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Food for AI: Evaluating Ownership and Visibility of Food Content on Instagram

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) governs the algorithm. The algorithm governs visibility and “virality” of content on social media. Therefore AI directly dictates the kind of content that a creator should post to gain reach on social media. I wish to study food content creation on the social media platform of Instagram, to understand how deeply AI is ingrained in conscious processes of posting content, and to analyse the effects of this nexus between AI and social media on Intellectual Property, Intellectual Property rights and cultural rights of the content creators individually and as part of the community they represent, as well.

This paper aims to study a group of unrelated food content creators, including chefs, vloggers and researchers, with a conspicuous Instagram presence, to understand a few pertinent questions— whether or not they consciously use AI tools for content creation or marketing, how they use these tools and where, and how dependent they are on these tools.

This should help answer the question that if AI governs social media algorithms and therefore visibility, does “viral” content on the cuisines of cultural minorities, or indigenous foods, eating habits and culinary practices, or food that acts as signifiers of cultural and ethnic identities, including gender, class and caste, also feed the large language models on which AI is built? If this is the case, then what beholds the nature and future of representation that these content creators embody on social media platforms?

This ethnography of digital content creators should help me interrogate further the nature and scope of copyright in this age of AI, and thereby should help to envisage developments in copyright law that protect the content creators and what they choose to represent through their content on social media, because in this age of growing dependence on AI tools, the human element should not disappear for the sake of a week of being “viral” on Instagram.