

## NOTE

# Copyright concerns of digital images in social media

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**Abstract**

There can be intellectual property rights in digital images in the form of copyright. Images are commonly shared online, particularly in social media. When digital images are shared online, this can have implications on the copyright in the images. This article highlights a number of copyright concerns, potential solutions and recommendations for creators and copyright owners of digital images, as well as those using and sharing the images.

**KEYWORDS**

copyright, digital images, intellectual property, social media

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Creating an image typically involves a significant commitment of time, effort, creativity and skill. To share the image with far more people than it being featured in a book, the artist may choose to share the image online. It would then have the potential to reach a much broader network of users, perhaps even more than the artist may even be aware of.

Online communication is not limited to text. Frequently, particularly in social media, images are copied and shared. This may be good for an artist who wants his or her creation to reach more people. However, this could also raise concerns about how the artists' copyright could be abused without the artist's permission or even knowledge. As González (2017, p. 3) wrote, "In [a] global society, the spreading of information has no limits, especially when it comes to online social networks where the production and dissemination of images and other materials take place in the blink of an eye, with the risk of being misused".

Images are a staple and popular component of social media. Sophisticated, detailed and versatile images are used to explain, illustrate and emphasize points. The ease of copying and reposting many of these images can result in such images being shared and reshared indiscriminately. This can make posts very engaging, but can also raise concerns for the copyright owners and authors of these images.