

- **Individual Interaction:** In traditional forms of media, interaction with individual user is either not possible or is very limited. Social Media platform offers **ability to connect with each and every individual**. It is also useful in seeking feedback on services.
- **Managing Perceptions:** One big challenge for government is to **avoid propagation of unverified facts and frivolous misleading rumors** with respect to government policies. Leveraging these platforms can help to counter such perceptions and **present facts to enable informed opinion making**.

Bureau of Outreach and Communication (BOC)

- It was **setup in 2017** by integration of erstwhile Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP) and Song & Drama Division (S&DD).
- **Mandate-** Branding of the Government as prime facilitator of people's empowerment and positioning of messages through Print, Audio-Visual, Outdoor and Digital Media to realize the same.

About Draft Policy guidelines

- **Need for advertisement on Social media:** Currently, organic reach of Government is limited to only such **people who are connected with social media handle of the concerned Ministry/Department**. Thus, there is need to reach or connect to people who are not connected with social media handle of concerned Ministry/Department.
- **Definitions:** Defines Social Media platform as **web / mobile based Internet Application** that allows **creation, access and exchange of user-generated content**. Content may be in form of text, audio-visual, graphics, animation etc.
- **Eligibility:** Social Media platform must be under **continuous operation since past 6 months** and with minimum of **25 million unique user count** per month from within India.

Challenges related to use of social media

- **Which Platforms to use:** Given **plethora of platforms and even types of social media**, it is very difficult to choose the type and no. of platform on which to engage and how to create inter-linkages between these platforms.
- **Who will engage:** Most departments have limited capacity to engage with traditional media itself and since **social media demands a deeper and constant interaction**, availability of such resources is even more limited.
- **How to engage:** Many questions revolve around rules of engagement, like how to create and manage an account, what should be response time, what are legal implications etc.

Conclusion

In 2012, Department of Electronics and Information Technology, has released "**Framework & Guidelines for Use of Social Media for Government Organisations**" that can be used as guide in Social media advertisements by Government agencies. Some suggestions are:

- **Well defined objectives:** Objective for use of social media is not just to disseminate information but also to undertake public engagement for a **meaningful public participation**. Thus, due care must be taken so that **people can communicate in their own language**, and **due cognizance** of views expressed is **taken**.
- **Choosing Platform-** Since choices are many, it is essential **to identify one or two key platforms** from which the department may **begin interaction**. Based on objective and response, basket of platforms may be enhanced.
- **Governance Structure-** describes rules of engagement for Organisations.
 - **Response and Responsiveness-** It is important to state upfront the scope of response so that expectations are set correctly.
 - **Content governance-** Content should adequately address **challenges related to accessibility in Indian Languages** as well as **accessibility of content for differently abled**.
 - **Legal provisions-** These must be viewed in accordance with Right to Information Act, Information Technology (IT) Act 2000 & IT Amendment Act 2008 etc.
- **Institutionalization:** Rules must be established so that all policy announcements are undertaken simultaneously on traditional as well as social media.

For more details on Government Advertisements refer to Regulation of Government Advertisements article in April 2020 Monthly Current Affairs.