

# NAVIGATING THE LEGAL MAZE OF STREET FOOD ADVERTISING BY FOOD BLOGGERS



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## The Rise of Food Blogging: A Deliciously Complex Legal Issue

In the digital age, food blogging has blossomed into a lucrative parallel career for many content creators. Among the various types of food blogs, those focusing on street food have gained substantial popularity. This article, based on the critical legal analysis by Arya Sandilya and Prof (Dr.) Debarati Halder takes a look into the ethical and legal complexities surrounding this phenomenon.

## Street Food Blogging: More Than Just Taste Tests

While some food bloggers share recipes and cooking tips, a growing number are venturing into the streets, tasting and reviewing local street food. These bloggers, often with considerable social media followings can significantly influence public opinion, including swaying customers towards specific street food vendors.

## The Gray Area of Street Food Advertising

This type of food blogging which increasingly resembles advertising raises several legal and ethical concerns. For instance, bloggers may not always disclose essential details about food preparation methods, hygiene standards or health-related information of the vendors they feature. This lack of transparency can mislead viewers, especially vulnerable groups like children, who may be influenced to consume potentially unsafe food.



## Legal Loopholes and Challenges

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Interestingly, the activities of these food bloggers may loosely fall under the definition of advertisement as per Section 2(b) of the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018. However, the street food vendors themselves often escape direct liability for marketing, as there's usually no formal contract between them and the bloggers.

### The Absence of Clear Legal Guidelines

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Neither the Information Technology Act, 2008, nor the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018 nor the Consumer Protection Act specifically address the potential liabilities of food bloggers in providing misleading information about street food. This legal vacuum leaves much room for unethical practices to thrive unchecked.

### The Need for Expanded Regulation

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Given the growing influence of food bloggers on consumer choices, the article suggests that the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018 should expand their scope. This expansion would include setting guidelines for street food advertising and marketing by food bloggers, ensuring that they adhere to standards of truthfulness and transparency.

### Empowering Consumers through Information

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One critical aspect of this issue is empowering consumers with the right information. Food bloggers can play a constructive role by not only showcasing street food but also educating their audience about hygiene, health and nutrition.

This approach can transform food blogging from mere advertising to a tool for public awareness

## Balancing Creativity with Responsibility

The charm of food blogging lies in its authenticity and personal touch. However, with great influence comes great responsibility. Bloggers need to be aware of their impact on public health and safety, especially when promoting street food which can have varying standards of hygiene and quality.

## Recommendations for Ethical Food Blogging

To address these concerns, it's essential for food bloggers to:

1. Verify and share accurate information about the hygiene and safety standards of the street food vendors they feature.
2. Clearly disclose any partnerships or sponsorships with food vendors to maintain transparency.
3. Follow ethical guidelines in their content to avoid misleading their audience, especially vulnerable groups.

## Conclusion: A Call for Legal Clarity and Ethical Blogging

The critical analysis by Sandilya and Halder highlights the urgent need for clearer legal guidelines and ethical standards in the realm of food blogging, particularly when it involves street food.

By expanding the scope of existing regulations and encouraging responsible blogging practices, we can ensure that this digital age phenomenon remains a delightful and safe experience for all.