

# Dynamics of the Pirate Market in Lubumbashi: Analysis of Causes and Consequences

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**Abstract:** *The pirate market in Lubumbashi constitutes a major informal activity driven by poverty, unemployment, and the lack of economic opportunities. It enables residents to meet their immediate needs by providing quick and accessible income despite the absence of official regulation. This practice develops under precarious conditions, generating unsanitary environments, health risks, and unfair competition for formal traders. Participants, often young and with low levels of education, perceive these activities as necessary for economic survival, despite being aware of the social and health risks involved. The study shows that economic motivations outweigh moral considerations, explaining the persistence of the pirate market. Identified risks include diseases, accidents, traffic congestion, and impacts on local development. The perception of its effect on social well-being is ambivalent, combining economic benefits with negative consequences. The analysis reveals that regulation and supervision by authorities are essential to limit negative effects. Gradually integrating these actors into the formal economy could reduce risks while maintaining their livelihoods. Awareness-raising and control measures are necessary to secure this activity. This research sheds light on local socio-economic dynamics and provides insights for appropriate public policies. It highlights the importance of reconciling economic survival, public health, and sustainable urban development.*

**Keywords:** Informal Economy, Pirate Market, Urban Livelihoods, Public Health Risks, Sustainable Urban Development

## 1. Introduction

The city of Lubumbashi, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is facing a concerning phenomenon: the illicit sale of goods, known as the pirate market. This phenomenon, intensified by the economic crisis of the 1990s, represents a major challenge for both authorities and the local population.

Informal activities develop under precarious conditions, generating unsanitary environments and health risks. They also affect the formal economy by creating unfair competition and weakening established businesses. Internal migration further fuels the growth of this informal sector, worsening social and economic vulnerability.

Residents often resort to it out of necessity, seeking to meet their basic needs. The pirate market also raises issues related to security, health, and living standards. It creates a vicious cycle in which poverty, unsanitary conditions, and crime reinforce each other.

This study aims to analyze the causes and consequences of this phenomenon in order to better understand its social, economic, and health implications. It also seeks to propose solutions adapted to the challenges of Lubumbashi.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations

This section aims to clarify the main terms used in this study in order to ensure a shared and precise understanding of the concepts addressed. It establishes a solid conceptual framework.

### 2.1. Definition of the Pirate Market

Benjamin (2017) considers the pirate market as an informal commercial space where goods are sold without legal

authorization. According to him, this phenomenon generally emerges during economic crises or major social disruptions. He emphasizes that these markets escape the control of authorities and fiscal regulations. These practices enable actors to meet their needs despite a difficult context.

Carmes (1993) defines the pirate market as an alternative economic activity that develops in response to the State's inability to regulate and supervise trade. He stresses the role of poverty and unemployment in the expansion of these markets. Participants often engage out of necessity rather than strategic choice. This definition highlights the structural and functional nature of the phenomenon.

Mwepu (n.d.) describes the pirate market as an informal sector offering products at affordable prices but under precarious conditions. It attracts vulnerable populations seeking quick income. The author notes that this market generates significant health and social risks. Thus, it constitutes both an economic solution and a source of urban disorder.

Kabela Masaka (2012) views the pirate market as an illicit practice that weakens the formal economy and public order. He emphasizes that vendors evade taxes and commercial standards, creating unfair competition. He also highlights its impact on taxation and local development. According to him, these activities reflect institutional weaknesses and insufficient regulation.

Cimanga Ndola (2012) defines the pirate market as an informal commercial activity that strongly influences the social and economic behavior of young people. He observes that early exposure to this market normalizes illegality and promotes risky behaviors. The study shows that this phenomenon has psychological and social consequences.

This definition emphasizes the human and behavioral dimension of the pirate market.

From our perspective, the pirate market can be understood as a pragmatic response to immediate economic needs in a context of precariousness and insufficient regulation. It represents both an opportunity for vulnerable actors and a challenge to public order and public health. We believe that this phenomenon is not limited to illegality, but also reflects social, economic, and behavioral dynamics specific to Lubumbashi. Thus, our approach aims to analyze the motivations, risks, and consequences of the pirate market in order to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding.

## 2.2. Research Theories

In this section, we present the theories and models that support the analysis of the pirate market. These theoretical frameworks provide tools to understand the motivations of actors, the economic and social dynamics, as well as the behavioral and structural implications of informal practices.

### 2.2.1. Motivation Theory

Motivation theory posits that human behavior is guided by the pursuit of satisfying needs and desires. According to Maslow (1943), these needs can be organized hierarchically, from basic physiological needs to self-actualization. This hierarchy influences how individuals prioritize their actions and decisions. In the context of the pirate market, primary needs such as food and income strongly motivate participation.

Economic behaviors within the pirate market can be understood through this theory. Individuals first seek to satisfy their essential needs, which explains their involvement in informal activities that provide quick and accessible income. Motivations are not limited to financial gain; social security and food stability are also priorities. Thus, motivation theory helps explain why the pirate market persists despite risks and sanctions.

This theory also highlights the importance of appropriate interventions to influence behavior. Public policies aimed at meeting basic needs can reduce the attractiveness of the informal market. By offering secure and profitable alternatives, economic activities can be redirected toward legal practices. Human motivation, driven by the satisfaction of needs, remains a key factor in understanding economic choices.

### 2.2.2. Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior, developed by Ajzen (1991), explains that behavioral intentions are determined by three factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived control. In the context of the pirate market, individuals assess the benefits and risks before engaging in informal activities. Their decisions are influenced by the perceived economic gains and potential sanctions.

This theory also helps to understand the influence of social norms on the informal market. Interactions with family, peers, and the community shape attitudes and either reinforce or discourage certain practices. Informal vendors may perceive the pirate market as socially acceptable, especially when this

practice is common in their environment. Thus, subjective norms play a central role in the persistence of the phenomenon.

Perceived control strongly influences participation in the pirate market. Individuals assess their ability to carry out the activity successfully despite risks such as sanctions or competition. The higher the perceived control, the more likely individuals are to engage in the informal market. This theoretical approach provides a useful framework for analyzing the motivations and behaviors of actors in precarious economic contexts.

## 2.3. State of the Art (Literature Review)

This section reviews existing research and studies related to the pirate market and informal trade. It helps identify established knowledge, gaps in the literature, and observed trends, in order to situate this study within the current scientific context and justify its relevance.

Ngoie Kafula (2010) examined the resurgence of the pirate market in Lubumbashi in connection with political and economic crises. He emphasizes that instability has fostered the development of informal activities. The author recommends appropriate economic regulation measures. This analysis highlights the importance of the socio-economic context in understanding this phenomenon.

Kabela Masaka (2012) analyzed the pirate market as an illicit activity affecting public order and taxation. The study highlights tax evasion and unfair competition toward formal businesses. It emphasizes the role of authorities in regulation and control. These findings demonstrate the need for effective institutional supervision.

Cimanga Ndola (2012) examined the impact of the pirate market on youth, revealing negative effects on their psychological state and social behavior. Exposure to these practices promotes the normalization of illegality. The author highlights the need for educational and awareness programs. These results emphasize the social and psychological dimension of the phenomenon.

Kasong A. Kund (2013) studied the causes of the proliferation of the pirate market, pointing to the lack of formal commercial spaces. The absence of legal structures pushes vendors toward informal activities. The author recommends the creation of regulated commercial zones. The study shows that urban planning and economic regulation are essential to limit this phenomenon.

## 3. Presentation of the City of Lubumbashi

Lubumbashi, the second-largest city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is the main economic and industrial center of Haut-Katanga. Its dense population and commercial vitality make it a major hub of exchange for the province and beyond. The city attracts migrants seeking economic opportunities, contributing to a highly competitive labor market. This urban dynamic encourages the emergence of informal practices such as the pirate market.

The pirate market in Lubumbashi mainly develops along avenues, in front of shops, and at bus stops. Goods are sold without authorization, often under precarious conditions. These activities escape the control of authorities and contribute to the unsanitary state of public spaces. Nevertheless, they constitute a means of survival for many residents facing economic hardship.

The consequences of these informal markets are multiple and complex. Economically, they create unfair competition for formal traders and deprive the State of tax revenue. Socially, they influence youth behavior and increase the risks of delinquency and accidents. From a health perspective, unsanitary conditions promote the spread of diseases and pose a major public health challenge.

Understanding the dynamics of the pirate market in Lubumbashi requires analyzing its causes and consequences. Poverty, underemployment, and the lack of effective regulation are key factors driving this phenomenon. Studying these dynamics helps propose appropriate solutions to integrate informal actors into the formal economy. It also highlights issues related to urban regulation and the protection of public health and well-being.

#### 4. Methodological Framework

The study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach, allowing for the measurement and analysis of participants' perceptions, behaviors, and motivations regarding the pirate market in Lubumbashi. This approach facilitates the evaluation of the causes and consequences of the phenomenon, as well as the identification of general trends within the population.

It relies on the collection of empirical data directly from the actors involved, in order to obtain reliable and representative information. The objective is to combine scientific rigor with an understanding of local socio-economic realities.

The research targets residents of Lubumbashi involved in informal trade. The sample consists of 40 participants, including 15 men and 25 women, aged between 15 and 44 years. Participants have varying levels of education and experience in the informal sector, reflecting the diversity of socio-economic profiles. This selection provides an overall view of the dynamics of the pirate market while ensuring that the results reflect diverse local realities.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires, including both closed and open-ended questions on the benefits, risks, motivations, and perceptions related to the pirate market. This technique standardizes information and facilitates statistical analysis. The questions also address the impact of the pirate market on social well-being and security, linking observations to measurable and comparable variables. The use of questionnaires ensures reliable data collection suitable for quantitative analysis.

Data analysis is based on descriptive statistics (frequencies and proportions) and the chi-square test, in order to test hypotheses related to the causes, motivations, and consequences of the pirate market. This method helps identify

general trends and significant relationships between the variables studied. The results are presented clearly and concisely, allowing for precise conclusions about the dynamics and impacts of the pirate market in Lubumbashi.

#### 5. Presentation of Data and Analysis of Results

The sample studied consists of 40 participants, including 15 men and 25 women, showing a slight female predominance. This distribution allows for capturing the diversity of economic perceptions and behaviors within the population. Gender influences how individuals perceive and utilize the pirate market to meet their needs. These differences are important for understanding the social and economic dynamics at play.

Participants' ages range from 15 to 44 years, with a majority being single, but also including some married, divorced, and widowed individuals. This diversity reflects varying levels of responsibility and experience in resource management. It shows that engagement in the pirate market affects both youth and adults facing different economic realities. Family status can thus influence perceptions of the benefits and risks associated with this activity.

Experience in informal activity ranges from 1 to 14 years, with many participants having little or no formal education. These combined characteristics indicate that the practice is not limited to a particular profile but is often adopted out of necessity rather than strategic choice. Experience and education influence the understanding of risks and opportunities related to the pirate market.

A majority of participants believe that the pirate market allows them to meet their immediate family needs. Others highlight the quick turnover of their products or support for unemployed family members. Some also appreciate the non-payment of taxes as an economic advantage. These perceptions show that, despite the negative implications, the pirate market constitutes a pragmatic solution to poverty and underemployment.

The main motivations for participating in this activity include underemployment and low productivity, followed by unemployment and difficulties selling certain products outside the city. General poverty is also mentioned by a minority. However, these motivations are not sufficient to morally justify the practice, indicating that engagement in the pirate market is more a matter of economic necessity than ethical reasoning.

Participants identify several risks associated with the pirate market, such as unsanitary conditions, traffic congestion, accidents, and theft. Others mention illnesses caused by poorly stored products, as well as the impact of unpaid taxes on local development. These risks are widely recognized, highlighting the problematic social and health dimension of this activity.

Despite awareness of these risks, the majority of participants refuse to abandon the pirate market. This attitude reflects an attempt to reconcile their economic needs with constraints imposed by authorities. Resistance to abandonment also

illustrates cognitive dissonance, where individuals seek to maintain consistency between their choices and economic survival.

The perception of the impact of the pirate market on social well-being is ambivalent. Some consider it to contribute positively, others believe it has no effect, and a few think it can sometimes be beneficial. This ambivalence reflects the tension between immediate economic benefits and negative effects on health and the social environment.

In conclusion, the pirate market appears as a means of survival for many participants, driven by economic needs and lack of alternatives. Social and health risks are well perceived but are not enough to deter the majority. The impact on well-being remains debated, highlighting the need for adapted public policies that offer safe and viable alternatives to informal market actors.

## 6. Interpretation and Discussion of Results

The results obtained from the questionnaires reveal that the pirate market plays a crucial role in meeting participants' fundamental needs. Indeed, 25 of the 40 respondents consider that this market allows them to provide for their family needs, aligning with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943). In a difficult socio-economic context, access to low-cost goods becomes a survival strategy, even if it carries ethical and legal implications. Thus, the pirate market appears as a pragmatic means of fulfilling essential needs in the absence of satisfactory formal alternatives.

The motivations mentioned for resorting to the pirate market highlight the impact of underemployment and low productivity on economic behavior. According to Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, individuals' intentions are strongly influenced by contextual factors, such as job availability. Although the chi-square test ( $8.76 < \text{critical value}$ ) shows that these motivations do not morally justify the practice, they explain why many individuals continue to engage in it, seeing it as a viable economic alternative given limited prospects.

However, the pirate market carries significant risks. The majority of participants (25 out of 40) associate this practice with unsanitary conditions and insecurity, confirming Cialdini's (2009) idea that the absence of regulation fosters deviant behaviors. The rejection of the null hypothesis ( $\chi^2 = 16.25$ ) highlights that these concerns are widely shared and require policymakers' attention. Moreover, despite these risks, the majority of respondents refuse to leave the market, illustrating Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, where individuals seek to maintain consistency between their economic choices and needs, even in the face of negative consequences.

Finally, the impact of the pirate market on social well-being is perceived ambivalently. Although 23 of the 40 participants recognize a positive contribution, the chi-square of 8.85 prevents rejection of the null hypothesis, reflecting a nuanced perception between social benefits and health risks. As noted by Mwepu (n.d.), this ambivalence shows that participants are aware of the harmful effects of the practice while considering

it necessary for their economic survival. This complexity emphasizes the importance for public policies to propose realistic and secure alternatives that address both economic needs and public health.

## 7. Contribution of the Study

This study provides a concrete understanding of the dynamics of the pirate market in Lubumbashi by identifying its main causes, such as underemployment, poverty, and the lack of effective regulation. It highlights the economic benefits perceived by participants while emphasizing the health, social, and security risks associated with this practice. The results also show that despite these risks, the majority of participants refuse to abandon the pirate market, illustrating the strength of economic and social motivations. By analyzing the impact on social well-being, the study reveals an ambivalent perception, underscoring the importance of considering both benefits and harms.

This research contributes to the literature on informal trade by contextualizing factors specific to Lubumbashi. It provides empirical data to guide public policy and urban regulation. The study also proposes ways to integrate informal actors into the formal economy in a safe and equitable manner. Finally, it serves as a foundation for future research on the interactions between poverty, informality, and public health in Congolese cities.

## 8. Conclusion

The study shows that the pirate market in Lubumbashi serves as a survival mechanism for many residents facing poverty, unemployment, and limited formal economic opportunities. Although it meets immediate needs, this phenomenon generates negative consequences for public health, sanitation, and social order. The coexistence of these positive and negative aspects illustrates the complexity of the informal market in a fragile urban context. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing appropriate and sustainable interventions. The results highlight the urgency of balanced regulation and oversight of informal actors.

The economic and social impacts of the pirate market reveal an imbalance between opportunities and risks. Unfair competition with formal merchants, tax evasion, and the vulnerability of youth exposed to illegality show the need for targeted measures. The study emphasizes that the strong economic motivations of participants cannot be ignored. Consequently, any strategy for integration into the formal economy must be realistic and consider the needs of vulnerable populations. Authorities and policymakers must combine regulation, training, and adequate infrastructure to mitigate negative effects.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of informal trade in Lubumbashi and provides guidance for public policies. It demonstrates that sustainable solutions must reconcile the economic survival of actors with compliance with health and social standards. Gradual integration of vendors into the formal economy could reduce risks while maintaining their livelihoods. Public awareness and appropriate control measures are also necessary. Thus,

the pirate market should be addressed not only as a problem but also as an opportunity for socio-economic transformation.

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