a highly anticipated film trumps the aforementioned concerns. Eventually, a “master print” is released. This happens when the film or television show gets its own official theatrical release which tends to have the same video content and quality as the official DVD release since the suppliers get their hands on the original video file and begin to produce copies, a DVD store employee explained.

Other issues exist where the pirated DVD may fail to play in a DVD player, likely due to encoding issues with the video file, incorrectly burned discs, or discs getting scratched and damaged in the process of transportation. Thus, the purchase of a film is always accompanied by the question, “*Kya yeh DVD chalegi?*” (“Will this disc work?”). It is very common for DVD store owners to bring in policies to mediate issues customers may have with DVDs not working, where they allow customers to replace any non-working disc with another for free. Often, DVD store owners have a small TV screen setup along with a DVD player and any necessary video game consoles to test DVDs before they're sold. This process is also often futile since pirated discs may work differently in different DVD players. In this sense, there is a constant source of anxiety attached to the purchase of pirated media in Pakistan. People in Pakistan may frequently purchase pirated media, but they do not always trust it.

The Transformation of Media under Pirate Distribution

Piracy results in the removal of media from the numerous paratexts and contexts in which it might originally have been understood. In this section, I analyze how pirate distribution removes or changes different aspects of the context and paratexts of media content, thereby influencing how we interpret them.

The cover art of the original DVDs is not only a clear indication of the content that is promised inside, but it is also a carefully curated product in and of itself. It is carefully constructed to help in “creating a life, character, and meaning for all manner of products and services” (Gray 4). For example, the DVD cover of any software would illustrate the purpose of the software, its

features, and the contexts in which it is used. The cover of a video game or movie might indicate the kind of experience one can expect using stylistic elements like the font used on the cover, the characters represented, the color scheme used, and other aspects of its design. Pirated DVDs in Pakistan often alter this experience completely, sometimes featuring creative attempts by the producers to create cover art of their own to sell the pirated content.

Figures 1 and 2 show the front and back cover of a pirated compilation of software. The front cover is radically different from the typical advertisement style for Adobe Photoshop and VLC media player; none of the original logos are present, and there is no obvious attempt at communicating the individual function of each software package. However, that is not to say that there is no original attempt at marketing the product. It announces that the product being sold is of “Public Demand,” of the “ultimate typing series,” and of the latest variety, “2018” (the year in which the CD was likely produced).

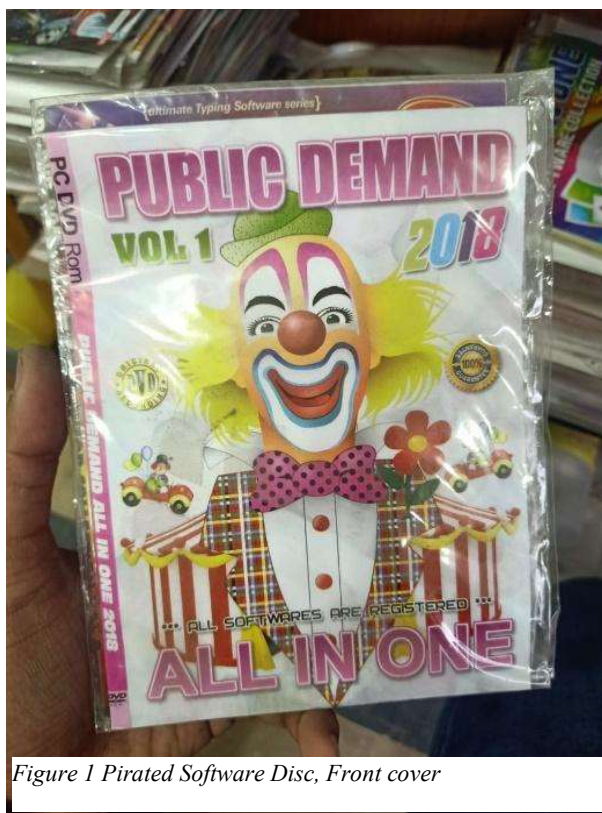


Figure 1 Pirated Software Disc, Front cover



Figure 2 Pirated Software Disc, Back Cover

The software on this pirated DVD are advertised as being “publicly demanded.” Here, the designer of the cover art is not communicating the purpose of the product as the original producer might have, who may have felt the need to differentiate the product from its competitors and encourage the use of Adobe Photoshop versus other image editing programs, for instance. In contrast, the designer of the cover art for the pirated product knows that using pirated Photoshop is already the norm, as are all the other programs included in the disc. If there are any alternatives, they are included too in the disc. The phrase “publicly demanded” is a very apt description, then. In this way, piracy also creates a new and innovative product since software packs like this are not typically sold internationally. The software is also described as all registered, which implies that each software has an additional third party “crack” included that modifies the installation to ensure that each installed software behaves like an original or a registered copy and not a limited or unregistered one which would have limited functions.

It is a little harder to make sense of some of the other phrases and images on the cover of the pirated DVD shown here, since they refer to things that may not directly relate to the product. However, they still serve to create associations for any potential buyer. The tagline “ultimate typing series” indicates that the software included in the DVD require the use of the keyboard, which communicates to potential buyers that the word processing programs included here, for example, are typically those associated with typing intense tasks. The ESRB sticker on the cover is also part of this attempt at creating familiarity as videogames are typically rated by the ESRB content advisory board based on the maturity of the content included to ensure that children stay away from adult content. Anyone who has purchased a videogame is familiar with ESRB symbols. By attaching an ESRB symbol here, the creator of the cover art tries to increase the credence of this original packaging of software by advertising it as an authentic product. With the core information conveyed with text, the clown completes the cover art. If nothing else, the animated imagery of the clown makes the product stand out in comparison to similar pirated software packages and lends the surrounding text and disc jacket an vibrant color scheme as well. Thus, there is a clear logic in the inclusion of what may seem like very disparate elements initially. The paratext is completely changed from the original to something decidedly more creative, and one which can speak to its consumers’ associations.

Even if the pirated DVD directly copies the box art of an original film or software, the complete content promised on the cover is rarely found on the pirated DVD. Original DVDs typically include a few extra features, such as subtitles, trivia games, behind-the-scenes, interviews of the cast and crew, and so on. These are meant to make the purchase of a DVD worthwhile even for consumers who have already seen the film in cinemas but these features are rarely present in pirated DVDs. Pirated DVDs will often include a menu that allows the selection of the film, but any options for bonus content likely do not work. The fact that this content will not be present is common knowledge. DVD store owners and clerks widely acknowledge that these extras will not be present. This includes instances where certain parts of the film may be missing too, such as an advertised “director’s cut” of Star Wars turns out to be the original cut mistitled, or the promise of “One Tree Hill’s Fourth Season” on the DVD cover falls short with a disc that omits the last few episodes or has the last few episodes that are corrupt. In each of these cases, there is a discrepancy between what you intended to view with the purchase of a DVD advertising content of a specific kind, and what you end up getting. These differences can be drastic, for example, if a television season is missing episodes, it could change the way that the linear narrative or the plotline is perceived, or they can be relatively marginal, for instance if some scenes are cut or

different from the cut that was advertised on the DVD. In either instance, though, the viewership experience is transformed.

In conclusion, in the purchase and viewing a pirated film in Pakistan, the consumer is made to interact with its pirated nature, as the form and content of the media changes as a result of the distribution process. As Ravi Sundaram argues, pirated media goods in Urban Delhi “took on a life as counterfeits, fakes, or copies, or in popular language, the ‘local’ or ‘duplicate’ (106). Pirated media in Pakistan takes on such a life of its own as well.

GTA Karachi as a Case Study of Pirate Creativity

Video game modifications (colloquially referred to as “mods”) are separate from complete video game releases. The creation of modifications, or modding, as it is called, can cover a wide range of actions. Any “process of altering, adding to, or deleting video game code to change the way that a particular game is played” qualifies as video game modding (Scacchi 3). Modifications can be of many kinds. Some of them can change a game completely, creating new and diverse user experiences. Others may change only small things about a game. Change as small as user interface changes are enough to qualify a mod.

GTA Karachi is a modification of the popular Grand Theft Auto (GTA) videogame series, published by Rockstar Games. It is part of a group of other modifications with similar titles such as GTA Punjab, GTA Lahore, GTA Dera Ghazi Khan. All of these are modifications of the Windows releases of GTA games released between 2000 and 2008, especially GTA San Andreas and GTA Vice City (since these tended to have graphical requirements low enough to be able to run on most computers).

These were not extensive gameplay-changing modifications; the game was still played the same way, and the story did not change. Rather, these mods were “reskins” of the original game. A mod that works by reskinning the game does not change any of the game’s code or gameplay mechanics. They change the game’s artwork with something designed by the mod maker. This means that certain objects and entities in the videogame world take on a new appearance even though they may act the same way they did before. So, for instance, you could make an AI car programmed to appear driving down the road seem like a different car, or you could change your own player model, or the signs and advertisements you might see driving down a suburban road (Scacchi).

The cost of producing a video game modification is far lower than the cost of actually making a video game from scratch since modification still uses the engine programmed for the videogame, especially if the modifications are small-scale. This is especially true for reskin modifications, where the changes may just relate to the creation of artwork and music with minimal coding.

The modder who made GTA Karachi is not affiliated with an organization and it is hard to discern who made the game at all. There is no clear mark of ownership, in-game or online. The game is freely available online, and numerous video tutorials exist that guide its installation. There is also a YouTube channel that has a video depicting a “teaser” of the game as well as the

name that might as well be of the modder (“GTA Karachi: Teaser”), but it is hard to definitively say who the author is due to the lack of any verification.

Piracy is helpful to the modding community in this regard. Piracy makes the software needed to create artwork and reprogram games readily available at affordable rates, so the production of mods is possible. Moreover, piracy presents a unique opportunity in Pakistan, where it also makes the distribution of these modifications possible in a manner that allows modders to gain a profit. In the US, modders are not allowed to earn a profit from the modifications that they produce. The law dictates that the mods produced by users are owned by the publishing company. Modern End User License Agreements signed upon the installation of video games also confirm this. In Pakistan, selling a DVD can be as simple as handing over a supply to a DVD store for a flat fee, who make it available to the customer. There are no legal processes the modder has to go through in order to publish their game for sale, nor do they have to worry about a cease-and-desist order since international publishers do not look to Pakistan for profits in video games anyway.

Thus, similar to Larkin’s argument that the infrastructure of pirate distribution systems allowed the creation of a video film industry in Nigeria, where the media technologies “are more than transmitters of content [as] they represent cultural ambitions, political machineries, modes of leisure, relations between technology and the body, and, in certain ways, the economy and spirit of an age,” I argue that a similar potential exists here in the production and in the game structure of GTA Karachi.

The Experience of a Virtual Karachi

The changes between GTA San Andreas (the original, unmodified game) and GTA Karachi are mostly only reskins. The mod skips the original game’s introductory sequence, so there is no introduction to the original plot or context of the game left. It starts with the main character in the fictional US state of San Andreas but with some very clear differences.

They are all aesthetic changes, likely inspired by the lived experiences of the modder as a resident of a Karachi neighborhood. The clothing of the characters is changed to match things that seem more recognizably Pakistani or typical of Karachi; the normally blue-clad policeman of San Andreas now sports the black shirt and khaki pants of the Sindh police while ordinary bystanders wear green. Political slogans are also present here, on a character’s T-shirt and graffitied on to the back of a store. The high-quality portrait of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan’s founder, edited into a building in the game gives a way a hint of the modder’s nationalistic pride as well. A roadside vendor advertises cheap burgers with his sign rendered in Urdu, while a woman in a kurta stands tall next to a Habib Bank sign.

These visual elements are things that an ordinary person living and commuting in Karachi might see on the daily. The modder does not focus on including visuals of landmark monuments, instead including objects that are more mundane and recognizable. This is a deliberate choice. The GTA games are designed as “open-world” games that use the mechanics of an “open-world” as part of its structure. This means that players are not forced to linearly experience certain parts of the game before others and are free to approach virtual cities and landscapes as a sandbox and

do as they please. By inserting symbols that signify the everyday life of someone who lives in Karachi into the cityscape of San Andreas, the modder creates a virtual Karachi. Though it is not an exact replica of the city, but perfect replication of an original has never been the essence of piracy. This replica is still effective in creating a sense of familiarity between the user and the virtual world.

James Paul Gee argues that video games, especially those offering choice and exploration, feature the interplay of three different kinds of identities. There is your real identity – who you actually are as a person playing a game, your virtual identity – the identity of the virtual character you inhabit, and your projected identity – your virtual identity seen as a projection of your real identity. The actions a person chooses to take with their virtual actor provide them with a new history, identity, and context; these are all part of their projected identity (54). In any ordinary GTA game, your virtual identity would be that of a gangster exploring and committing criminal acts in a Western city. This is a context that is recognizable because one may have seen it in movies, but nevertheless not a Pakistani context that a Pakistani gamer would be able to connect to. GTA Karachi thus serves a localizing function. The projected identity of a Pakistani user playing GTA Karachi would involve the creation of an identity that is far closer to home, that is identifiable through the clothing you wear, the signs you see driving by in the street, and the uniform of the policemen you come into conflict with.

Conclusion

Piracy in Pakistan can thus be seen as in existing a state where it is illegal yet so normalized that the illegality ceases to be a defining characteristic. Besides this, piracy in Pakistan has characteristics of a formal business structure. In addition, piracy transforms objects as they are transported through pirate distribution systems, which in turn influences how people interact with and make sense of pirated objects as new paratexts are created and as the media suffers audio and visual degradation. Piracy in Pakistan also inheres it in a special potential for creativity, as has been realized by the maker of GTA Karachi, creating a unique experience that is far more localized. Given the sheer prevalence of piracy in Pakistan, this paper helps provide a complete picture of the Pakistani viewership experience, something that piracy as a system inevitably shapes.

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