

Copyright Protection for Photographic Materials: Disseminating Awareness and Perception on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

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Structured Abstract:

Purpose: This paper explores or represents at first the concept of Intellectual Property (IP) and the basic or fundamental nature of Intellectual Work (IW). Then the study is on delves into Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), its explanation, origin, main branches and key features of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Next subtopic of the paper: the relationship between Modern Age and IPR, specifically how it is related to Photographic Materials.

Study Design / Methodology / Approach: A significant section of the paper examines the relationship between modern technological advancements and IPR, specifically concerning photographic material. In this context the paper concentrated on emerging issue of Internet, Smart Phones which have high resolution picture capacity, which pre dominates Modern Photography in every aspect. In today's world of technological advances, with full of Digital Inventories, Cyber World, there is a great impact on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). The emergence of digital media, high-resolution smartphone cameras, and the dominance of digital photography raise important legal and ethical issues in copyright protection.

Findings: The paper highlights the issue of over-reproduction of Photographic Material using Digital Media, Smart Phones, Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR) Camera and also about actual Copyright Owner with their Legal Right. The study highlights the impact of over-reproduction and unauthorized use of Photographic Materials and the challenges faced by copyright owners in protecting their work.

Research Limitations / Implications: There is a high chance for theft of Copyright from Original Owner. Over availability of Photographs is becoming a genuine threat to this area.

Practical Implications: This paper also deals with Model Photography and Photographers as who are the Legal Owners of this type of Photographic Work. Furthermore, the paper addresses the Legal Rights of Model Photographers and the growing concern of unauthorized distribution in the Digital Era.

Social Implications: The paper raises the question as to, what Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) can do for the society and what should be the best way

of using Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for the benefit of the society. The discussion focuses on what IPR can do for society and the most effective ways to utilize it for the benefit of the public.

Originality / Value: Concluding, the paper mainly express its deep thought regarding the proper implementation of Legal Rights, Information Explosion in Modern Age and its direction towards Property Right issues related to Photographic Material. In conclusion, the research emphasizes the importance of implementing Robust Legal Frameworks to protect Photographic Intellectual Property in an age of Rapid Technological Advancement.

Article Type: Research Paper.

Keywords: Intellectual Property (IP), Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Digital Content, Photography, Copyright of Photography, Model Photography.

Introduction

Intellectual Property (IP) encompasses creations of the mind, including literary, artistic, and photographic works. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) grants legal protection to these creations, ensuring that the original creators can control and benefit from their work. In the digital age, photography has evolved with the proliferation of high-resolution smartphone cameras and digital platforms, raising critical concerns about ownership, reproduction, and copyright enforcement.

Copyright law treats photographs as original artistic works protected from the moment they are created. In most countries (following the Berne Convention) a photograph need only be fixed in a tangible form (e.g. taken with a camera) to be copyrighted. As the U.S. Copyright Office explains, “copyright protects original works of authorship, including original photographs,” and the photographer immediately gains exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, display, and make derivative works of the image. In practice, even simple creative choices (angle, lighting, timing, etc.) make a photo “original” under the law.

Indeed, as early as *Burrow-Giles Lithographic Co. v. Sarony* (1884), courts recognized that a photograph capturing the photographer’s “intellectual conception” is protectable. Likewise, European law now requires that a photograph be “the author’s own intellectual creation” in order to qualify for copyright. In short, once you click the shutter, copyright exists automatically – no registration or notice is needed for basic protection.

Historical Background

The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, signed in Paris, France on March 20, 1883, was one of the first Intellectual Property (IP) Treaties. It established a Union for the protection of Industrial Property. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is the United Nations agency dedicated to the use of Intellectual Property (IP) (patents, copyright, trademarks, designs, etc.) as a means of stimulating innovation and creativity.

The term **Intellectual Property (IP)** is relatively a recent, dating from 19th century. Modern usage of the term Intellectual Property (IP) goes back at least as far as 1867. In the Berne Convention (1886) the term Intellectual Property (IP) has been adapted. In 1967, WIPO - World Intellectual Property Organization was established by a treaty as an agency of the United Nations.

Establishment of Rights and Ownership

By default, the photographer (the person who actually takes the picture) is the author and first copyright owner. Rights are usually not transferred unless the photographer explicitly assigns them. The main exception is the “work made for hire” doctrine in the U.S.: if a photographer is an employee or there is a written agreement commissioning the photo as a work-for-hire (for specific statutory purposes), the hiring party (e.g. the employer or client) is treated as the author. Absent such an agreement, a commissioned photographer normally keeps the copyright (granting only a license to the client). Authors can also license or assign rights by contract, but otherwise the creator retains ownership. (Note: model-release or privacy laws may restrict publishing certain images of people or property, but those are separate from copyright.)

Intellectual Property (IP)

Simply stated that the property which comes from one's own intellectual work is called Intellectual Property. Now what is “Intellectual Work”. According to Harrod's Librarians' Glossary - “Intellectual Work” is a creation resulting from Intellectual activity covering all forms of expression and possessing the characteristics of originality. Originality means which seems to be significantly different from any other work, either in form or in content. It means it is unique and which is distinct to others work.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

IPR refers to the legal protections granted to creators for their intellectual works. These rights include copyright, patents, trademarks, and trade secrets. Copyright is the most relevant branch for photographic material, as it grants exclusive rights to photographers to control the distribution, reproduction, and modification of their images. The protection of photographic material under IPR plays a crucial role in maintaining originality and preventing unauthorized use.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is the method of connecting the world of ideas to the world of commerce. Protection to the originality of one's own work can be possible with the help of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Concept of Intellectual Property captures the mode of copyright. This concept is uniquely western idea conditioned by two main interlocking features: the socio cultural attitude towards intellectual and artistic creation and the industrial revolution. Industrial revolution made conditioned for the emergence of Intellectual Property concepts.

Intellectual Property (IP) has been divided in to two branches: **Industrial Property** and **Copyright**. The area of Industrial Property pertains to protection of Invention, Patent, Trademarks and Industrial Design and the restrained of unfair competition. Copyright is basically the protection of cultural work in all media: **Literature, Music, Art, Architecture** and **Audio-Visual Productions**. So in short, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) or Intellectual Property Law granted owners certain explicit rights to various markets, machines, musical, literary and artistic works, discoveries and inventions.

Importance of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

1. The WIPO Treaty and other related International Agreements present a fact that Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is essential to maintain economic growth.
2. With the help of Intellectual Property Law, creators are getting advantage with legal protection and financial support, and with this financial support they are creating new.
3. On the other hand, public making payment for using the exclusive creation and they are also getting advantage out of it.

4. Under this policy creativity and the dissemination and application of its result encourage fair trading which would contribute to social and Economic development.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) System Strengthens the Country's Economic Growth

The Anti – Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) states that “effective enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is critical to sustain Economic growth across all industries globally.”

Everyone has natural Right over his labour or the creation produced by his / her own. So it is unjust to misuse by someone else's. To prevent that misuse Right or Law is needed. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) maximizes social utility. The pre assumption is that they promote public welfare by encouraging the creation, production and distribution of intellectual work. Without Intellectual Property (IP) there would be lack of incentive to produce new ideas, thus a system of protection optimizes social utility. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) also protect original worker from stolen of ideas.

So we also understand that protection of Intellectual Property (IP) is essentially a moral issue. Human mind is full of resource and using this wealth of mind new inventions of the world had been made since very beginning. So violating Intellectual Property (IP) is therefore no different morally than violating others Property.

Objectives of the Study




1. The Impact of Digital Technology on IPR.
2. To find out how Copyright works for Photographic Material, is always the actual photographer getting their claim or Legal Rights?
3. To find out if the Original Photographer of a Photographic Material get rewarded not only terms of Copyright but also financially.
4. Who are the actual Copyright Owners of a Photographic Material in Model Photography?
5. Impact of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Model Photography.

Research Methodology

Different methods have been applied to form this article. Recent articles related to these topic and sub topics gathered together and also study have been done from statistical facts getting from there. Direct interview method also done to gather data from different commercial photographers like newspaper photographers, etc.

Relationship between the Modern Age and IPR

The digital revolution has transformed photography. Today, billions of images are shared daily on social media platforms, often without proper attribution to the original creator. The ease of copying, editing, and distributing digital photographs has increased the risk of copyright infringement. Key issues include:

-  The rise of social media and image-sharing platforms.
-  The impact of high-resolution smartphone cameras and digital photography.
-  The challenge of enforcing copyright in an era of digital proliferation.

Impact of Digital Technology on IPR

First, we need to know about the digital content. The content available in digital format is considered as digital content. Right-holders are very much afraid of the potential for copyright infringement, as:

1. Digital Materials are easy to copy.
2. The copies made are of extremely high quality.
3. The material can be distributed to many people within matter of second. For example, a report, published, can be sent as many people by just an e-mail attachment.
4. Copies can be achieved at low or marginal cost.

The most important international copyright convention, the Berne Convention, copyright protection covers all “Literary and Artistic work”. Related rights protect the contribution of others who add value in presentation of literary and artistic work to the public, performing artists, such as actors, dancers, singers, and musicians, producers of phonograms, including CDs and broadcasting organizations.

Digital Technology enables the transmission and use of all of their protected materials in digital form over interactive networks. The process of digitization allows the conversion of such material in to binary form, which can be transmitted across the Internet, and then redistributed copies and stored in perfect digital form.

Given the capabilities and characteristics of digital network, technologies, e-commerce has a tremendous impact on the system of copyright and related rights. From one perspective, the Internet has been described as “the world’s biggest copy machine.” where as earlier technologies like photocopying and taping allow mechanical copying by individual consumers, and it can be done in limited quantities. On contrast, Internet can make unlimited number of copies, virtually instantaneously, without perceptible degradation of the quality. If we give an example : in the Music Industry, the emergence of Internet-based file swapping services such as Napster and others, have enabled a large scale exploitation of music and recording without the authorization of the shareholders. The exploitation has further aggravated by the simultaneous broad commercialization of CD burners and portable MP3 players, adapted top the most commonly used file format. These challenges are now faced by the copyright industry. For this reason, a huge amount of economic value from copyright industry has been lost. This digital piracy affect very much to the copyright industry and the economic growth of the society also will be affected. It is therefore, critical to adjust the legal system to respond to the new technological developments in an effective and appropriate way, because technologies and markets increasing rapidly.

In 1996, two treaties were adopted by WIPO. The WIPO Internet Treaties are designed to update and supplement the existing International treaties on copyright and related rights. They respond to the challenges posed by the digital technologies and in particular, the dissemination of protected material over the global network that make up the Internet. The contents of the Internet Treaties can be divided in to three parts –

1. Incorporation of certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement not previously included explicitly in WIPO Treaties (Example: Protection of computer programmes and original database as literary works under copyright law).
2. Updates not specific to the digital technologies.
3. Provision that specifically address the impact of digital technologies.

Copyright Works for Photographic Materials

Photography

Photography is the art, application and practice of creating durable images by recording light or other electromagnetic radiation, either electronically by means of an image sensor, or chemically by means of a light-sensitive material such as photographic film. It is used in many fields of science, manufacturing (e.g., photolithography), and business, as well as its more direct uses for art, film and video production, recreational purposes, hobby, and mass communication.

Digital Photography

Digital imaging uses an electronic image sensor to record the image as a set of electronic data rather than as chemical changes on film. An important difference between digital and chemical photography is that chemical photography resists photo manipulation because it involves film and photographic paper, while digital imaging is a highly manipulative medium. This difference allows for a degree of image post-processing that is comparatively difficult in film-based photography and permits different communicative potentials and applications. Digital photography dominates the 21st century. More than 99% of photographs taken around the world are through digital cameras, increasingly through smart phones.

Nowadays we have seen proliferation of photographs due to using high quality smart phone with high quality camera. In the last decade or so, however, the digital age has created a boom in the number of skilled photographers out there, and as technology moves forward, the technical challenges of photography are shrinking. As a result, the profession of photography is changing again. Now, one don't even need to own a camera to become a professional photographer; the phone is the number-one way of taking pictures, and the image quality achievable with today's phones is comparable with DSLRs from only five years ago.

Disadvantages of Digital Photography

But it has some disadvantages too. They are:

1. Using smart phones everyone in a same situation taking picture of same object at a time. In this way photo of a same object is getting reproduced in a single shot.

2. Actual sense of photography lost.
3. As the smart phone photographs are now available very easily on social media, reproduction and photo piracy can easily be done.

Property Rights of Photography

In general when the shutter is released or a soft / hard button is clicked to take a photograph, the person who does the same owns the copyright. An exception is when the photographs are taken by an employee who has been employed by the employer for such work is to be considered a work made for hire. The photographer generally has full rights of the images meaning they can also publish it to something like social media without permission from the people/property in the image. Though there are exceptions in the following scenarios.

- ✚ Was taken while trespassing on private property. Acknowledgement or citation is needed in that purpose.
- ✚ Confidential information must not be shared that should kept in mind.

If the photographs are taken for Commercial purposes one may be required to gain permission from anyone who was involved in the film or photograph. Commercial purpose usually means that someone is taking photographs for financial gain or to promote goods or services.

Copyright Issues in Photography

Several key concerns arise in photographic copyright:

1. **Ownership Rights:** The legal owner of a photograph is typically the photographer unless rights are contractually transferred.
2. **Model Photography:** When people appear in photographs, additional considerations such as model release agreements and privacy laws come into play.
3. **Unauthorized Reproduction:** With the availability of digital editing tools, images can be manipulated, duplicated, and redistributed without permission.
4. **Theft and Plagiarism:** Photographers often find their work used without credit or compensation, leading to financial and reputational losses.

Model Photography or Fashion Photography

Fashion Photography is a genre of photography that portrays clothing and other fashion items. This sometimes includes haute couture garments. It typically consists of a fashion photographer taking pictures of a dressed model in a photographic studio or an outside setting. Photographers play a key role in the fashion industry and that is why we need to make them aware of their rights so that nobody takes advantage of their work. In the fashion industry, every single course of action is bound by agreements and contracts, be it hiring a model, photographer, designer, etc. With the pandemic around the corner, everything is digitalized. Social media being the perfect platform for reach for photographers can be a boon and bane at the same time. A lot of upcoming fashion photographers struggle with publishing their photos because of their work being stolen and shared by others without giving them any credits. With the help of various editing tools, watermarks can be removed thereby stealing their credit.

A photographer may register a copyright in a photograph; however, this is a recommendation rather than a requirement. Copyright protection begins the moment the work is created. The expression of a concept is copyrightable, but not the idea, according to copyright law. Normally, social media platforms have their own copyright rules. Countries pass laws to safeguard intellectual property for two primary reasons:

1. First, to give statutory voice to the creator's moral and economic rights, and
2. Second, to foster creativity in order to encourage fair trade and accelerate the creator's and countries economic and social growth.

The laws controlling Copyright protect Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) on photos. Legislators have taken strenuous attempts to protect photographers' rights by categorizing images in the "Artistic Category," which includes photographers under the idea of "Authors." The law grants the author-specific rights that can only be exercised by the author. The Indian Copyright Act of 1957 is comprehensive. It protects not only traditional paper images but also online photographs, despite the fact that they are not specifically addressed. The "first owners" of a literary work, according to Section 17(a) of the Indian Copyright Act, are the authors of that work, and first ownership will always remain with the author, even if the rights to the literary work have been transferred. In short, this section states that the photographer is the original proprietor of the photograph and that he has all rights to it. The

existing copyright legislation is capable of meeting the difficulties brought by modern technology and provides a solid legal foundation for copyright protection. Section 51 of the Indian Copyright Act of 1957 safeguards photographers' expression from infringement. Copyright infringement is defined as any violation or infringement of the author's rights. In addition, Indian courts have ruled that publishing a photograph without the author's or owner's consent from another published material constitutes an infringement of the photograph. However, infringement does not occur when the identical photograph is utilised by another person without the goal of obtaining illicit profits. Also, if the photograph is used for legislative or academic purposes, it will not be considered a copyright infringement and will be considered authorised use of photographs without the photographer's prior authorization. Regarding model photography photographers holds the copyright; however the model (or whoever has employed the photographer) will have a license to use for the intended purpose.

The Copyright Act of 1957 grants creators (photographers) of artistic works certain exclusive rights. The photographer's rights are as follows:

1. Right to reproduce, this means that no one may make one or more copies of a work, or a major portion of it, without the copyright owner's permission. He can use the right to reproduce as a legal basis for various sorts of exploitation of copyrighted work.
2. Right to make any adaptation of the work, which means it entails the creation of a new work or the alteration of existing work in a similar or different form. According to Section 57 which deals with authors special rights, the author of a work shall have the right to claim authorship of his work, to restrain or claim damages in respect of any distortion, mutilation, modification, or other act in relation to the said work, whether or not the author's copyright has been assigned entirely or partially if such acts would be prejudicial to his honour or reputation.

Best Practices for Photographers

To guard their rights in this environment, photographers should take proactive steps:

1. **Register Important Works Early:** In the U.S., file registration within three months of publication or before any infringement. Early registration preserves the right to

statutory damages and strengthens any future lawsuit. If you have many photos, use group-registration options offered by the U.S. Copyright Office (up to 750 images in a group).




2. **Use Visible or Embedded Marks:** Although not legally required, adding a copyright notice or watermark can deter casual theft. A small logo or translucent signature placed smartly on the photo alerts viewers that the image is not free. (Balance deterrence against aesthetics – even a light watermark often discourages reuse.) Similarly, embed metadata (EXIF / IPTC) with your name and copyright info in the image file. This invisible data can help establish provenance and ownership if a dispute arises.
3. **Retain Originals and Records:** Keep the highest-quality original files, negatives, or RAW formats of your work. Save any files with creation timestamps or registration certificates. These serve as evidence of authorship and date if challenged.
4. **Use Contracts and Clear Licenses:** When shooting on assignment or selling images, always use written contracts. Specify who owns what rights, for what uses, and for how long. Use model or property release forms when photographing identifiable people or private property intended for commercial use. If you offer any usage licenses (even “free to use”), spell out the terms in writing or via well-known license frameworks (e.g. Creative Commons).
5. **Monitor and Act Promptly:** Periodically search for your images online (e.g. via Google or TinEye image search) to spot unauthorized uses. If you find infringement, act quickly. For online cases, submit a DMCA takedown to the host or use the platform’s reporting tools. When filling out takedown notices (especially on social media), give precise details: for example, provide the exact URL of your own published image (on your website or portfolio) rather than the infringing post. Clear evidence makes platforms more likely to act. If your photo is registered, include the registration number and title in your notice – this often speeds processing.
6. **Brand Your Work:** Include a © symbol and your name on published images (in captions or visible on the image) as a reminder to users. Publicly state copyright terms (for example, an “All rights reserved” notice on your site). Some photographers keep low-resolution thumbnails publicly and reserve high-res versions for clients with permission.

7. **Leverage Community and Resources:** Join photographer associations or forums to stay informed. Many professional groups publish guidance on IP (e.g. the U.S. Copyright Office's photographer FAQ). Some offer services like automated DMCA takedown or tracking software that flags where your images appear.
8. **Consider Watermarking Algorithms:** For large portfolios, consider using forensic watermarking (invisible marks) that can survive cropping or compression. There are services that embed such watermarks and scan the web for copies.

By combining legal preparedness with practical habits, photographers can greatly improve their chance of retaining control over their images. The law provides strong default rights to creators of photographs, but realizing those rights often requires vigilance. Registering key works, labeling images clearly, and enforcing rights promptly are the best lines of defense in today's digital landscape. [Sources: Authoritative guidance from the U.S. Copyright Office and EU directives, as well as recent case analyses and photography-industry resources.]

Copyright Protection for Photographs in India

A person other than photographer may use any photograph without any intension of gaining undue profit out of it or for any educational purpose, research purpose, and judicial proceedings with proper acknowledgement. This falls under the principle of fair use.

-  Photographs are protected under Copyright Law as artistic work under section 21c of Copyright Act 1957 in India. Photographs are protected under the law of copyright as it has included in the kind of artistic work. Although the quality does not matter here as bad quality photographs are also get protected. The essential criterion for protecting requires that the photographs must be original. Same picture can be captured by many people and each one is protected under the law as it is. However if someone demand or use the same picture captured by other photographer and that person demands it as his own work then this is a violation of copyright act.
-  In India, as per section 25 of the Copyright Act, the photographs are provided copyright protection for a period of 60 years from the date of publication, i.e. the date of the photographs are first published. Foreign artistic works are also given protection in India.
-  Ordinarily, the author is the first owner of copyright of a work created by him. Same way the photographer is the first owner unless there is any agreement. Photographer

himself has the right to reproduce it, make any modification, editing, make any adaptation and again publish.

🌈 Section 51 of the Copyright Act protects the copyright infringement of photographers. Also the Court of India decided that the publication of a photograph without taking permission from the actual owner, and copying the material is the infringement of the copyright in the photograph.

The Copyright Act, 1957 is an exhaustive Act which effectively safeguards the photographer's right in India. This law not only protects the traditional or paper photography but also online photographs too. The existing Copyright law can completely overcome the threats and challenges imposed by latest technology and have a strong legal base. So we hope that rights of the photographers must be maintained and controlled successfully in the age of Digital era.




Digital Era Challenges

Digital technology and social media have amplified both copying risks and enforcement complexity. On the one hand, anyone can now share, repost, or print high-resolution images with ease. Watermarks and credits are easily cropped out, and reposting on platforms often strips or obscures author metadata. As one commentator bluntly noted, "image theft happens" frequently online. Once an image is on social media, it may be disseminated worldwide in seconds, sometimes under licences (or terms of use) that the photographer never intended. Many platforms' terms grant them extensive rights (often irrevocable, royalty-free) to use user-uploaded images; these terms can conflict with the photographer's interests.

Another modern issue is generative AI: models like Stable Diffusion or Midjourney are trained on large image datasets scraped from the web. Photographers worry that their work may have been used without consent or compensation. Getty's lawsuit against Stability AI is the first major test of whether using copyrighted photos to train an AI constitutes infringement or fair use. The outcome (still pending) could have broad implications for photographers' rights in the AI era. In general, digital reproduction, deep-learning, and even simple screen-capture tools make enforcement technically possible but often burdensome. Cross-border enforcement is also tricky: an infringing image might reside on a server overseas, requiring international legal channel.

Aside from technology, social norms pose challenges. Some users believe “anything on the internet is free,” so even blatantly stolen photos go uncredited. Attribution (moral rights) is strongly protected in some countries but weak or absent in others (the U.S. grants only limited moral rights to art prints, not typical photos). Finally, over-saturation of images makes it hard for individual photographers to gain visibility; preventing “over-reproduction” (e.g. commercial products printed with unlicensed photos) is a constant struggle, as some sites or individuals’ mass-copy stock or unsplash-style images for profit.

With technological advancements, photographic material is easily accessible and can be reproduced infinitely with minimal cost. This raises concerns about:

-  The balance between accessibility and copyright protection.
-  Ethical implications of image usage on social platforms.
-  Legal frameworks needed to prevent unauthorized reproduction.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Copyright and other related Legal Rights are very much essential. Information which is a characteristic of modern society, scattered everywhere, may become a more useful with such legal rights. In this way everyone, the creator, information owner, information seeker and the society shall earn benefit. With the help of Copyright Act like other artistic material Copyright of Photographs is also maintained.

As digital technology advances, the challenges surrounding IPR and photography continue to evolve. To ensure fair protection for photographers, governments and legal bodies must enforce stricter copyright laws, educate users about ethical image usage, and promote responsible sharing practices. Future developments in artificial intelligence and block chain technology could play a significant role in tracking and verifying image ownership. Ultimately, a balanced approach that respects both accessibility and Intellectual Property rights is necessary to sustain creativity and innovation in the photographic industry.

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