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Advertisement Guidelines of the Royal Government of Bhutan

Ministry of Information and Communications Royal Government of Bhutan

1. Effective Date

These guidelines shall come into force from.....Day of.....Month of 2016 year corresponding to theDay ofMonth of the Fire Male Monkey Year of the Bhutanese Calendar.

2. Scope of Application

2.1 These guidelines are issued under Section 6 of the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act, 2006 and shall apply to all Ministries, Government agencies, Constitutional Institutions and Government-owned corporations that use public funds to advertise in the media.

2.2 Advertisements shall be defined as the dissemination of all forms of information including tender notifications, public announcements, and other Government messages.

2.3 Media shall include all print, broadcast, audio visual, electronic/digital/social media and public spaces. The premise of these guidelines shall be that all media are functioning in a market environment that facilitates healthy competition.

2.4 These guidelines shall be read and applied in accordance with all the existing laws, regulations and policies of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

3 Objectives

The Advertisement Guidelines of the Royal Government of Bhutan aims to ensure that:

3.1 The values of Gross National Happiness are promoted. (Refer Annexure: 1)

3.2 Advertising plans and campaigns shall address the needs and concerns of all sections of society

3.3 Government officials understand the culture of advertising, public advertising across the Government is effectively coordinated, advertisements of the Government are professionally managed, and all Government messages are responsive to the diverse

information needs and reach the relevant sections of Bhutanese society through judicious use of the public funds.

- 3.4 Public funds are utilized by all Government agencies to inform all people about their rights or responsibilities, about Government policies, programmes, services or initiatives, or about dangers or risks to public health, safety or the environment.
- 3.5 Government agencies shall place advertisements or purchase advertising space or time in an appropriate medium that ensures the reach of the Government messages to the audience that the advertisement seeks to inform.
- 3.6 Government advertisements are not intended in any way to be a form of financial subsidy to any particular media.

4 General Principles

The Government is responsible for ensuring equity, probity, relevance and accountability in all activities that form its communication strategies.

In selecting the media to place advertisements, the following criteria shall be considered:

- 4.1 Reach of the media to the audience that the advertisement seeks to inform. The Bhutan InfoCom and Media Authority, (BICMA) shall facilitate auditing systems to verify the reach of different Bhutanese media.
- 4.2 Media that promote understanding of the values of Gross National Happiness, (GNH) rather than those that promote consumption and commercialism. Accepting that weighing the “GNH contribution” of a media will be a complex task, the MoIC suggests a number of “indicators” that might show the commitment of news media and media companies to this national vision. While this may not be a complete strategy it will be a guide for Government agencies that advertise in the Bhutanese media. The premise here is that, just as the media must hold Government and national institutions accountable, media themselves must be accountable to society.

There are ways that media can express their commitment to society:

- a) Media houses establish written policies that are made public.
- b) Media houses have written codes of ethics that are made public.
- c) Media houses have written codes of conduct for their journalists/employees.

- d) Media issue corrigenda, when they make mistakes, in the earliest issue or broadcast after the mistake.
- e) Media that do not carry “unhealthy” advertisements like junk food, alcohol, cigarettes, and other consumer goods that might affect the well-being of citizens.
- f) Media that carry or promote healthy content. This refers to content related to, but not confined to, the four pillars and nine domains of GNH.
- g) Media that do not carry advertisements that nurture unhealthy values in minors.
- h) Media that promote national more than international content, news and information more than entertainment and advertising.

4.3 Media that publish advertisement rates along with audited circulation figures confirming their reach.

4.4 Media that invest in the promotion of Dzongkha. (Details in section 7)

5Types of Advertising

5.1 There are two types of public advertising/messages:

1. Public Announcements
2. Emergency Announcements

5.1.1**Public Announcements** shall be bifurcated into two categories:

- a. Commercial announcements and
 - b. Non-Commercial announcements
-
- a. Commercial includes but are not limited to
 - Expression of interest
 - Requests for proposals
 - Tenders.
 - b. Non-Commercial includes but are not limited to:
 - Health Warnings
 - Holidays and Office timings
 - Job Vacancies

- Public Trainings
- Public Scholarships and
- Election notices

5.1.2 **Emergency Advertising**

Emergency advertisements that are issued during natural disasters, pandemics or any other emergencies as declared by the Government. All media shall be required to announce Emergency Announcements made by the Government immediately and free of cost.

5.2. **International Advertising**

5.2.1 The placement or purchase of Government advertisements shall also be directed at audiences outside of Bhutan to promote Bhutan's interests. Government agencies are advised to consult the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) or Bhutanese embassies to ensure that the messages and advertisements are placed in credible media.

5.2.2 All Bhutanese firms/agencies producing local advertisements or any international firms producing advertisements targeted to the Bhutanese audience should use local models/actors in their advertisements. However, exception may be allowed on a case-by-case basis if an advertisement is spearheaded by international agencies like the United Nations (UN) for the benefit of the public.

6 **General Rules**

6.1 Government agencies shall not allow non-government messages and advertisements in media produced by Government agencies, except messages that are of a non-commercial nature which directly benefit the society and are of public interest.

6.2 Government agencies shall not use public funds to purchase advertising that support a political party.

6.3 All Government advertising must appear in Dzongkha and English wherever relevant or applicable. Other local dialects/languages may be used if the message is targeting a specific audience.

6.4 Government agencies shall avoid endorsing or providing a marketing subsidy or an unfair competitive advantage to any person, organization or entity outside the Government.

- 6.5 Government agencies shall not advertise or publicly endorse products or services they purchase or obtain from the private sector under contract.
- 6.6 All advertisements by Government agencies shall also be placed on their online sites.
- 6.7 Government advertisements shall not be used - directly or indirectly - to promote a particular Government official or public figure.

7 Promotion of Dzongkha

7.1 On the premise that;

- a. Media are an important vehicle for the promotion of language, the promotion of Dzongkha is included in these guidelines.
- b. 87th session of the National Assembly, in June 2007, resolved that all newspapers must publish a Dzongkha edition. (with the publication of Dzongkha newspapers, this resolution needs to be reviewed).

7.2 National policies mandate the Royal Government to subsidize the development of Dzongkha. The RGoB shall adopt the following strategies to promote Dzongkha through the Bhutanese media:

7.2.A Newspapers

- 1. The Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC) and Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) shall form an Expert Committee to monitor the quality and standard of Dzongkha in all Bhutanese media.
- 2. The Committee shall rank Dzongkha media organisations bi-annually.
- 3. All Government Ministries, Departments, agencies, institutions, and corporations shall subscribe to the top 1/2/3 (to be decided) Dzongkha media as ranked by the Committee.

7.2.B Broadcast:

- a) Advertisements shall be placed based on reach and target audience (Sl. No 7.2 A 1,2) as above will be applicable to this Section.

8. To Ensure Compliance of the Above

- a. The Government shall withhold advertisements from media that act in disregard to national interests including the incitation of communal, racial, religious disharmony or gender bias.
- b. The Government shall withhold advertisements from media that lack professional ethics and credibility. This shall be defined by stories and comments that are baseless and defamatory or repugnant to socially accepted norms of decency.
- c. The Government shall withhold advertisements from media that commit factual errors and refuse to issue immediate corrigendum.
- d. Government agencies shall withdraw public advertising from a particular medium if it violates the terms of a contract (e.g. prints an incomplete advertisement, misses a particular ad spot, etc...).
- e. The Government shall withhold advertisements from media that deliberately breach the stipulations in these guidelines
- f. Government advertisers shall ensure that: (1) established procedures are followed (Section 10) (2) advertising campaigns and products are aligned with Government priorities. (3) national advertising campaigns are adapted to regional audiences.
- g. No Government agency shall decide to withdraw advertising because of content unless the content is proven to breach any of the stipulations in these guidelines.
- h. Government agencies shall make a public announcement of any decision to withdraw or withhold advertisements providing the justifications for the decision.

9. Authority to Confirm the Breach of Guidelines

- 9.1 The breach of any stipulation in these guidelines shall be confirmed by the Media Council or court of law before a Government organization withholds any advertisement.

10. Procedures

In pursuance of these guidelines, the following procedures are to be followed:

- 10.1 The Government shall allocate adequate funding for information services including advertising.

- 10.2 It shall be made mandatory for Government organizations to appoint Information and Media Officers (IMOs) to coordinate with concerned agencies in preparing annual information plans including advertisement budgets. The Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) shall advise Government agencies on multiple ICT and media responsibilities of the IMOs.
- 10.2 For Government campaigns, the Ministry responsible for the particular campaign shall make the following information available:
- a. The production cost of the campaign
 - b. The name of the company or organization developing the campaign
 - c. The media placement cost of the campaign
 - d. The name of the media outlet hosting the advertisement
 - e. Any other information required
- 10.4 The IMOs within Government agencies shall be responsible for archiving all relevant details of advertisements. Maintain a register of advertisements placed by the agency in different media. This may be audited at prescribed intervals.
- 10.5 Government agencies shall maintain, in an organized manner, complete documentation of the activities related to an advertising project. Maintaining this information including chronological records, from the planning stage to post-evaluation, to enable successors (staff, managers and auditors) to rebuild the history of an ad campaign and fully understand the decisions made, what changes took place, who made them, when they were made and why.
- 10.6 Every Government agency that advertises shall produce an annual report that evaluates the efficacy of the advertisements it ran, accounts for all money spent on advertising, where the money went, and include notes about the selection criteria used in determining which entities produced the advertisements and which ones hosted the advertisements.
- 10.7 If the Government pays for an advertisement placement, no private entity can be reflected in that advertisement, including logo and name.

11. Standardizing Government Advertising

a. Advertisement Placement Board (APB)

The current system of distributing advertising funds is so de-centralised and un-coordinated that no one can fully monitor, let alone measure it. Each Government entity is responsible for allocating its own advertising budget to the media of its choice. This un-coordinated process of awarding many individual and small contracts, practically without criteria in place, makes this distribution system non-transparent and vulnerable to misuse.

The system of allocation could be better coordinated and made transparent with a set of consistent criteria through an Advertisement Placement Board (APB).

- planning and budgeting for advertisements
- make all ad placement decisions for advertising needs of the Government and its related agencies
- decisions published on APBs website
- a yearly report on Government ad spending with allocations to types of media, (T.V., Radio and Newspapers).

b. Pre-allocation of the Advertisement Fund

One option may be to set aside a proportion of the Government's advertisement budget for the private media. But this allocation should be prepared very carefully and with the following policy goal in mind: to stabilize the private newspaper market by making sure that at least a part of the total Government's advertising expenditures (pre-allocated funds) will be "reserved" for the private newspapers, thus bringing predictability and stability to the market.

c. Criteria for Allocation of the Government's Advertisements

Government ads to be allocated based on the Advertisement Guidelines of the Royal Government of Bhutan and,

- i) Only media that have done the circulation and audience audit shall be eligible to compete for the Government's advertising funds.
- ii) Only media that publish in regular and pre-determined frequency are eligible to compete for Government advertising funds.

11.1 The APB shall make available to all Government agencies templates for different types of commercial and non-commercial public announcements.

11.2 Government logos and the name of the sponsoring Ministry/Agency shall be used on all Government advertising.

11.3 Relevant contact information shall be included on all public announcements and initiatives. This information shall include the agencies contact person, telephone number, fax number, physical address, email address, and websites.

11.4 All public announcements and initiatives shall include placement/tracking number.

11.5 Each advertisement shall include the media placement number for the campaign, which can be reset every year.

12 Advertising Process

Government advertising process shall be separated into two stages:

- (1) Creation of advertisements (ad agencies).
- (2) Placements of advertisements.

12.1 Creation of Advertisements

12.1.1 Advertisements shall be created by officials of the Government agency or by licensed professionals based on competitive bidding where professional design and editing are required.

12.1.2 The following criteria shall be required for placement of advertisements:

- a. Justification of the media where the advertisement is to be placed, based on the criteria identified in Section 4.
- b. Estimated production and placement costs.

Affirmation that the Minister/Secretary/Heads of Agencies have reviewed and approved the media production and placement plan.

13 Rules and Procedures for Appeal

If media wish to appeal against any decision by Government agencies they may do so through the following process:

13.1 File a written complaint (or request for reinstatement) with the agency in question. The agency shall then have five working days to respond to the complaint.

- 13.2 File a formal complaint with the Media Council (on the establishment of the Media Council) which will study or investigate the complaint. The Council shall announce its decision within a reasonable period, depending on the complexity of the complaint.
- 13.3 The Media Council's decision may be followed by a further appeal to the Court of Law.

14 Roles and Responsibilities

14.1 Cabinet

The Cabinet shall be responsible for the following:

- 14.1.1 Approving the Advertisement Guidelines of the Royal Government of Bhutan submitted by the MoIC.
- 14.1.2 Ensuring that issues related to the release and sharing of all information are managed effectively and with uniformity throughout the Government.

14.2 Ministries/Agencies

- 14.2.1 The Ministry of Information and Communications to update these guidelines to keep up with changing trends in the media.
- 14.2.2 Each agency shall appoint one IMO or establish a Media Cell or Media Department depending on the needs of the agency. Refer annexure 1 for detailed responsibilities of IMOs.
- 14.2.3 Each agency shall be responsible for planning and budgeting advertisements on an annual basis.
- 14.2.4 Government agencies are mandated to train the IMOs, facilitated by the Department of Information and Media, MoIC.
- 14.2.5 Government agencies shall provide their managers and employees at all levels with the skills to implement these guidelines. Incoming employees shall be informed about these guidelines and encouraged to familiarize themselves with it.

14.3 Information and Media Officers (IMOs)

14.3.1 Monitor coverage of the Ministry/Agency, including coverage in the social media.

14.3.2 Formulate and compile the annual advertisement plan and budget.

14.3.3 Each IMO shall also be trained in the following media skills:

- a. To use simple and clear language in all public advertisements,
- b. Writing press briefs and press releases,
- c. Placing advertisements based on target audience and reach,
- d. Deciding on the best medium to use, e.g. Billboards, TV, radio, internet, theatre, drama, jingles, text messaging, door-to-door, publications.

15 Monitoring and Evaluation

15.1 Each Government agency shall be responsible for an annual audit of the expenditure on advertisements and evaluating the efficacy of advertising campaigns.

15.2 Large campaigns shall be required to be evaluated for effectiveness. Ways to do this include but are not limited to: setting up a website and then monitoring traffic, putting in place a response mechanism (e.g. a call to action or toll-free phone number) and then measuring the response.

15.3 The heads of the Ministry/Agency shall monitor implementation of these guidelines. Evaluations shall be organised by the APB to assess the effectiveness of these guidelines bi-annually and submit a report annually to the Government and post on its website.

16 Sponsorships

Advertisements sponsored by other institutions, donors/development partners shall comply with these guidelines and their contributions shall be acknowledged.

16.1 Government agencies shall issue and receive sponsorships - arrangements in which one party provides another with financial resources or in-kind assistance to support a project or activity of mutual interest and benefit. Like all collaborative arrangements, sponsorships must be communicated in a manner that is fair and equitable to each party.

16.2 Government agencies shall acknowledge their sponsors when communicating with the public about a sponsored activity. Similarly, institutions must ensure sponsorship recipients

- individuals, groups, companies or other Governments should also acknowledge the Government of Bhutan's contribution(s) to their activities.

16.3 The IMOs responsible for arranging or administering sponsorships shall consult with their Department Heads or his or her designate, who must in turn consult with the Secretary and Minister supervising the Department for communication advice and support. Such consultations shall take place prior to establishing any contractual arrangement to ensure compatibility with the communication goals of the Government and the institution.

16.4 A sponsored project or activity shall include advertising or promotional efforts involving the media as part of a communication strategy. However, such efforts shall not be the focus of a sponsorship, but simply an aide to inform the public.

17 Cataloging and Securing Information

17.1 Information and Communication materials related to Government advertisements, irrespective of the medium used, shall be archived and securely maintained to ensure current as well as long-term accessibility and transparency.

18 Internet Standards and Guidelines

Types of URLs to use, standard page layouts, email standards (addresses, signatures, etc...)

19 Copyright

19.1 Copyright protection for public advertisements will be protected in accordance with existing copyright laws.

20 Inquiries

Government agencies shall direct any questions about these guidelines to the APB, regarding its application and interpretation.

Government Advertisement Guidelines

Appendix A: Definitions

Media – means licensed media (Newspaper, magazine, journals, television, radio, online news media, social media, mobile phones, and films).

Government - means the Royal Government of Bhutan.

Government agencies - For the application of this policy includes Parliament, Ministries, Departments, Divisions, Public Corporations, Authorities and Autonomous agencies.

Government advertising - is defined 'as any message, conveyed in Bhutan or abroad, and paid for by the Government for placement in media such as newspapers, television, radio, internet, film, video and computer games, or other public property and spaces.

Junk food- is a common term used for any food item that is unhealthy and has low or poor nutritional value.

Annexure-1

Roles and responsibilities of Information and Media Officers:

1. Advertising Planning:

- a. Identify Ministry/Agency's advertisements
- b. Managing the Ministry/Agency's advertising budget
- c. Administering media contracts with media with the approval of the Director/Secretary.

2. Advertising Implementation:

- a. Contracting advertising services and purchasing of media space (which agency/org)
- b. Determining where to place ads/who creates them

3. Press Liaison:

- c. Write press releases
- d. Organise press conferences
- e. Organize interviews
- f. Preparing briefs for all Departments of the Ministry/Agency

4. Hold bi-annual meetings with IMO from other Ministries to review and refine standard procedures, plan collective buys to maximize efficient use of public funds, share and exchange information, revise/amend templates, among other pertinent considerations.
5. Maintain close communications with respective Ministers, Secretaries, and other officials of the Ministry/Agency.
6. Each IMO shall also be trained in writing press briefs and press releases.

7. Gross National Happiness

GNH Initiatives are steps taken by the Government to promote GNH values and priorities. They may be creative content that include but are not limited to the four pillars, nine domains, 33 indicators, and other strategies identified by the Government. The media will be encouraged to produce creative content that are good for physical, mental and spiritual health of the population. They will be discouraged from producing content that promote commercialism and consumerism.