



## Regulating Promotions on Social Media

**For Prelims:** Social Media, Endorsement Guidelines, Consumer Protection Act, Cybersecurity, Hate Speech, Fake Advertisement, Data Privacy.

**For Mains:** Extent of Social Media in India, Challenges Related to Social Media.

### Why in News?

The Centre has released [endorsement guidelines](#) for **celebrities and social media influencers** that mandates **compulsory disclosure of monetary or material benefits of a product** or a brand they are promoting through their social media platforms.

### What is the New Guideline for Enforcement on Social Media?

#### ▪ Disclosure Norms:

- Disclosures must be **prominently and clearly displayed in the endorsement** and terms such as **'advertisement', 'sponsored' or 'paid promotion'** should be used for all sorts of endorsements.
- It aims to ensure that **individuals do not mislead their audiences through unfair trading practices** when endorsing products or services and that they are in compliance with the [Consumer Protection Act 2019](#) and any associated rules or guidelines.
- Disclosures should not be mixed with a **group of hashtags or links**. Also, in the case of a live stream, disclosures should be displayed continuously and prominently during the entire stream on **social media**.

#### ▪ Penalty:

- If there are any violations, the penalty prescribed for misleading advertisements under the **Consumer Protection Act 2019** will be applicable.
- In that case, the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** can impose a penalty of up to **₹ 10 lakh on manufacturers**, advertisers and endorsers and for repeated offences, a penalty of up to **₹ 50 lakh can be imposed**.
- The CCPA can also prohibit the **endorser of a misleading advertisement from making any endorsement** for up to one year and for subsequent contravention, prohibition can extend up to three years.

### What is the Extent of Consumption of Social Media in India?

#### ▪ Extent of Social Media in India:

- According to the **Global Statistics**, in India, the number of social media users is growing at a steady rate of **467 million** in 2022 due to **deep penetration of internet connectivity among people**.
  - Also, overall the number of Internet users in India has grown to a whopping **658 million**, which is roughly **47% of the total population of India**.

#### ▪ Benefits of Social Media:

- **Democratization of Information:** Social media is allowing the **democratization of**

**knowledge and broader communication.** Billions of netizens around the world now feel empowered to bypass traditional curators of information.

- They have also become **creators and disseminators of content**, not just consumers of it.
- **Direct Interaction with Government:** Today social media has empowered common people to **directly interact with the government and avail government services directly.**
  - Common people tagging **Railway and other ministries** and the agencies responding to them is common news these days.
- **Promote Creativity and Self-expression:** Social media provides a platform for users to share their **ideas, thoughts, and creativity with the world.**
- **Increased Customer Engagement:** Social media allows businesses to engage with their customers in a way that was not possible before, allowing for more **personalized and effective customer service.**
  - Social media is a cost-effective way for businesses to market and advertise their products and services.
- **Challenges Related to Social Media:**
  - **Misleading Advertising:** Social media platforms are often used to **advertise products and services**, but some businesses use **misleading or false advertising**, which is an unfair trading practice.
    - **Social media platforms** are also used to **post product reviews** by influencers, but some **reviews may be fake or biased**, which can be misleading to consumers and also a violation of fair-trading practices.
  - **Cyberbullying and harassment:** Social media has become a breeding ground for **cyberbullying and harassment**, leading to mental health issues and even suicide in some cases.
  - **Privacy Concerns:** Social media platforms collect and store large amounts of personal data, raising concerns about **privacy and data security.**
  - **Lack of Regulation and Polarisation:** Social media platforms operate with little regulation, which can lead to harmful **content, fake news, and hate speech.**
    - Also, social media can create an echo chamber effect where people are exposed to similar views and opinions, causing polarization in society.

## Way Forward

- **Social Awareness:** A **digitally literate** country is the need of the hour. **Responsible social media** use must be taught at every school **and college in the country and especially in the rural areas** where people can be easily manipulated.
- **Stricter Content Moderation:** Social media companies will need to implement stricter content moderation policies and more **robust systems for identifying and removing harmful content.**
  - This would help in reducing the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and other harmful content on their platforms.
- **A Dedicated Social Media Policy:** A holistic policy to **regulate social media by creating accountability of social media** platforms to not target youth as consumers or future consumers.
  - This will make the algorithms more **attuned towards adults rather than youth.**

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question:

**Q. What are social networking sites and what security implications do these sites present? (2013)**

**Source:TH**

