

For Information
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Legislative Council
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

2004 Public Opinion Survey on Film Classification System

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the findings of the 2004 Public Opinion Survey on Film Classification System.

BACKGROUND

2. The Film Censorship Authority (FCA), who shall be the Commissioner for Television and Entertainment Licensing according to section 3 of the Film Censorship Ordinance (Cap. 392), commissions an opinion survey on the film classification system and standards biennially. The objective of the survey is to gauge public opinion on the film classification system and film censorship standards.

METHODOLOGY

3. The survey, conducted in August 2004, comprises three parts: a main survey and two focus group surveys. For the main survey, the sample reflects the demographic structure of the Hong Kong population. 622 respondents aged 13 to 59 who had watched movies in cinemas at least two times in the past 12 months were recruited to attend group interviewing sessions. They were asked to complete a questionnaire and give views on selected film segments and dialogues extracted from classified films.

4. One of the two focus group surveys is the public advisers survey. A total of 78 public advisers were drawn from a 270-member panel of public advisers who are volunteers appointed by the FCA to view films with censors and advise on film classification. The format of survey is the same as that of the main survey. Moviegoers aged 13 to 59 were the target respondents for the other focus group survey. A sample of 519 moviegoers was recruited at selected cinemas. Their views were

collected by follow up telephone interviews.

5. We have deposited two copies of the full report of the survey with the Legislative Council Secretariat for Members' perusal. The executive summary of the report is at **Annex**.

SURVEY FINDINGS

6. In brief, the results of the survey revealed that:
- (a) the public support and accept the existing film classification system;
 - (b) the existing film classification standards generally meet the expectations of the community; and
 - (c) members of the public generally regarded the film classification system as a useful guide for selecting films for their children.

Major findings are elaborated in paragraphs 7 to 18 below.

THE MAIN SURVEY

Knowledge and Acceptance of Film Classification System

7. 86% of the respondents found the current film classification system acceptable. Nearly all (99%) were aware of the film classification system and 80% were able to identify the categories and classification notices of the existing classification system. The level of awareness and knowledge is about the same as the outcome of the previous survey in 2002.

Role of Classification System in Film Selection

8. The respondents found the film classification system useful when selecting films for viewing. 62% of the respondents would use the category of a classified film as a reference for selecting films.

Parental Guidance

9. Parents found the advisory Category IIA (i.e. not suitable for children) and Category IIB (i.e. not suitable for young persons and children) useful when selecting films for viewing by their children. 81% of the adult respondents considered the advisory Categories IIA and IIB useful for providing parental guidance, and 77% of the parent respondents would use these advisory Categories as reference when selecting films for their children.

10. 82% of parents claimed that they would choose films for their children under the age of 18. 87% of parents with children at or under the age of 14 chose films for their children whereas only 43% of parents with children aged between 15 and 18 did so.

Access to Category III Films by Young Persons

11. Out of the 55 young persons (aged 13-17) surveyed, 30 (or 55%) had seen Category III films (i.e. for persons aged 18 or above only). When asked to indicate the venue(s) at which they saw Category III films, 23 (or 77%) said that they saw such films at home, 15 (or 50%) saw them at their friends' homes, 2 (or 7%) at cinema and 1 (or 3%) on the Internet (respondents are allowed to indicate more than one venue).

12. Out of 30 young persons who had seen Category III films, 21 (or 70%) either owned a copy of these films or obtained a copy from friends under 18, of whom, 13 (or 62%) bought them from video clubs/shops, 6 (or 29%) from shops selling unauthorized tapes/discs, 4 (or 19%) got them from parents, 3 (or 14%) had self-recorded copies and 3 (or 14%) downloaded from the Internet (respondents are allowed to indicate more than one source).

Views on Film Classification Standards

13. 30% of the respondents considered the current film classification standards just right, 18% a bit strict, 1% very strict, 34% a bit lenient and 2% very lenient. The public's attitudes towards the appropriateness of the current film classification standards were more or less the same as those collected in the 2002 survey.

Views on Category III Film Titles and Advertising Materials

14. The respondents generally found the existing classification standards on Category III film titles and advertising materials appropriate. Respondents were shown twelve such film titles and they considered FCA's decisions appropriate in ten cases. They were also shown four posters for Category III films and they considered FCA's decisions appropriate in all cases. Of the six video/laserdisc packages for Category III films shown to them, respondents considered FCA's decisions appropriate in all cases.

THE FOCUS GROUP SURVEYS

Survey on Public Advisers

15. 79% of the respondents, compared with 90% in 2002, considered the current classification system acceptable. Some 41% of the respondents considered the existing film classification standards appropriate, 19% a bit strict and 24% a bit lenient. In 2002, 33% considered the standards appropriate, 23% a bit strict and 37% a bit lenient.

16. In the light of the survey findings, we will consider conducting in-depth discussions with the public advisers on their views on the film classification system and the film censorship standards. Findings of the main survey and that of moviegoers will be shared with the public advisers.

Survey on Moviegoers

17. 97% of the respondents, compared with 95% in 2002, found the current classification system acceptable. Some 43% of the respondents considered the existing film classification standards appropriate, 15% a bit strict and 18% a bit lenient. In 2002, 48% considered the standards appropriate, 17% a bit strict and 10% a bit lenient.

18. On the whole, the moviegoers' attitude towards the film classification standards has not changed when the findings were compared with that of the 2002 survey, except that slightly more respondents considered the standards a bit lenient than in the last survey.

WAY FORWARD

19. Judging from the outcome of the three surveys, the current film classification system for Hong Kong is on the whole appropriate, though more respondents considered the film classification standards a bit lenient. It also revealed that more young persons under 18 had access to Category III film materials. Some are downloading such materials from the Internet. We would need to educate young people, through publicity programmes and in collaboration with schools, to stay from Category III films. Parents should also exercise more parental guidance for their young children.

Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority
December 2004



Survey on Film Classification System 2004 – Executive Summary

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority

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Statement of Professional Commitment

ACNielsen certifies that the information contained in this report has been compiled in accordance with sound market research methodologies and developed by, or for, ACNielsen.

ACNielsen believes that this report represents a fair, accurate and comprehensive analysis of the information collected. Information based on randomly selected samples is within acceptable statistical variances.



Introduction

Background

The Film Censorship Authority (FCA) has been commissioning independent survey companies to carry out opinion surveys biennially with the aim to understand the attitudes of the public on the classification system and standards. The last survey was conducted in 2002.

Research Objectives

The objective of the survey is to gauge public opinion on the film classification system and film censorship standards, and, where appropriate, to identify areas of improvement in both the classification system and standards.

Specifically, the survey explores the following issues:

(1) Film Classification System

- Public awareness of the three-tier film classification system and the work of the FCA;
- Public attitudes towards the advisory categories (Categories I, IIA and IIB) and mandatory age restrictions (Category III) in the existing Film Classification System;
- Public awareness and support for Categories IIA and IIB classifications as appropriate guidelines for choosing films for minors; and
- Parents'/ Adults' guidance to minors on the choice of film and minors' accessibility to Category III films.

(2) Film Censorship Standards

- Public attitudes towards Film Censorship Standards adopted by FCA on the depiction of sex, violence, horror, language, offensive behaviour and criminality;
- Public opinion and suggested classification of themes including youngster participating in crimes, triad activities, individuals taking the law into their own hands and inflicting illegal punishment, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, sadism and masochism, prostitution, incestuous behaviour, bestiality, religious people involved in sex, pedophilia, and drug abuse; and
- Public opinion on censorship standards on film titles, packaging and advertising materials.

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Research Design

To address the stipulated research objective, the study was divided into three parts in order to collect comprehensive opinions from three groups of respondents:

- Part 1 – the Main Survey
 - Part 2 – the Public Advisers Survey
 - Part 3 – the Movie-goers Survey
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Research Design, continued

Main Survey This part of the survey intended to collect opinions on the Film Classification System from the community at large based on relevant demographic features (e.g. sex, age, occupation and education).

Target Respondents

The target respondents were the general public aged 13 to 59 who satisfied the following criteria:

- Ordinary movie-goers who had watched movies in cinemas at least two times in the past 12 months;
- Did not hold strong opinions (good or bad) towards film production; and
- Neither knew nor were related to other respondents in the same interviewing session.

Sample Size, Sampling Method and Sample Composition

The target sample size was 600 and the respondents were recruited based on quotas of sex, age, education, occupation, type of housing and parenthood recommended by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) of the Government of the HKSAR Government. The sample was considered to be representative of the demographic structures of the Hong Kong population.

Sample Achieved

A total sample of 622 was achieved.

Data Collection Method

The respondents attended group interviewing sessions in a mini-theatre. During the sessions, the respondents viewed selected film segments and dialogues extracted from the films previously classified by the FCA, and film titles, packaging and advertising materials for films previously classified by FCA. Those aged between 13 and 17 were only shown the film segments and other visual materials that were of Category IIB or below.

A self-completion questionnaire was used to collect the respondents' opinions on different areas of the Film Classification System.

Fieldwork Period

Fieldwork was carried out between 5 and 17 August, 2004.

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Research Design, continued

Public Advisers Survey The Public Advisers Survey collected opinions on the Film Classification System from the existing public advisers appointed under the Film Censorship Ordinance (FCO).

Target Respondents

The target respondents were defined as the existing public advisers appointed under the FCO.

Sampling Method

The public advisers were invited by TELA to participate in the survey. In view of the confidentiality of the public advisers' contact details, all invitations to attend the group interviewing sessions were made by TELA.

Sampling Achieved

A total of 78 public advisers participated in the survey.

Data Collection Method

Similar to the Main Survey, the public advisers viewed the film segments and dialogues extracted from the films previously classified by the FCA, and film titles, packaging and advertising materials for films previously classified by FCA.

The public advisers were requested to fill in a self-completion questionnaire.

All the group interviewing sessions were held at the mini-cinema in the TELA office.

Fieldwork Period

Fieldwork was carried out between 21 and 28 August, 2004.

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Research Design, continued

Movie-goers Survey

This part of the survey aimed to find out the views of the movie-goers who had attended the selected screenings for the survey.

Target Respondents

The target respondents were defined as ordinary movie-goers aged between 13 and 59 who had attended one of the specified screenings in cinemas.

Sampling Method

The respondents were recruited at selected cinemas that showed each specified screening. Their names and telephone numbers were recorded and they were then contacted for telephone interviewing.

Sample Achieved

The target sample size was 500. A total sample of 519 was achieved with the following breakdown:

- 70 movie-goers of “Quill” (導盲犬小 Q)
- 102 movie-goers of “I Robot” (智能叛變)
- 107 movie-goers of “The Twins Effect II” (千機變 II 花都大戰)
- 54 movie-goers of “Tae Guk Gi” (太極旗飄揚: 生死有情)
- 81 movie-goers of “Collateral” (同行殺機)
- 105 movie-goers of “Dumplings - three... extremes” (餃子三更 2 之一)

Data Collection Method

The above-mentioned six films of different categories (Category I, IIA, IIB and III) were selected by TELA for the survey. Subsequent to the recruitment of the movie-goers at the selected cinemas, telephone interviewing method was employed to collect the movie-goers’ opinions on the Film Classification System and the films they had watched. All the recruited movie-goers were contacted within three days after they were recruited.

Fieldwork Period

Fieldwork was carried out between 6 and 25 August, 2004.

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Summary of Findings



Detailed Findings - Knowledge of the Film Classification System

Awareness of the Film Classification System Almost all of the general public (99%), public advisers (97%) and moviegoers (98%) were aware of the existence of the Film Classification System.

Identification of the Film Classification System The great majority of the general public (80%) and the public advisers (93%) had correct knowledge of the Film Classification System. Only 20% and 7% respectively were unable to identify the current system.

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Detailed Findings - Opinions on the Film Classification System

Level of Acceptance towards the Existing Film Classification System

All the three types of respondents showed acceptance towards the Film Classification System. The movie-goers had the highest level of acceptance with 97% finding it very or quite acceptable, followed by the general public at 86% and the public advisers at 79%.

(Table 1)

Table 1 *Level of acceptance towards the existing Film Classification System by the General Public, Public Advisers and Movie-goers*

	General Public	Public Advisers	Movie-goers
Sample Size	613	76	508
Very acceptable (4)	64%	59%	79%
Quite acceptable (3)	22%	20%	18%
Quite unacceptable (2)	6%	14%	1%
Not acceptable at all (1)	1%	0%	0%
No comment	6%	7%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Mean	3.60	3.48	3.77

Sufficient Promotion of the Film Classification System to the Public

Sixty-nine percent of the movie-goers and 64% of the public advisers considered the Film Classification System was sufficiently promoted to the public. However, only about half (48%) of the general public thought likewise.

Perceived Effectiveness Means to Promote the Film Classification System

Television was perceived to be an effective means to promote the Film Classification System to the public by the vast majority of the three types of respondents (93% general public, 96% public advisers and 91% movie-goers).

Other channels considered useful were trailers (64% general public, 78% public advisers and 66% movie-goers) and multi media on board (66% general public, 74% public advisers and 61% movie-goers).

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Detailed Findings - Opinions on the Film Classification System, continued

Age Restriction of Watching Category III Films

Nearly eight in ten (79%) of the general public thought it was appropriate to set the minimum age of watching Category III films at 18. This age restriction was considered appropriate by an even higher proportion of the public advisers (82%) and movie-goers (92%).

Amongst those who did not agree to the existing age restriction for Category III films, most of them proposed a stricter age limit which should be 20 years old or above.

Appropriate Organization to Carry Out Film Censorship and Classification

A significant majority of the movie-goers (93%) considered TELA appropriate for carrying out the role of film censorship and classification. Around seven in ten of the general public (70%) and public advisers (72%) thought likewise.

Amongst those who did not regard TELA appropriate for the tasks, 68% of the general public considered an organization from the general public would be a more appropriate body to carry out such role, while 61% of the public advisers would like an organization appointed by the Government to be responsible for the tasks.

Most movie-goers who did not regard TELA appropriate to perform film censorship and classification held the view that an organization from the film industry would be more suitable to take up the work (56%).

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Detailed Findings – Reference Made to the Film Classification System When Selecting Films

Incidence of Referring to Film Category When Selecting Films

Amongst the three groups of respondents, public advisers (77%) had the highest incidence of referring to the film category when selecting films, followed by the general public (62%) and the movie-goers (61%).

Furthermore, 60% of the public advisers paid attention to whether the films belonged to Category IIA or IIB when they chose films, while only less than half of the general public (37%) and movie-goers (40%) did so.

Helpfulness of Sub-division of Category II Films to Parents in Selecting Films for Children

The great majority of the three groups of respondents regarded the sub-division of Category II helpful to parents in selecting films for children (81% of the general public, 96% of the public advisers and 64% of the movie-goers).

Provision of Classification Information Available on TELA's Website

Only a minority (23% of the general public, 22% of the public advisers and 5% of the movie-goers) was aware of the provision of classification information available on TELA's website.

Ninety-two percent of the movie-goers and 88% of the general public considered it very or quite helpful for TELA's website to provide classification information on films. Only slightly fewer public advisers (82%) held the same view.

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Detailed Findings – Parental Guidance on Selecting Films for Children

Parental Guidance on Selecting Films for Children

a) For children aged 14 or below

Amongst the general public who had children aged 14 or below, the vast majority (87%) chose films for their minors. Nearly eight in ten (78%) of the parents also considered whether the films were of IIA or IIB when selecting Category II films for their children aged 14 or below.

Likewise, most of the public advisers (81%) and movie-goers chose films for their children aged 14 or below, among whom a majority (85% of public advisers and 70% of movie-goers) checked whether the films belonged to Category IIA or IIB.

b) For children aged between 15 and 18

Forty-three percent of the general public who had children aged between 15 and 18 chose films for their minors and the majority of these parents (74%) considered whether the films were of Category IIA or IIB when selecting Category II films for their children of such age.

Most of the public advisers (71%) chose films for their children aged between 15 and 18 while only 27% of the movie-goers did so. Amongst those who chose films for their children, over eight in ten (80% of public advisers and 89% of movie-goers) looked into whether the films belonged to Category IIA or IIB.

c) For children aged 18 or below

Amongst the general public who had children aged 18 or below, the vast majority (82%) chose films for their minors. Nearly eight in ten (77%) of the parents also considered whether the films were of IIA or IIB when selecting Category II films for their children aged 18 or below.

Most of the public advisers (77%) chose films for their children aged 18 or below while only 61% of the movie-goers did so. Amongst those who chose films for their children, over seven in ten (88% of the public advisers and 72% of movie-goers) looked into whether the films belonged to Category IIA or IIB.

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Detailed Findings – Young Persons’ Habits of Viewing Category III Films

Incidence of Watching Category III Films

Slightly more than half (55%) of the general public who were aged 13-17 (referred to “young general public” hereafter) had ever watched Category III films.

A smaller proportion (24%) of movie-goers from the age bracket 13-17 (referred to “young movie-goers” hereafter) had ever watched such films.

Number of Times Watching Category III Films

Virtually all the of young general public (97%) and young movie-goers (84%) who had ever watched Category III films had watched such films for five or fewer times in the past year.

Place of Watching Category III Films

The two most popular places of the young general public of watching Category III films were their own homes (77%) and their friends’ homes (50%), while the young movie-goers (68%) watched such kind of films mainly at their friends’ homes.

Person(s) Who Provided Video Tapes/ LDs/ VCDs/ DVDs of Category III Films

For those young general public and young movie-goers who had watched Category III films at their own or friends’ homes, such types of video tapes, LDs, VCDs and DVDs were primarily provided by their friends (89% and 62% respectively), especially from those who were aged below 18.

Source of Obtaining Video Tapes/ LDs/ VCDs/ DVDs of Category III Films

Amongst the young general public, the video tapes, LDs, VCDs and DVDs of Category III films were largely bought from video clubs/ shops (62%). The second most popular source was shops selling unauthorized video tapes/ LDs/ VCDs/ DVDs (29%).

Young movie-goers, however, obtained such films basically from shops selling unauthorized video tapes/ LDs/ VCDs/ DVDs (54%), and to a lesser extent, from video clubs/ shops (38%).

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Detailed Findings – Young Persons’ Habits of Viewing Category III Films, continued

Parents’ Awareness of Young Persons’ Watching Category III Films

Slightly more than half (57%) of the young general public who had watched Category III films at their own or friends’ homes did not let their parents know they had watched such kind of films.

Similarly, the parents of less than half (47%) of the young movie-goers were aware their children had watched Category III films.

Reason(s) for Watching Category III Films

Amongst both young general public and young movie-goers, the main reason for watching Category III films was out of curiosity (60% and 47% respectively). Another reason was that the young general public and young movie-goers thought the contents of these films did not have any bad influence on young persons (37% and 26% respectively).

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Detailed Findings – Attitudes towards Film Censorship and Classification Standards

Attitudes towards the Current Film Classification Standards

All the respondents were asked about their attitudes towards the film classification standards based on a five-point rating scale:

- Very lenient (1)
- A bit lenient (2)
- Just right (3)
- A bit strict (4)
- Very strict (5)

The classification standard was thought to be just right by 30% of the general public, 41% of the public advisers and 43% of the movie-goers. Most of the remaining respondents held the opinion that it was a bit lenient.



Detailed Findings – Attitudes towards Film Censorship and Classification Standards, continued

Level of Acceptance towards Titles, Advertising Materials and Packaging of Existing Category III Films

Over half of all three types of respondents accepted all or most of the titles, advertising materials and packaging of the existing Category III films.

(Table 2)

Table 2

Acceptance (all are acceptable or most of them are acceptable) towards films related materials by the general public, public advisers and movie-goers

	General Public	Public Advisers	Movie-goers
Sample Size	622	78	519
Titles	58%	76%	69%
Advertising Materials	57%	76%	64%
Packaging	59%	70%	61%

The general public and public advisers were further asked to indicate their attitude towards specific titles, posters and packaging of films selected by TELA. Overall speaking, the level of acceptability was positive.

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Detailed Findings – Suggested Classification for Selected Film Segments and Dialogues

Suggested Classification for Selected Film Segments

In the survey, both the general public and the public advisers were shown 30 film segments selected by TELA with the following breakdown:

- five film segments of *sex and nudity*
- thirteen film segments of *violence*
- two film segments of *sexual violence*
- three film segments of *offensive behaviour*
- seven film segments of *horror and shock*

A relatively large proportion of the general public classified eighteen out of the thirty film segments in the same category as by TELA, five in a stricter category, and seven in a more lenient category.

(Table 3)

Table 3 Comparison of the classification standards between TELA and the general public

	Total Number of Segments Selected	Stricter than TELA's Standard	Same Standard as TELA	More Lenient than TELA's Standard
Sex and Nudity	5	2	2	1
Violence	13	2	8	3
Sexual violence	2	0	1	1
Offensive behaviour	3	0	2	1
Horror and shock	7	1	5	1

In general, the public advisers had stricter standard than TELA with nine out of the thirty film segments categorized under a stricter category by a significant proportion of the respondents.

There were eighteen out of the thirty film segments that were put under the same category as TELA. Only three were classified in a more lenient manner than TELA.

(Table 4)

Table 4 Comparison of the classification standards between TELA and the public advisers

	Total Number of Segments Selected	Stricter than TELA's Standard	Same Standard as TELA	More Lenient than TELA's Standard
Sex and Nudity	5	2	3	0
Violence	13	3	8	2
Sexual violence	2	0	1	1
Offensive behaviour	3	2	1	0
Horror and shock	7	2	5	0

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Detailed Findings – Suggested Classification for Selected Film Segments and Dialogues, continued

Suggested Classification for Selected Film Dialogues

In the survey, the general public and the public advisers were shown ten specific film segments selected by TELA and were asked to classify the film segments regarding their dialogues.

A large proportion of the general public and public advisers agreed to the classification standards of TELA on the film dialogues, although some general public tended to be stricter towards “S.W.A.T 特警雄風”, “Golden Chicken 金雞” and both segments of “Love For All Seasons 百年好合”. “Sonny 裸男速遞” was, however, regarded to be too strict by over one-third of the general public – 37% were of the view that it should be classified as Category IIB instead of III.

Appropriateness of Existing Category of Selected Films

The movie-goers were asked about the appropriateness of the designated categories of the selected films that they had watched. The vast majority (75% to 100%) of the respondents perceived the current category appropriate.

Among those movie-goers who had an opposite view, four films were classified by a large proportion of them in a category stricter than TELA. “Dumplings – three... extremes 餃子三更 2 之一 ” was the exception with almost all (95%) movie-goers thinking it should be put under a more lenient category.

End of Report

A full version of the report on "2004 Public Opinion Survey on Film Classification" is available for perusal at the Secretariat.