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# Concept in India copyright and design law: Fashion

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**Abstract**—Copyright law in India protects fashion designs that are considered unique artistic works. 2 Since 'arts works' is defined so broadly, this is obvious. 3 In 2006, the Delhi High Court made a distinction between "purely artistic works" and "artistic works meant to be applied to goods" in terms of the definition of the word. 4 Although it is not stated explicitly, it is reasonable to assume that the Designs Act, 2000 would apply to fashion designs as well. The Copyright Act and the Designs Act both provide legal protection for fashion designs. However, the fundamental premise of the Designs Act must be examined in relation to the underlying logic of industrial production. Indian law protects the works of fashion designers to a certain extent, and this study aims to shed light on the matter.

**Keywords---**Fashion Designs, Article, Applied to Article, Microfiber.

# Introduction

If a fashion design qualifies as an artistic work that is original, it is protected by copyright. Because the term "arts works" is so wide, this may be easily comprehended. There is a distinction among "purely creative works" and "artistic works designed to be industrially applied to items" that the Delhi High Court DB made in 2006 via the Microfiber case. According to the name of the act (the Designs Act, 2000), fashion designs should be protected. In order to fully understand the rationale for creating the Designs Act, one must go further, particularly into how industrial production works in general. This article aims to shed light on the extent to which Indian law protects the works of fashion designers. In this article, the Copyright Act of 1957 and the Designs Act of 2000 will be discussed.

## **Relevant Legal Provisions**

A specific provision for copyright in registered or qualifying designs is contained in Section 2(d) of the Designs Act, 2000 and Section 15 of the Copyright Act

(CRA). Copyright laws do not apply to design registrations made under the Designs Act, 2000. Design that is suitable for registration but not yet registered loses copyright if copied by an industrial process by the copyright holder or anybody with the copyright holder's permission. A design is defined in Section 2(d) of the Designs Act, 2000, as "just the aspects of shape or configuration of any product, whether in two-dimensional or three-dimensional, by any industrial process or procedures of any sort, whether human, mechanical and chemical." The Copyright Act definition of "mechanical device" excludes trademark or property mark and any creative work (as defined in section 2(c) of the Copyright Act, 1957).

# How Does the Law Pan Out in Reality?

An established fashion designer who has a clothing brand in her name and is contracted to manufacture a dress—an evening gown—for, say, Sonam Kapoor is right to what amount of protection for her work? In an effort to demonstrate how India's present body of IP law fails to offer enough protection for fashion designs, the paper examines these and related areas of legal protection in detail. It is important to note that in order to qualify as art, the design must display adequate inventiveness and "originality," which effectively translates into the fashion designer's working method of sketching out the gown and drawing it up. In accordance with the CRA, 1957, section 13, copyright is transferred back to the subject matter. As a result, the copyright for more than 50 industrial products might be forfeited if Section 15(2) applies to them. As a result, the minute as a copyright owner moves their work from a strictly artistic to an industrial context, their copyright is effectively forfeited. 8 The designer may opt to make the garment immediately after visualising it in her head and putting it into action in three dimensions. Copyright would apply to that 3-D piece of art as well, making the gown a creative work in its own right. This unique gown, which was created without the use of any design documents and is not intended to be used in future shows, should not be considered a design but rather an original piece of art. Section 15(2) does not apply in this situation.

# Problems with Interpretation-'Article' to Exist Independent of Design?

When the complications are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that a gown that is instantly created cannot be protected as a design. Design is used to a product under section 2(d), where it denotes the presence of two things/two needs. The design and the article are two separate things. To meet both requirements, the gown must be stitched with reference to 2D design drawings, but if the gown is simply embroidered using some concepts that are in the brain but have not been transformed to any physical form, the prerequisites are not satisfied." Defending against this is impossible." As a 3D depiction of the designer's vision, it might be regarded an original work of art. However, the decision in the Microfibres case, which will be examined extensively in the following paragraphs, differs in that it seems to indicate that even a gown made quickly might be protected as a design, provided that it is registered and has artistic appeal. [I]t is important to highlight that a creative effort on which a design is based is not necessary in every circumstance. An artist does not need to be a craftsman in order to begin designing anything. Creating an end product

doesn't necessitate the primary artistic labour involved in weaving a shawl. It's fair to say that the concept is genuine, but in my opinion it falls short when it comes to the definition of "design" under the Designs Act of 2000. As a result of this, it has been suggested that the legislative body should recognise the gown's direct stitching as a design. To do this, the definition of a design in Section 2 of the Act needs to be revised and clarified (d). It's ambiguous in its current form, allowing for a wide range of interpretations.

# Extent and scope of protection under copyright law

The designer would be the exclusive owner of the copyrighted drawings (hence referred to as "design documents"), garments, or both. Only the original creator has the right to make a copy of the design. Creating a three-dimensional version of a two-dimensional piece of art is an example of copying (using the design drawings to make a copy of the gown, or simply making a replica without relying on the design drawings). If you make drawings and sketches of the gown, or otherwise replicate the work in two dimensions, you may be infringing on the artist's intellectual property rights. In addition, the designer would be the exclusive owner of any copy of the design that was created, whether it was saved electronically or not. In other words, the author/artist has the unique right to take photos or record a video of the design drawings/gown. The copyright belongs solely to the designer artist, and he or she has the right to distribute copies of the work. The designer, on the other hand, has no influence over the dress's motion after it has been sold. Meaning that Sonam Kapoor may sell it for whatever price she chooses without any interference from the designer. The Doctrine of Exhaustion would kick in since it would be deemed an already-published work. Copyright Act of 1957 Section 51 defines infringement, which includes these exclusive rights. A fashion design licensee is obligated to act within the parameters of the licence agreement, even if the designer licences the rights to the design to someone else. It would be a violation if he showed any disobedience. Because of the designer's power to restrict Sonam Kapoor or demand damages for any mutilation or other act in regard to the gown, the actress's earlier example must be kept within acceptable parameters. Regardless of whether or not an author's copyright is recognised, moral rights exist irrespective of that right. They remain in the author's consciousness even after the work has been licenced or given away, according to the author. Before using the work in a film, anyone interested in doing so must first obtain permission from the designer. Designers alone are responsible for any alterations to the original design drawings, whether they're major or little. In cases when a later designer is 'inspired' by the earlier one, infringement may be a possibility, provided there is sufficient evidence. Even if someone like Sonam Kapoor adds frills or lace to the gown to meet her own preferences, the designer's exclusive right prevents anyone else from undertaking any of the actions previously specified with respect to the adapted version without the designer's approval. Consider the fact that Sonam Kapoor herself may have added her own modifications to the garment, which may be deemed fair dealing and therefore not infringe on any copyrighted content. This must be interpreted as a subservience to the designer's moral rights, according to the author. The designer of the gown would be protected in India under the CRA 1956 if the design drawings or gown were first published in India or if the author was an Indian citizen at the time of production. As a general rule, publication is making

the work available to the general public, either through the distribution of copies or through the dissemination of the work. Publishing and disseminating designs may be accomplished in several methods, including fashion shows, private exhibits, and other more covert venues for presenting stitched garments. While it's true that the gown and/or illustrations were designed by Roberto Cavalli, copyright wouldn't extend to them if they were created outside of India. However, this does not mean that his works are available for everyone in India to reproduce at will. It doesn't matter if a work was initially published outside of India or if its author is not an Indian citizen; as long as the country where the work was first published or the citizenship of the author is relevant to the Order's Schedule is included, the CRA 1957 will apply unless otherwise specified.

#### Status of knockoffs

It is common for fashion knockoffs to be made from the same materials as the original designs, but at a lower price. Designing and manufacturing knockoffs has never been easier than it is now, thanks to technical advancement and the increased exposure that comes with globalisation. Their livelihood depends on producing mass-market replicas of the latest designer clothes that appear in showrooms for public consumption at a comparable low price, which is why the ones associated with the knockoff economy physically hunt the fashion shows. A time has passed when fashion periodicals were uncommon and photos from runway shows were often surrounded by thick black lines to prevent unauthorised duplication. There were only a few select guests invited to the couture presentations, which meant that only a select few were privy to a sneak peek at the upcoming seasons' anticipated trends. As a result, photographers and other reporters are going nuts when it comes to snapping photos and publishing them across a variety of platforms at the blink of an eye. As a matter of fact, it's not just the law enforcement organisations who are to blame, but also legislators and the courts for failing to grasp the fundamental meaning of the job and protection it demands. The regulations are vague, and it's unclear whether laws apply to the inventor's work, which makes it easier for others to copy his ideas. When it comes to the ambiguity of fashion designs, the CR Act, 1957's section 15 takes the lead. The Designs Act, 2000 has a particular clause pertaining to copyright in registered or capable of registration designs, which is copied above. According to this provision, it appears that copyright does not exist in design drawings that are registered as designs under the Designs Act, 2000. It is worth considering whether or not fashion designs are covered by the Design Law. Specifically, a "process-applied object" is what the Act refers to as a "design" (d). Trademarks, property marks, and creative works of the CRA 1957 are not protected designs under the Act. There is no provision for covering an artistic production under the Designs Act as a result of the entire IP protection system. If fashion designs are excluded from the Designs Act's scope, it is not immediately obvious from the statute. The DB of the Delhi High Court has, however, suggested a possible explanation in the -microfibres case.

# Microfibres V Girdhar

Both parties in the Microfibres v Girdhar case were involved in the upholstery fabric industry. One judge found that Girdhar's designs were a close imitation of

the Microfibres' art. Section 15(2) of the CRA, 1957, had removed copyright protection for the same, however. Microfibre has made them more than 50 times in an industrial procedure. Consequently, the designs of Microfibres were not protected by the IP framework since they were not registered under the Designs Act. The following are two issues that the decision addresses: Artistic works are broadly defined in Section 2(c) of the Copyright Act to include even those that do not have any obvious aesthetic value. Design registration and protection under the Designs Act requires that a design be visually appealing. 2) Only if it is unique can a design be considered an artistic work. As a result, the phrases 'artistic works' and 'designs' under the Copyright Act are not interchangeable. Each of them has a distinct scope and significance. However, when an original piece of art like a painting has to be reproduced or reworked in order to be utilised as a printed design on a piece of clothing, the finished product must be visually appealing. While the painting is protected as an original work of art, its derivative that is put to a manufactured product is only protected as an independent creative work until 50 pieces are made. Unless the Design Act has been invoked, it is no longer a protected design once the 51st unit is manufactured, at which point it becomes a "free" design that is no longer covered by either the Copyright Act nor the Designs Act. It is not protected by the Copyright Act of 1957 under Section 15 when the work is reproduced or substantially altered exclusively for industrial applications. This eliminates the original creative work—the artwork on which the design is based—from the definition of the design. As long as the design is original, it can be considered an artistic work. Only 50 units with same design can be produced before the protection expires. [W] Reproducing an original creative work using an industrial technique or method, such as mechanical or chemical processes, is entirely up to the copyright owners of the material in question. Under the Designs Act, "Design" refers to a procedure used in the manufacturing process to apply aesthetic characteristics such as form, pattern, decoration, and the arrangement of lines or colours to a product that solely appeals to the human sight. As a result, a design that appears on a product is distinct from an original work of art. To be protected as a creative work under the Copyright Act of 1957, the original artwork must be utilised to industrially make the designed article of clothing. Copyright Act Section 15 thwarts any commercial use of the design that can be drawn from this source material." It's on the verge of extinction.

# Judicial interpretation and possibility of protection under design law

Adapting an artistic work for industrial use diminishes its distinctiveness, and so even if the altered version was an artistic work in the strictest sense of the word, it becomes a design. According to Section 14 of the Copyright Act, the original creative work may be economically exploited to a limited extent by using or reproducing it in any other form or by making copies. The Designs Act, 2000 looks to protect our gown/item if the application of these 2D design attributes results in a visually appealing design and if the drawings or design document is not intended for one-off fabrication. If a design is not registered, it does not have any legal protection. If registered design drawings are used, Section 22 of the Designs Act would apply to fashion knockoffs.. Infringers of registered designs are obliged by law to pay the registered proprietor Rs 25000 for each infringement, which is enforceable as a contract debt under Section 22 of the Trademarks Act,

2013. It's critical that a design be applied to a product in some way. In the context of this definition, a "item" is a produced thing that may be formed of any substance—natural or synthetic—and include any portion that may be fabricated and sold separately. When we say "design," we mean any pattern or adornment that is "applied" to the item in question. "Applied to an item" 28 is defined as follows by Copinger: On a regular reading, the phrases "pattern" and "ornament" are typically used to refer to exterior and largely ornamental features that are applied to an object. The phrases are employed in two dimensions, rather than three. It's impossible to do this in the case of a form design, because the underlying'shape' and 'configuration' are directly responsible for the article's structure or 3D existence. To what extent would constructing a gown from design drawings constitute 'applying' the design to a product in this context? (evening gown). Due of this, it is hard to separate the two and identify them as separate entities. To be relevant under Section 2(d), the Design Act of 2000 seems to require that an article exists apart from the design. After being cut and put into place, the gown takes on its final shape for the first time. A three-dimensional representation is not available anywhere else. All that's left if the pattern is taken from the gown is some cut fabric rags, which don't seem to meet the requirements of a piece under the Design Law, in my opinion. In the definition of "article," there is an absence.. Industrial Designs Act 2000 does not recognise design drawings that have not been used to create a physical item of any kind. In the greatest artistic works of Copyright Act, 1957, they are still present. They are. Because of the 2000 Act, they are not allowed to be registered as a design.

## Other cases on issue

The Delhi High Court's Division Bench had the opportunity to consider some of the problems highlighted above in Rajesh Masrani v TahlianiDesign 30. Claiming that the designs it made while making garments and accessories were original works under Section 2(ii)(c) of the Copyright Act of 1957, the Plaintiff. The designs printed and stitched on the cloth were also said to be works of art, as were the finished outfits. The Single Judge imposed an interim injunction in favour of the plaintiff because of copyright infringement concerns."Artistic Works" is an example of this type of argument. Masrani tried to convince the court that Tahilianis designs and garments should be protected under the CRA as creative works by citing Microfibres v Girdhar. The court sided with Masrani. This paragraph in particular was cited from Microfibres: Keeping in mind the purpose for why these arrangements or works were put in place must be ignored. We want to put them to work in the manufacturing industry. An industrial method is necessary to apply the design to the fabric. Unless it is framed and hung on the wall, it does not serve any use. Aside from the fact that it is constructed with an industrial product, the most crucial characteristic is that it cannot be considered art on its own. (Emphasis added) On the basis of this paragraph, the appellant Masrani claimed that the plaintiff company's designs and patterns were prepared specifically for commercial purposes. Tarun T's design drawings had only been used to make perhaps 20 or so copies of the works in question, but they were still being created in an industrial setting. He claimed that copyright should not be granted. Because they had not been copied more than 50 times using an industrial manner, Tarun T's works were nonetheless protected by the Copyright Act under the Designs Act of 2000, even if the Court ruled that they were artistic works under the relevant provision. This basically suggests that the purpose of a work does not need to be considered when assessing its nature. The Single judge, therefore, correctly found that Masrani had committed an infringement. If the Design were to be registered under the Designs Act, it would no longer be protected from violation by copyright under the Copyright Act. As long as its use in an industrial process on an object exceeds the threshold limit of 50 times, a design that is eligible for registration in accordance with the Designs Act will continue to be protected by copyright under the Act. Once that threshold is breached, the Copyright Act no longer protects it. As a result of this reading, the Copyright and Designs Acts would be in accordance with the original legislative intent if they were approved A fresh Biba Apparels lawsuit has shook the fashion sector and the legal community with comparable difficulties. The plaintiff's trademark and trade name, RITU KUMAR, was utilised to market clothing.. The plaintiff claimed copyright to different drawings and sketches he created for those outfits. For example, sleeves and front and back panels were said to have unique elements that made them stand out from the others. It was alleged that the defendants had copied Ritu Kumar's artwork, and as a result, they were infringing on her intellectual property. When it came to prints and clothes made in colorable imitation or significant reproductions of the plaintiff's prints and garments the defendant was accused of doing all of the above, including duplicating, printing, publishing, distributing, selling, and providing it to the public. In this method, a restraining order was requested. The defendants argue that copyright law does not apply because the plaintiff has used these works more than 50 times in an industrial process to create clothing. It is argued that as a result, the works do not fall under the purview of the Copyright Act. Due to the Designs Act of 2000 not registering numerous designs, the public domain was able to use many of them. According to paragraph 26 of the ruling, the DB of Microfibres had earlier asserted something similar in 2006. It was asserted by the Court that The defendant's outfits are not merely reprints of the copyright work, as some have suggested. An problem of copyright infringement under the Indian Copyright Act may have arisen if the plaintiff's copyrighted works were used to generate prints, and those prints were lifted and used to print on the defendant's garments. An industrial procedure is used by the defendant in this case in order to apply an image from the plaintiff's copyrighted work to a garment that was made by that same company. Since the plaintiff does not claim infringement of his or her Indian Copyright Act rights, that will not be at issue in this case. The court reasoned that since the defendant altered the prints to make them suitable for industrial application to the garments in question, there was no evidence of copyright infringement on the defendant's behalf. There are only two ways to look at the interaction of two laws, and the author claims that this final paragraph is totally incorrect. It goes like this: Illustration A fashion design is created by taking an unique piece of art and making it appropriate for mass production. Artistic work 'X' by A is protected by copyright under section 2(1) since it is an original work of art (c) An independent artistic work, 'Y', was modified by A to be applied to garments by himself, resulting in copyright extinguishing in 'Y' and not X, which has been used more than 50 times. Microfibres adequately described this. When the Design Act of 2000 removes creative works from the definition of designs, this is what it means. Since fashion design drawings are not suitable for use in garments at the outset, they are not registered under the Designs Act, 2000. The 'X' design, which was created by A under section 2(1)(c) of copyright

law, is eligible for copyright protection. An invention that is applied to clothing without any intermediary change, and that is used more than 50 times by the same person is extinguished in X. Whether B's copying or modifying of X constitutes infringement under the Copyright Act, 1957 will be decided by the "time" at which B makes the copying or modifying of X. B would be in violation of section 15 if he did so before A has exceeded the maximum of 50 productions, but he would not be if A has not yet exceeded the limit (2). Rather than making the assertions it did in para. 26 above, the court should have focused on section 15(2)'s essential provisions, because Ritu Kumar's designs, patterns, and other features had been put to a range of fashion items via an industrial process more than 50 times. They were obviously not covered by any copyright laws. Copyright infringement is impossible since there is no copyright. 7.2 Does It Matter What You Mean? It is Copinger Skone James' responsibility to ensure that his input is relevant by honouring the original author's "intention." He argues that designing 'of something is fundamentally distinct from designing 'for' something else entirely. Design documents and models are created as part of the process of creating something else, rather than as an end in themselves. Designing for something other than an object can only be determined by the designer's goal. When a designer creates a design document or model in accordance with a similar provision of the UK Act, he or she must be able to demonstrate that he or she was in the proper mind-set when he or she prepared the document or model. The copyright act's section 15(2), on the other hand, would be based on this determination. As long as it started as an artistic creation, copyright should not expire even if 50 copies of the final piece are made for commercial purposes. Section 15 of the Copyright Act does not allow for consideration of intent, according to the author, because it goes against the spirit of the Designs Act. Artistic creations would be protected for a lengthy amount of time if purpose is given such weight in the business sphere, even when they are financially exploited. According to Microfibres, there is a version extolling this same concept. Unlike Cpoinger, the above-mentioned instance explains it in terms of real-world circumstances, rather than deliberate aim.

#### **Prologue: Limited Edition Creations**

The author recommends that fashion designers avoid registering their designs under the Design Act, 2000, in order to maximise the monetary worth of their ideas by creating limited-edition products and without registering their creations. They can benefit from copyright protection for 60 years and the lifespan of at least 49 articles throughout that time. Under the Copyright Act of 1957, a fashion designer can make two unique copies: one for personal enjoyment, which is protected as an artistic work, and one for commercial/mass production use. A design can be registered if it meets the uniqueness and prior publishing requirements of the Designs Act of 2000. It would be a waste of money from the first 49 publications if the modified/adapted/derivative version intended for industrial items fails to meet novelty36 criteria and is not registerable under the Designs Act, 2000.

## References

- 1. Literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works; (b) cinematograph films; and (c) sound recordings.
- 2. Section 2(c) of the Copyright Act, 1957 defines 'artistic work' to mean (i) a painting, a sculpture, a drawing (including a diagram, map, chart or plan), an engraving or a photograph, whether or not any such work possesses artistic quality; (ii) work of architecture; and (iii) any other work of artistic craftsmanship.
- 3. 2006 (32) PTC 157 De.
- 4. Garnet Kevin, Davies Gillian and Harbottle Gwilym (ed). (2011). Copinger and Skone James on Copyright. Thompson Reuters Ltd.
- 5. 2006 (32) PTC 157 Del.
- 6. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 14(c)(i)(A).
- 7. See Copyright Act, 1957, ss 14(c)(i)(B) and (C).
- See Copyright Act, 1957, s 51--Copyright in a work shall be deemed to be 8. infringed — (a) when any person, without a licence granted by the owner of the copyright or the Registrar of Copyrights under this Act or in contravention of the conditions of a licence so granted or of any condition imposed by a competent authority under this Act — (i) does anything, the exclusive right to do which is by this Act conferred upon the owner of the copyright, or (ii) permits for profit any place to be used for the communication of the work to the public where such communication constitutes an infringement of the copyright in the work, unless he was not aware and had no reasonable ground for believing that such communication to the public would be an infringement of copyright; or (b) when any person — (i) makes for sale or hire, or sells or lets for hire, or by way of trade displays or offers for sale or hire, or (ii) distributes either for the purpose of trade or to such an extent as to affect prejudicially the owner of the copyright, or (iii) by way of trade exhibits in public, or (iv) imports into India, any infringing copies of the work.
- 9. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 57(1)(b).
- 10. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 57(1).
- 11. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 14(c)(v).
- 12. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 14(a)(vi).
- 13. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 52(1)(a)(i).
- 14. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 13(2)(i).
- 15. See Copyright Act, 1957, s 15(2).
- 16. 2006 (32) PTC 157 Del
- 17. As already reproduced via the definition of designs under section 2(d) of the Designs Act, 2000.
- 18. 2006 (32) PTC 157 Del.
- 19. 2006 (32) PTC 157 Del.
- 20. 2006 (32) PTC 157 Del.
- 21. Section 22 (1) of the Designs Act, 2000 provides that 'during the existence of copyright in any design it shall not be lawful for any person to-(a) for the purpose of sale to apply or cause to be applied to any article in any class of articles in which the design is registered, the design or any fraudulent or obvious imitation thereof, except with the license or written consent of the registered proprietor, or to do anything with a view to enable the design to be

- so applied; or (b) to import for the purposes of sale, without the consent of the registered proprietor, any article belonging to the class in which the design has been registered, and having applied to it the design or any fraudulent or obvious imitation thereof, or (c) knowing that the design or any fraudulent or obvious imitation thereof has been applied to any article in any class of articles in which the design is registered without the consent of the registered proprietor, to publish or expose or cause to be published or exposed for sale that article.'
- 22. Section 22(2)(i) states that 'if any person acts in contravention of this section, he shall be liable for every contravention-(a) to pay to the registered proprietor of the design a sum not exceeding twenty-five thousand rupees recoverable as a contract debt, or (b) if the proprietor elects to bring a suit for the recovery of damages for any such contravention, and for an injunction against the repetition thereof, to pay such damages as may be awarded and to be restrained by injunction accordingly: Provided that the total sum recoverable in respect of any one design under clause (a) shall not exceed fifty thousand rupees: Provided further that no suit or any other proceeding for relief under this sub-section shall be instituted in any court below the court of District Judge.
- 23. The Designs Act, 2000 s 2(a)
- 24. Garnet Kevin, Davies Gillian and Harbottle Gwilym (ed). (2011). Copinger and Skone James on Copyright. Thompson Reuters Ltd. para 13-289.
- 25. Garnet Kevin, Davies Gillian and Harbottle Gwilym (ed). (2011). Copinger and Skone James on Copyright. Thompson Reuters Ltd. para 13-288.
- 26. Rajesh MasranivTatunTahilianiFAO (OS) No.393/2008.
- 27. 2006 (32) PTC 157 Del.
- 28. 2006 (32) PTC 157 Del.
- 29. Ritika Pvt Ltd v Biba Apparels Pvt Ltd MANU/DE/0784/2016.
- 30. Garnet Kevin, Davies Gillian and HarbottleGwilym (ed). (2011). Copinger and Skone James on Copyright. Thompson Reuters Ltd. para 13-312.