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## Copyright And Social Media In UK

Society is driven by creators. But in the modern digital world, creators aren't just those who design and build upon an idea. Since the development and rise in social media, everyday individuals have become a new generation of creators, making copyright laws more complicated, and ever more difficult. Copyright is therefore intertwined with the development of technology, and social networking. These social media platforms have become one of the largest challenges for copyright law and policy in recent years, constantly changing and adapting with each new creation. This article builds on literature that identifies the underlying issues between social networking sites and copyright laws; namely the ways in which social networking has rendered copyright somewhat obsolete. Whether it is true or false that the digital age has contributed to this, is a matter of debate.

Copyright's primary objective is to encourage creativity by rewarding creators for their work (Laddie, Prescott, and Vitoria 2011). In doing so, copyright laws allow for creators to decide what happens to their work, and prevents others from using it. Drassinower (2009) notes that "copyright law is not a prohibition on copying, but rather an institutionalised distinction between lawful and wrongful copying". Although, such a broad use of copyright infringement online has resulted in an ambiguous understanding of the term. As Lessig (1999) states: 'Basic functions like copying and access are crudely regulated in an all or nothing fashion. You generally have the right to copy or not, to gain access, or not' (p. 129).

When social network sites became a large part of society, it gave users and organisations the ability to share information. These networking platforms then enable the everyday user to communicate with a wider audience, market themselves, and share information (Lundell 2015 p.). More specifically, the sharing of images and videos, which are often protected by artistic works.

The philosophy behind sharing on social media networks contradicts with the nature of copyright laws. Online, the regulation of literary, artistic and dramatic works for acts of copying and communicating fall directly under copyright law. You cannot communicate copyright works to the public without the permission of the rights holder. As such, this nature of sharing on social media significantly impacts the way in which copyright is supposed to protect creative works. Whilst social media ultimately encourages users to create and share original content, it also provides those tools to share third party content. Features such as the retweet, repost and share contribute to this (Facebook 2017 PN). From a business perspective, social media relies heavily on advertising. Here, the feature of 'sharing', contributes to a larger audience, meaning that more people are engaging with the platform, resulting in a higher revenue. For instance, it was estimated that Instagram would reach around 4 billion in revenue in 2017, and it is expected that Instagram's ad revenue for 2019 could reach over 10 billion (Levy 2017, PN). With such a large sum of money being produced through these features, it becomes increasingly possible that we will see digital businesses opting for lessened copyright laws, therefore making them obsolete in the digital future.

Even so, this does not render copyright laws as completely obsolete. Recently, the UK Intellectual Property Office (IPO) published a report detailing the impact that social media has

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had on intellectual property infringement (Collopy and Drye 2017 PG). This report outlines that social media plays a significant role in the sale and distribution of counterfeit and pirated goods. Intellectual property has often been a topic for discussion in the debate around online copyright laws, however its definition is often misunderstood. [Intellectual property is defined as “a species of property akin with real property” (Collins 2006), meaning it holds the same values as something tangible that you own. Copyright is a form of intellectual property, so when you share something online, does that make it a breach of copyright? Or is it the users fault for signing up for a site that they know has such features. This user agreement brings up a debate about whether or not it is reasonable to ask the user to agree that they will not infringe copyright on their platform, when the platform itself fundamentally encourages sharing.

Following from this, research has outlined that users are often unaware of what type of online activity is actually defined as ‘illegal’. A case study by Palfrey et al. (2009) discovered that when students were asked ‘do you know what copyright means?’ 84% responded yes, however their definition of the term was inherently wrong. Additionally, there is a general belief by many that online illegal activity is a social norm, meaning it has no moral implications (Bowrey 2005). These beliefs are a result of the uncertainties surrounding online copyright laws, as the public often do not know where they stand.