

Public Opinion Survey on Film Classification System 2017-2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Office for Film, Newspaper and
Article Administration**

December 2018



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Under the Film Censorship Ordinance (Cap. 392) (“FCO”), films intended for public exhibition in Hong Kong have to be approved by the Film Censorship Authority (“FCA”), who is the Director of Film, Newspaper and Article Administration. They are either classified under a three-tier classification system (e.g. cinematograph films / movies) or exempted from classification (e.g. educational, cultural, religious and promotional films). In order to gauge public views on the film classification system and the film censorship standards, the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration (“OFNAA”) commissioned MVA Hong Kong Limited (“MVA”) to conduct the Public Opinion Survey on Film Classification System in late 2017 (the “Survey”).

1.2 Objectives of the Survey

1.2.1 The Survey consists of two parts, namely, household survey and focus group study. It aims at collecting public views on the film classification system and standards. Specifically, the Survey covers the following issues –

i) Film classification system:

- Public awareness and acceptability of the three-tier film classification system;
- Public views on the standards of the advisory categories (Categories I, IIA and IIB) and mandatory age restriction (Category III) in the existing film classification system, film titles, and advertising materials and packaging for Category III films;
- The extent of guidance provided by parents and adults to minors on the choice of films;
- Public awareness of the application of the three-tier film classification system to cinematograph films and film publications in video format; and
- Public awareness of and opinions on the work of OFNAA;

ii) Film censorship standards:

- Public acceptability of the current film classification standards;
- Public attitudes towards the current film classification standards on the depiction of sex, violence, horror / shock, language, offensive behaviour and criminality;
- Public opinions on the censorship standards of film titles, and packaging of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray disc and advertising materials for Category III films;
- Public opinions on the censorship standards of film trailers and advertisements displayed in public place; and
- Public views on the film censorship standards of cinematograph films approved by the FCA and film publications in video format.

1.3 Methodology – Household Survey

1.3.1 The household survey was conducted by way of structured face-to-face interviews with target respondents covering land-based non-institutional residents in Hong Kong who were aged 13 to 65.

- 1.3.2 A random sample of respondents was selected from the Frame of Quarters, which is maintained by the Census and Statistics Department (“C&SD”) and is composed of the Register of Quarters (“RQ”) for residential quarters in the built-up areas and the Register of Segments (“RS”) for residential quarters in the non-built up areas, to represent the demographic structure of the Hong Kong population. For each selected household, a respondent was selected by the “Next birthday method”.
- 1.3.3 The fieldwork was conducted between 3 November 2017 and 8 March 2018. A total of 1,505 individuals aged 13 to 65 were successfully enumerated from 2,134 households. The overall response rate was 70.52%. The remaining households were mainly non-contact cases (at least five visits were paid) and refusal cases.
- 1.3.4 The data collected through the household survey and the percentages presented hereafter have been weighted according to the gender, age, living district and housing type distribution¹ based on the results of the 2016 Population By-census such that the findings could represent the population aged 13 to 65.

1.4 Methodology – Focus Group Study

Target participants

- 1.4.1 The target participants were -
- i. Hong Kong residents aged 18 – 65;
 - ii. from different segments of the population with respect to their gender, age, education, marital status and parenthood;
 - iii. regular film viewers i.e. persons who had watched classified films shown in cinemas or published in VCD / DVD / Blu-ray formats at least six times in 24 months preceding the Survey; and
 - iv. not working in the film industry or related to any other participants.

Recruitment of participants

- 1.4.2 Focus group participants were drawn from voluntary respondents from the household interviews and recruitment through the network of MVA. A total of 62 participants were recruited, with 34 from the household interviews and 28 from MVA’s network.

Composition of focus group

- 1.4.3 The composition of focus group participants was based on the assumption that participants with different demographic characteristics, including age, gender and stages of parenthood, hold different views and have different standards on the suitability of film contents for public exhibition under the three-tier film classification system. They were divided into six groups, including two uni-gender groups of persons without children or with children aged 18 or above only, two uni-gender groups of parents with children aged 12 or below, and two uni-gender groups of parents with children aged 13 – 17.

¹ Subsidized sale flats were classified as public housing in the Survey in accordance with similar classification adopted by C&SD.

Study design

- 1.4.4 To ensure smooth running of the focus group study, two pilot group meetings (involving two uni-gender groups respectively) were conducted in January 2018 to test the running time required, the flow of discussion and logistical arrangement, and the effectiveness of the moderation questions in the discussion guide. Subsequent to the pilot meetings and refinements of the discussion guide, six focus group discussions were conducted in March 2018. Each group consisted of 9 to 11 participants.

Data collection method

- 1.4.5 The focus group meetings were conducted in Cantonese and facilitated by a moderator. At the beginning of each session, a brief introduction of the Survey and the Hong Kong film classification system was provided. It was followed by the following procedures -

- (a) **Part I:** 28 film segments of various lengths, ranging from 20 seconds to 2 minutes, were grouped into the following nine categories and shown to the participants sequentially -
- i. advertisement;
 - ii. film trailers;
 - iii. offensive language / sexual reference in films;
 - iv. sexuality and nudity in films;
 - v. shock and horror in films;
 - vi. offensive / criminal behaviour in films;
 - vii. drug taking / drug consumption in films;
 - viii. sexual violence / perversion in films; and
 - ix. violence / gore / torture in films.

After viewing each film segment, participants were invited to either indicate whether the film was acceptable for exhibition at public place or to assign an appropriate classification category under the current film classification system. They were also invited to give their comments on the film segments using a designated opinion form.

- (b) **Part II:** A discussion session was held to discuss the criteria for approving and classifying the nine categories of film segments mentioned in paragraph 1.4.5(a) and other factors that should be taken into consideration when making such decisions.

2. Summary of Major Findings of the Household Survey and Focus Group Study

Knowledge, acceptance and reference value of the three-tier film classification system

- 2.1.1 There was high awareness of the three-tier film classification system. A vast majority of respondents (88.9%) knew that the system was in place.
- 2.1.2 Among the respondents who were aware of the classification system, 59.4% of them could correctly identify each category in the classification system² and could point out their corresponding meaning. The remaining respondents either mistook that there were three categories in the classification system or simply had no idea of the system.
- 2.1.3 The acceptance of the classification system was high, with 74.7% of the respondents found the system acceptable.
- 2.1.4 41.1% of the respondents indicated that they would take film classification into consideration when making film choices, while 58.9% said otherwise. The main reason for not taking film classification into account when making film choices was that the relevant respondents were 18 or above and they considered themselves mature enough to make their own film choices.

Views on the statutory age restriction (i.e. only 18 years old or above are allowed to watch Category III films)

- 2.1.5 The vast majority of respondents (91.0%) considered it appropriate to prohibit people aged below 18 from watching Category III films. Only 7.0% of the respondents found the current age restriction not appropriate.

Selection of films by parents for their children

- 2.1.6 Most respondents (86.3%) with children aged 12 or below would select films for their children, while 64.3% of the respondents with children aged 13-17 would do so. 95.8% of the former and 96.9% of the latter indicated that they would take into account film classification when making film choices for their children.

Awareness and opinions of OFNAA's functions and responsibilities

- 2.1.7 A large proportion of the respondents (79.0%) were aware that film censorship and classification were the responsibilities of OFNAA.
- 2.1.8 The majority of the respondents (89.0%) considered it appropriate for OFNAA to perform film censorship and classification functions.

² The three-tier film classification system comprises four categories: Category I - Suitable for All Ages; Category IIA - Not Suitable for Children; Category IIB - Not Suitable for Young Persons and Children; and Category III - Suitable for Persons Aged 18 or above only.

Opinions on film classification standards

- 2.1.9 According to the results of the household survey, 71.8% of the respondents strongly accepted / accepted the current film classification standards. Only a very small number of them (1.0%) found the current standards unacceptable / strongly unacceptable. On different film contents in different categories, over half of the respondents (54.5% to 67.8%) considered the current classification standards were “just right” with mean ratings ranging from 2.66 to 3.00.³ It showed that OFNAA’s current film classification standards were considered appropriate generally.
- 2.1.10 In the focus group study, the participants were shown 28 film segments and then asked to indicate their ratings of the acceptability or the classification of individual film segments. OFNAA and participants gave the same classifications to 19 film segments. Participants gave higher classifications to five film segments and lower classifications to three film segments. There were split views among participants on one film segment. Overall speaking, participants’ views were generally in line with those of OFNAA.
- 2.1.11 The focus groups also discussed the factors to be taken into consideration in classifying films. Participants generally considered that the plot and theme, the contents and presentation, the film genre and the target audience should be taken into consideration in classifying films.
- 2.1.12 Participants’ classifications of film contents involving violence / gore / torture and shock / horror were largely the same as those of OFNAA. Participants, however, tended to hold stricter standards for sexuality and nudity, offensive language / sexual reference and sexual violence / perversion. They tended to be more tolerant towards offensive / criminal behaviour and drug taking / drug consumption.

Opinions towards depictions of different contents

- 2.1.13 Respondents in the household survey and participants of the focus group discussions were asked to give their views on the appropriateness of the current film classification standards in respect of the following film contents -

Violence and cruelty / torture

- 2.1.14 In the household survey, over half of the respondents (57.6% – 67.8%) considered that the standards of different film categories in this respect were “just right” with mean ratings⁴ of 2.80 – 3.00, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards. 78.6% of the respondents considered that detailed or gratuitous depiction of cruelty and extreme violence should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition.
- 2.1.15 Participants of the focus group study considered that in making classification decisions for violent contents, factors like the details of depiction, the amount of unnerving feelings aroused, and the degree of harm inflicted on oneself or others should be taken into consideration.

³ The respondents were asked to express their views on a five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

⁴ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

Horror / shock

- 2.1.16 In terms of horror and shocking contents in different categories of films, over half of the respondents (62.6% – 67.2%) of the household survey considered that the standards were “just right” with mean ratings⁵ of 2.81 – 2.99, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 2.1.17 Participants of the focus group study in general considered that factors like the plot / setting, duration, details of the depictions and amount of unnerving feelings aroused should be taken into consideration in making classification decisions.

Sex and nudity

- 2.1.18 In the household survey, over half of the respondents (54.7% – 61.4%) considered that the standards of different film classifications in this respect were “just right” with mean ratings⁶ of 2.68 – 2.93, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 2.1.19 Participants of the focus group study considered that mild sexual depictions were acceptable for films of low classifications. Depending on the extent of nudity, detailed or explicit sex acts should be given higher or even the highest classification.

Perversion

- 2.1.20 The majority of the respondents of the household survey considered that the depictions of the following perverted themes should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition -
- i. bestiality;
 - ii. necrophilia;
 - iii. abnormal sexual interest (such as sadomasochism and fetishism);
 - iv. explicit or gratuitous depiction of sexual violence or sexual acts under coercion;
 - v. exploitative incestuous behaviours; and
 - vi. detailed or gratuitous depiction of a child under the age of 16 years engaging in sexual activity.
- 2.1.21 Participants of the focus group study generally considered that perverted contents should be classified Category IIB or higher.

Offensive language

- 2.1.22 In the household survey, over half of the respondents (56.6% - 62.8%) considered that the standards of different film classifications in this respect were “just right”, with mean ratings⁷ of 2.77 – 2.99, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards. It was, however, noted that respondents felt rather strongly about the use of Cantonese foul language in films. 69.3% of the respondents considered that excessive use of genuine Cantonese foul language should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition.

⁵ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

⁶ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

⁷ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

- 2.1.23 Participants of the focus group study showed tolerance towards coarse expressions which had been absorbed in daily language, but considered that strong offensive language such as foul language was unacceptable for films of lower classifications.

*Drug taking*⁸

- 2.1.24 In the household survey, over half of the respondents (57.9% and 60.0%) considered that the standards of Category IIB and Category III films in this respect were “just right” with mean ratings⁹ of 2.70 and 2.82, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards. It was noted that 82.5% of the respondents considered that detailed promotion and incitement of or instruction on the use of dangerous drugs (such as narcotics) should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition.

- 2.1.25 Participants of the focus group study considered drug content a mature topic and should appear only in films with higher classifications. They, however, showed tolerance towards brief and implicit drug taking scenes. They were also more receptive if the act was depicted in a negative manner.

Offensive / criminal behaviour

- 2.1.26 The majority of the respondents of the household survey considered that the depictions of the following themes should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition -

- i. intentional denigrations or insults to a particular class of the public by reference to the colour, race, religious beliefs, ethnic or national origins, or gender; and
- ii. detailed instruction on or encouragement of dangerous actions or imitable criminal techniques.

- 2.1.27 Participants of the focus group study considered that the seriousness of the behaviour, the age of the criminals, the depiction and consequences of the criminal acts and the manner of insults should be taken into account when deciding classifications.

Opinions towards current approving standards of film titles, advertising materials and packaging

- 2.1.28 In the household survey, over half of the respondents (57.0%) strongly accepted / accepted the current standards for approving film titles. The mean rating¹⁰ was 3.57, which showed that respondents considered that the approving standards of OFNAA were generally acceptable.

- 2.1.29 Respondents also considered the current approving standards of advertising materials and packaging for Category III films¹¹ acceptable with an acceptability rate of 49.2% for advertising materials and 65.5% for packaging respectively. The mean ratings¹² of acceptance for advertising materials and packaging were 3.39 and 3.74 respectively, indicating that OFNAA’s approving standards were in line with the respondents’ standards.

⁸ Drug taking contents are generally found in Category IIB and III films.

⁹ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

¹⁰ The five-point scale: 1-“strongly unacceptable”, 2-“unacceptable”, 3-“average”, 4-“acceptable”, 5-“strongly acceptable”.

¹¹ The current “Film Censorship Ordinance” regulates advertising materials and packaging of Category III films only.

¹² The five-point scale: 1-“strongly unacceptable”, 2-“unacceptable”, 3-“average”, 4-“acceptable”, 5-“strongly acceptable”.

Opinions on whether Category III films for commercial exhibition should be relieved from excision requirement and other views

- 2.1.30 The majority of the respondents (71.2%) of the household survey were of the view that Category III films for commercial exhibition should not be relieved from excision requirement.
- 2.1.31 The vast majority of the focus group participants considered that the current three-tier film classification system was appropriate for Hong Kong because it was not unduly restrictive to either viewers or film makers. A small number of participants suggested that the authority might consider allowing movies which were unacceptable to the majority of adult viewers because of their extreme contents to be shown in designated theatres for niche interests.

3. Household Survey – Details of Major Findings

3.1 Knowledge of and Opinions on the Three-tier Film Classification System

Knowledge of the three-tier film classification system

- 3.1.1 Most of the respondents (88.9%) were aware of the current three-tier film classification system. Among the respondents who were aware of the system, 59.4% of them could identify the categories of the system and point out the corresponding meaning of each category¹³. 24.5% of the respondents failed to identify the four categories of the classification system because they either mistook that there were three categories in the current film classification system or simply had no clear idea of the system.

Acceptance of the three-tier film classification system

- 3.1.2 74.7% of the respondents considered the three-tier film classification system strongly acceptable / acceptable. Only very small number of them (1.6%) considered the system unacceptable / strongly unacceptable. Respondents' views were expressed on a five-point scale, with "1" being "Strongly unacceptable" and "5" being "Strongly acceptable". The mean rating of acceptance of the classification system was 3.80¹⁴, indicating that the system was generally acceptable among the respondents.
- 3.1.3 Among the respondents, 41.1% indicated that they would take classification categories into consideration when making film choices while 58.9% said otherwise. The main reason for not taking into consideration film classification when making film choices was that the relevant respondents were 18 or above and were mature enough to make their own film choices (76.0%).

Views on the statutory age restriction (i.e. only 18 years old or above are allowed to watch Category III films)

- 3.1.4 The vast majority of the respondents (91.0%) considered it appropriate to forbid person aged below 18 to watch Category III films. Only 7.0% of the respondents found the 18-year-old watershed not appropriate. Among those who found the existing age restriction not appropriate, the mostly cited age is 16 years old followed by 21 years old.¹⁵

Whether parents would select films for their children

- 3.1.5 Most of the respondents with children aged 12 or below would select films for their children (86.3%). Among them, 95.8% would take film classification into account when making film choices for their children. Among those who took film classification into consideration, 94.9% of them said that they would choose films for their children given their tender age and that film classification provided relevant information which would facilitate their decision making. 72.2% of these parents said that the film classification system was useful to them in avoiding film contents that could have adverse effect on the development of their children.

¹³ The three-tier film classification system comprises four categories - Category I, Suitable for all ages; Category IIA, Not Suitable for Children; Category IIB, Not Suitable for Young Persons and Children; and Category III, Persons Aged 18 or Above only.

¹⁴ The five-point scale: 1-"strongly unacceptable", 2-"unacceptable", 3-"average", 4-"acceptable", 5-"strongly acceptable".

¹⁵ In view of the small sample base of respondents (i.e. fewer than 100 respondents), percentages are not shown as the figures are subject to large variation and the result should be interpreted with caution.

- 3.1.6 The proportion of respondents who would select films for their children aged 13-17 (64.3%) was much lower than those with children aged 12 or below (86.3%). Nevertheless, 96.9% of the former would consider film classification in making film choices for their children. The reasons for parents taking film classification into account when selecting films for their children aged 13-17 were similar to those of parents with children aged 12 or below.

3.2 Awareness of the Functions of OFNAA

- 3.2.1 Overall speaking, respondents have general ideas of the functions and responsibilities of OFNAA. When giving slight clues, 87.7% of them could identify at least one function or responsibility of OFNAA. The most commonly mentioned responsibility was film censorship and classification (79.0%), followed by examination of advertising materials of Category III films (58.4%) and examination of packaging of Category III films (55.3%).
- 3.2.2 Most of the respondents (89.0%) considered it appropriate for OFNAA to carry out film censorship and classification functions.

3.3 Views on the Classification Standards of the Three-tier Film Classification System

Acceptance of film classification standards

- 3.3.1 71.8% of the respondents strongly accepted / accepted the current film classification standards, only 1.0% found the current standards unacceptable / strongly unacceptable.
- 3.3.2 86.9% of the respondents considered that the current film classification symbols and their relevant notices provided sufficiently clear information on film classification to the viewers.
- 3.3.3 73.0% of the respondents opined that the current film classification standards were just right, while 10.0% considered the standards too strict / a bit strict and 11.7% considered the standards too lenient / a bit lenient. The respondents were asked to express their views on a five-point scale, with "1" being "too lenient" and "5" being "too strict".¹⁶ The mean rating was 2.98, indicating that the current standards were about just right.

Opinions towards censorship standards of different categories under the film classification system

- 3.3.4 Respondents who had watched films in cinemas or at home (VCD / DVD / Blu-ray) in the past 24 months were asked to give their overall opinions on the appropriateness of the current film classification standards in respect of the following film contents: violence, cruelty / torture (for Category IIB and Category III films only)¹⁷, horror / shock, sex, nudity, language, drug taking (for Category IIB and Category III films only)¹⁸ and offensive behaviour. Their views were expressed on a five-point scale, with "1" being "too lenient" and "5" being "too strict".¹⁹
- 3.3.5 For different film contents in different film categories, over half of the respondents (54.5% to 67.8%) considered that the current classification standards were "just right" with mean

¹⁶ The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

¹⁷ Cruelty / torture contents are usually found in Category IIB and Category III films only.

¹⁸ Drug use contents are usually found in Category IIB and Category III films only.

¹⁹ The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

ratings²⁰ ranging from 2.66 to 3.00. It showed that respondents considered OFNAA's current classification standards just right in general.

- 3.3.6 The mean ratings²¹ on different types of scene or depiction in Category I films ranged from 2.72 to 2.86.
- 3.3.7 The mean ratings²² of Categories IIA and IIB films (ranging from 2.68 to 2.82 and 2.66 to 2.84 respectively) were similar to those of Category I films.
- 3.3.8 Mean ratings²³ of Category III films, ranging from 2.82 to 3.00, were slightly higher than the other categories.
- 3.3.9 It was noted, in particular, from subgroup analyses on public acceptance level that -
- i. more male respondents considered the current film classification standards "a bit strict" / "too strict" than female respondents in respect of Category IIA, IIB and III films;
 - ii. more respondents from the age group of 20-29 considered the film classification standards "a bit strict" / "too strict" than respondents from the age group of 50-59; and
 - iii. more respondents who were parents with children aged 17 or below considered the current film classification standards "a bit lenient / too lenient" for Category IIB and III films.

Opinions towards depictions of specific contents

Violence and cruelty / torture

- 3.3.10 In terms of violence, over half of the respondents (57.6% – 67.8%) considered that the current classification standards were "just right" with mean ratings²⁴ ranging from 2.80 to 3.00, indicating that OFNAA's standards were generally in line with the respondents' standards.
- 3.3.11 The majority of respondents (78.6%) considered that detailed or gratuitous depiction of cruelty and extreme violence should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or banned from public exhibition.

Horror / shock

- 3.3.12 In terms of horror, over half of the respondents (62.6% – 67.2%) considered that the current classification standards were "just right" with mean ratings²⁵ ranging from 2.81 to 2.99, indicating that respondents considered OFNAA's standards generally in line with their standards.

²⁰ The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

²¹ The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

²² The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

²³ The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

²⁴ The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

²⁵ The five-point scale: 1-"too lenient", 2-"a bit lenient", 3-"just right", 4-"a bit strict", 5-"too strict".

Sex and nudity

- 3.3.13 In terms of sexuality and nudity, over half of the respondents (54.7% – 61.4%) considered that the current classification standards were “just right” with mean ratings²⁶ ranging from 2.68 to 2.93, indicating that OFNAA’s standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 3.3.14 The majority of respondents considered that the depictions of the following themes should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or banned from public exhibition -
- i. bestiality (93.9%);
 - ii. necrophilia (93.7%);
 - iii. abnormal sexual interest (such as sadomasochism, fetishism) (88.8%);
 - iv. explicit or gratuitous depiction of sexual violence or sexual acts under coercion (86.0%);
 - v. exploitative incestuous behaviours (85.2%); and
 - vi. detailed or gratuitous depiction of a child who is under the age of 16 years engaging in sexual activity (79.6%).

Offensive language

- 3.3.15 Nearly half of the respondents (44.4%) agreed that use of Cantonese foul language in a film should be taken into consideration when making classification decision. However, quite some respondents (28.7%) held a different view and considered that Cantonese foul language should not affect the classification decision of a film. Among the respondents who considered that use of Cantonese foul language should or might play a role in classification decision, the majority of them (65.7%) opined that the degree of vulgarity and offensiveness of the language should be considered.
- 3.3.16 In applying the language factor to the current classification standards, over half of the respondents (56.6% – 62.8%) considered that the language was “just right” in different categories of films with mean ratings²⁷ of 2.77 – 2.99, indicating that OFNAA’s current classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 3.3.17 The majority of respondents (69.3%) considered that excessive use of genuine Cantonese foul language should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or banned from public exhibition. 21.8% of the respondents, however, took a liberal view and considered it acceptable for Category IIB films.

Drug taking

- 3.3.18 Over half of the respondents (53.3%) considered that depiction of drug abuse should be a factor for consideration when making classification decision of a film. 22.4% thought that it would depend on the presentation. 22.0% of the respondents considered that it should have no impact on the classification of a film.
- 3.3.19 Among the respondents who opined that depiction of drug abuse should be or might be taken into consideration, 61.4% of them opined that the age of the character who took drug in the film should be considered.

²⁶ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

²⁷ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

- 3.3.20 In the household survey, over half of the respondents (57.9% and 60.0%) considered that the standards for Category IIB and Category III films in this respect were “just right” with mean ratings²⁸ of 2.70 and 2.82, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 3.3.21 The majority of respondents (82.5%) considered that detailed promotion and incitement of or instruction on the use of dangerous drugs (such as use of narcotics) should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or banned from public exhibition.

Offensive / criminal behaviour

- 3.3.22 The majority of the respondents considered that the depictions of the following themes should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition -
- i. intentional denigrations or insults to a particular class of the public by reference to the colour, race, religious beliefs, ethnic or national origins, or gender (72.9%); and
 - ii. detailed instruction or encouragement in dangerous actions or imitable criminal techniques (72.2%).

Opinions towards approving standards on film titles

- 3.3.23 Respondents were asked about their general perception of the current standards for approving film titles. Without specific titles in mind, over half of the respondents (57.0%) strongly accepted / accepted the current standards for approving film titles. The mean rating²⁹ was 3.57, which showed that the current standards were generally acceptable by respondents.
- 3.3.24 Respondents aged 18-65 and non-sole English speakers (comprising 93% of all respondents) were then shown a list of nine Chinese film titles and were asked to provide their views. Respondents’ views on seven of the titles were in line with those of OFNAA.

Opinions towards approving standards of advertising materials for Category III films

- 3.3.25 Respondents were asked about their general perception of the current approving standards of advertising materials (e.g. posters, newspapers, magazines, vehicles, film stills, exterior walls of buildings, etc.) for Category III films without providing specific materials. About half of the respondents (49.2%) strongly accepted / accepted the current standards. Only 9.7% of the respondents strongly unaccepted / unaccepted the current standards. The mean rating³⁰ was 3.39, showing that the current standards were generally accepted by the respondents.
- 3.3.26 Respondents aged 18-65 were then shown ten film posters which contained different presentations such as violence, nudity, sexual depictions and sexual references and were asked to provide their views. Respondents’ views on the posters were generally in line with the approving standards of OFNAA. Specifically, the majority of them considered all ten film posters acceptable for public display while OFNAA had rejected two of these film posters.

²⁸ The five-point scale: 1-“too lenient”, 2-“a bit lenient”, 3-“just right”, 4-“a bit strict”, 5-“too strict”.

²⁹ The five-point scale: 1-“strongly unacceptable”, 2-“unacceptable”, 3-“average”, 4-“acceptable”, 5-“strongly acceptable”.

³⁰ The five-point scale: 1-“strongly unacceptable”, 2-“unacceptable”, 3-“average”, 4-“acceptable”, 5-“strongly acceptable”.

Opinions towards approving standards of packaging of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray publication for Category III films

- 3.3.27 80.3% of the respondents were aware that films approved by the FCA and published in the form of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray discs on sale in Hong Kong were subject to the regulation of the FCO.
- 3.3.28 The vast majority of the respondents (85.9%) considered that the classification symbols and notices of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray packaging were clear enough for viewers' information.
- 3.3.29 Respondents were asked about their general perceptions of the current approving standards of packaging of Category III films without providing specific materials. 65.6% of the respondents strongly accepted / accepted the current approving standards. Only 1.0% of the respondents strongly unaccepted / unaccepted the current standards. The mean rating³¹ was 3.74, showing that the respondents considered the current approving standards generally acceptable.
- 3.3.30 Respondents aged 18-65 were then shown nine packaging designs of published films which contained different graphic presentations such as horror and gruesome depiction and portrayals of sex / nudity, and were asked to provide their views. Over half of the respondents found all nine packaging designs acceptable, while OFNAA rejected six of them. It showed that respondents were more liberal than OFNAA in approving packaging designs.

Opinions on whether Category III films for commercial exhibition should be relieved from excision requirement

- 3.3.31 71.2% of the respondents considered that there should be excision to films with extreme contents if they were to be exhibited to general adult viewers as Category III films. 23.7% of respondents considered that there should be no restriction on the contents of Category III films, i.e. no excision was required for commercially exhibited Category III films.

³¹ The five-point scale: 1-"strongly unacceptable", 2-"unacceptable", 3-"average", 4-"acceptable", 5-"strongly acceptable".

4. Focus Group Study – Details of Major Findings

4.1 Summary of Findings

4.1.1 To gauge participants' views and standards on nine major categories of film material exhibited in public place and cinemas, 62 participants with different gender, age, education, marital and parenthood status were divided into six groups. They were shown 28 film segments below and were invited to indicate whether these films were suitable for exhibition in public place or in cinemas and if so, their classifications of the films –

- i. advertisement (1 segment);
- ii. film trailers (4 segments);
- iii. offensive language / sexual reference in films (4 segments);
- iv. sex and nudity in films (4 segments);
- v. shock and horror in films (4 segments);
- vi. offensive / criminal behaviour in films (3 segments);
- vii. drug taking / drug consumption in films (2 segments);
- viii. sexual violence / perversion in films (3 segments); and
- ix. violence / gore / torture in films (3 segments).

Participants gave classifications to the above film segments based on their own judgement without discussion with other participants in this part.

4.1.2 Participants' classifications were generally in line with OFNAA's classification standards. Specifically, among the 28 film segments, both OFNAA and participants gave the same ratings to 19 film segments (67.9%). Participants gave higher classifications to five film segments (17.9%) and lower classifications to three film segments (10.7%). Participants had split views on one film segment (3.6%). Higher classifications by participants were generally found in respect of language, sexuality and nudity depictions and sexual violence materials. Lower classifications were found in respect of offensive / criminal behaviour and drug taking / drug consumption depictions.

4.1.3 Discussion sessions were then held to discuss the participants' considerations and standards for approving / classifying the nine categories of film materials. Their views on the 28 film segments and classification standards are summarized in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.7.

4.2 Advertisement

4.2.1 Participants were shown one advertisement with sex and nudity contents which were considered unacceptable for exhibition in public place by OFNAA. The commercial featured sequence of depictions of women in sexy leather attires, with a large part of their bare breasts shown.

4.2.2 The majority of participants agreed with OFNAA's decision and considered the advertisement unacceptable / slightly unacceptable because there were excessive close-up shots of the breasts and cleavages of the female models. Also, the exposure of a large part of the models' busts coupled with their sexy postures and heavy breathing sound carried strong sexual appeal. The participants considered that advertisements of this kind had adverse impact on youngsters because they were titillating and indecent, and that it would not be appropriate to screen seductive advertisements in public place.

- 4.2.3 Participants considered that the key factors in deciding whether an advertisement was suitable for public screening included (1) the impact of the depiction on children and young viewers, particularly whether they would imitate the undesirable behaviours featured; and (2) whether the advertisement would shock, terrify, offend and cause embarrassment to viewers. In general, sex and nudity, violence and torture, offensive language, and horror and shocking content were unsuitable for exhibition in public place.
- 4.2.4 Participants generally considered that public place, for instance, streets, parks and wall-mounted screens inside and outside buildings, were open space. It would be difficult to exercise audience control. Restriction on showing time would not be an effective measure in protecting children and teenagers from harmful materials. Advertisements in public place should therefore be clean for all audience.

4.3 Film Trailers

Trailer with sexual contents shown in public place

- 4.3.1 Participants were shown a trailer of a comedy with depictions including close-up shots of a hotly dressed woman and some intimate and sensuous behaviour of a few couples. Some sarcastic comments on the body shape and the flirtatious manner of a young woman were also included. The trailer was considered acceptable for exhibition in public place by OFNAA. The majority of participants agreed with OFNAA's decisions. As there were only brief close-up shots of the clad body of the woman, sexual appeal was considered to be mild. The participants also considered that the remarks about the body shape of the young woman were intended to be humorous rather than discriminatory and they were not overly offensive in the context of the film.

Trailer with violence and coarse language shown in public place

- 4.3.2 Participants were shown a trailer with violent contents which was considered unacceptable for public exhibition by OFNAA. The trailer featured a killer slitting the neck of a man. His wife was dragged on the ground and a man was beaten and vomited foam. Foul language and sexual references about male sex organ were also heard in the trailer.
- 4.3.3 Participants had split views over the trailer. They were mainly concerned about the joke related to the size of the male sex organ and the crude language used. Slightly more than half of the participants considered the trailer acceptable / barely acceptable for public exhibition because of its comedic nature. They considered that the violent depiction was brief, the Cantonese foul expression was deliberately muted and the sex joke was not overly explicit. Nearly half of the participants considered that the trailer was unacceptable / slightly unacceptable given the frequent use of coarse expressions and Cantonese foul language (muted), and that the reference to male sex organ was obvious and vulgar in particular when such language was accompanied with the scene of the man trying to expose his sex organ. The trailer as a whole was explicit and indecent, and therefore it should not be shown in public.

Trailer with horror and shocking elements shown in public place

- 4.3.4 Participants were shown two film trailers with shocking contents. Film trailer (1), which was considered acceptable for exhibition in public place by OFNAA, featured a brief shot showing a woman whose neck was injured with a little bloodline seen. Film trailer (2), which was considered unacceptable for exhibition in public place by OFNAA, contained a sequence of

depictions including the claws, fangs, bloodstained hand and reddish eye of different vampires, and a vampire being hit by a car and shots of a corpse.

- 4.3.5 All participants found film trailer (1) acceptable / barely acceptable for public exhibition because the injury on the neck of the woman was not discernible.
- 4.3.6 The majority of the participants considered film trailer (2) acceptable / barely acceptable for screening in public place. They opined that despite the unsettling opening scene and the sound effect, the horror effect gradually lessened as the trailer proceeded with light-hearted music. Besides, the look of the vampires was not unfamiliar to ordinary viewers, and the overall effect of the trailer would not amount to shock to most viewers.

Other factors for consideration

- 4.3.7 Similar to the views on advertisements for public exhibition, participants considered that the key factors for deciding whether a film trailer was acceptable for screening in public place included (1) its impact on children and young viewers, particularly, whether young viewers would imitate the undesirable behaviours featured, felt unsettled or threatened; and (2) whether the trailer contents were offensive to children and adults alike.
- 4.3.8 Participants considered that contents involving sex, horror, shock and violence were generally not suitable for screening indiscriminately in public places including cinema lobbies which were accessible by members of the public including young children. If it was unavoidable for such elements to be included in film trailers for promotion, they should be presented in a discreet manner.
- 4.3.9 Participants considered that film trailers shown in certain public places, including cinema lobbies, roadside wall-mounted screens and lift compartments, should be clean and free from problematic materials because of the potential danger of these materials to road / venue users.
- 4.3.10 Participants considered that venue operators, including cinema operators, should exercise sensitivity in the placement of film trailers together with Category I films.

4.4 Specific Film Contents

- 4.4.1 In this session, participants were invited to indicate the classifications (viz. Categories I, IIA, IIB and III) after viewing the film excerpts and to offer their comments. Their decisions and views are summarised below.

I. Offensive language/sexual reference

- 4.4.2 Participants were shown four film segments on offensive language. Segment (1) featured a group of women sharing stories about what happened on their wedding nights and giving advice to an inexperienced bride on her first sex (OFNAA – Category IIA / Participants – slightly less than half opted for Category IIA). Segment (2) featured three enraged men shouting Cantonese foul expressions to each other (OFNAA – Category IIB / Participants – over half opted for Category IIB). Segment (3) depicted a man searching for a sex partner via a website and text-chatting on sex-related matters (OFNAA – Category IIB / Participants – nearly half opted for Category III). Segment (4) featured a three-way phone call (part of the conversation in sign language) on sexual matters with explicit details (OFNAA – Category III / Participants – majority opted for Category III).

- 4.4.3 Participants' views on the classifications of the three film excerpts, viz. segment (1), segment (2) and segment (4), were the same as those given by OFNAA. Participants gave a higher classification to segment (3) than that given by OFNAA.
- 4.4.4 Nearly half of the participants classified segment (1) as Category IIA. They considered that the sexual references therein were light-hearted jokes. There were puns on sex acts and sex organs but only experienced adults understood what they were referring to.
- 4.4.5 More than half of the participants classified segment (2) as Category IIB. Participants considered that genuine Cantonese foul language was not suitable for young persons and children because of its strongly offensive and colloquial nature. Indiscriminate use of genuine Cantonese foul expressions in films might have adverse effect on young persons. However, despite the offensiveness, language alone should not warrant a Category III classification.
- 4.4.6 Nearly half of the participants classified segment (3), which contained sexual references in the context of homosexual relationship, as Category III. They considered that the depiction of a young man seeking casual sex on the Internet in a random manner promoted promiscuity. Also, the exchange about the size of male sex organs and their durability in an exciting state was explicit and might induce sexual imagination.
- 4.4.7 Regarding segment (4), the majority of the participants classified it as Category III. Participants considered that the conversation was a vivid depiction of various conventional and non-conventional sex acts. Sexual movements, sound, description of sex organs and sex act positioning were included in the conversation. The content was considered detailed and gratuitous.
- 4.4.8 Participants had diverse views on whether sexual references in the context of homosexuality should warrant a higher classification. A number of participants were of the view that homosexuality was a sensitive and controversial subject in society. Despite the entertainment nature of films, depiction of homosexual behaviour should be treated with caution to avoid stereotyping, discrimination and promotion of casual sex as it might have undue impact on children and teenagers who were at the crossroad of sexual identity. Higher classification would help draw the attention of parents and adults on the film contents so that they might provide proper guidance to their children. Some participants, however, considered that heterosexuality and homosexuality should be treated on an equal footing if our society upheld equality as a virtue. Classification of sexual references should be determined by its frequency, the degree of explicitness and the extent of embarrassment caused rather than whether they were used in a heterosexual or a homosexual context.
- 4.4.9 Separately, participants' views were gauged on acceptable language for different classifications in general -

Category I : Most participants considered that there should be no undesirable language in this category. Coarse language (if not offensive) and muted foul expressions were marginally acceptable.

Category IIA : Most participants considered that crude / coarse / colloquial expressions or less offensive language which had already been absorbed into daily language were acceptable for this category. Some participants considered foreign foul expressions less offensive than Cantonese foul language and found them acceptable for this category. In

terms of sexual references, most participants considered that they should be mild, implicit, not detailed and not graphical.

Category IIB : Most participants considered that use of genuine Cantonese foul language should render a classification of at least Category IIB because of its offensive nature. In terms of sexual references, most participants considered that they could be more specific but should not be graphical and derogatory towards women.

Category III : All participants considered that frequent use of foul expressions, especially those used in a derogatory and cursing manner which bordered on references to sex organs, should warrant a classification of Category III.

II. Sex and nudity

- 4.4.10 Participants were shown four film segments with sex and nudity contents. Segment (1) depicted a couple taking off their shirts with some movements on the bed in silhouettes (OFNAA – Category IIA / Participants – majority opted for Category IIB). Segment (2) depicted a man taking off all his clothes in the office and walking out onto the street naked, with his bare chest and bare back seen. He kissed a female colleague on his way out. (OFNAA – Category IIA / Participants – slightly over half opted for Category IIB). Segment (3) depicted the sex of a middle-aged couple, with waist-up thrusting and bare-breasts seen (OFNAA – Category IIB / Participants – majority opted for Category III). Segment (4) featured a naked woman sitting between a man’s legs and thrusting with her bare breasts and the man’s pubic hair seen (OFNAA – Category III / Participants – nearly all opted for Category III).
- 4.4.11 The participants’ views on the classification of segment (4) was the same as that of OFNAA. For segments (1), (2) and (3), most participants gave them higher classifications than those of OFNAA.
- 4.4.12 Most participants, including males and females, considered that the depiction of a couple making love in bed in segment (1) should be classified as Category IIB because the scene was presented in a passionate way. Given the ardent expression of the couple, the scene might invoke sexual imagination of youngsters.
- 4.4.13 Slightly more than half of the participants classified segment (2) as Category IIB. They considered that the impetuous behaviour of the young man, viz. getting naked and kissing a female colleague in the work place to express his overjoy was improper and inexplicable. The non-consent kissing might be regarded as sexual harassment. Such behaviour, which was not acceptable by social norm and was unlawful, should not be encouraged.
- 4.4.14 The majority of the participants gave segment (3) a Category III classification because the couple was half naked when engaging in sex. Bare breasts were exposed and there were obvious sexual movements as well as different positioning and conversations on sexual climax. The whole scene was lengthy and was suitable for mature viewers only.
- 4.4.15 Nearly all participants agreed that the rigorous sexual intercourse of a fully naked couple in segment (4) was explicit and should be classified as Category III. They considered that the detailed and lengthy sex scene depicted the whole sequence of sexual intercourse from foreplay to completion. With titillating chats and moans, the segment resembled pornography which was intended to bring strong erotic and sensual stimulation to viewers. It should be restricted to viewers aged 18 and above.

- 4.4.16 In addition, in determining the classification of films with depictions of sexuality and nudity, participants generally considered that the extent of nudity should be taken into consideration. Specifically -

Category I : Most participants considered that there should be no nudity in general, and sex acts, if any, should only be suggestive or implied. Some considered animated nudity without body details acceptable in this category. Pure nudity in natural setting, for instance, brief shower scene, nude aboriginals and children etc. were marginally acceptable.

Category IIA : Most participants considered that mild sexual depictions like passionate kissing and implied sex were acceptable.

Category IIB : Most participants opined that restrained nudity was an essential element in sex scenes in this category. Half-length nudity of a couple and thrusting movement should be acceptable.

Category III : All participants considered that full length nudity in sex acts should only be acceptable under this category. Hardcore sex showing sex organs should not be allowed.

III. Shock / horror

- 4.4.17 Participants were shown four film segments with shock / horror contents. Segment (1) featured prank playing on a mother with a toy centipede (OFNAA – Category I / Participants – majority opted for Category I). Segment (2) depicted human beings being attacked by octopus-like monsters in a spaceship. Some of them were captured by the tentacles of the monsters and then being swallowed (OFNAA – Category IIA / Participants – majority opted for Category IIA). Segment (3) featured surgery scenes showing a large amount of blood spurting out from a blood stained tumour with innards of the patient shown during a surgical operation (OFNAA – Category IIB / Participants – nearly half opted for Category IIB). Segment (4) featured gory massacre of a large group of teenage students and passers-by by a weird draught severing their torsos (OFNAA – Category III / Participants – vast majority opted for Category III).
- 4.4.18 The views of the majority of the participants were in line with OFNAA’s classification decisions for the four selected film segments.
- 4.4.19 The majority of participants agreed that the prank scene in segment (1) should be classified as Category I. The whole scene was regarded as a funny display of a mischievous uncle trying to frighten his nieces but their mother took the blow somehow. The centipede looked fake at first sight and was not scary at all. The segment was considered suitable for all ages.
- 4.4.20 Most participants classified segment (2) as Category IIA. They considered that the look of the monster in the film was not particularly scary or unfamiliar to young viewers, who already had experience in watching sci-fi movies. Also, the swallowing of humans was surrealistic and brief. No pain or harm was spotted during the process.
- 4.4.21 Regarding segment (3) which depicted a surgery scene, nearly half of the participants classified it as Category IIB due to its realistic depiction of surgery. Fainthearted viewers might find it difficult to accept.
- 4.4.22 For segment (4), the vast majority of participants agreed with OFNAA’s decision of a Category III classification. They opined that the scene was a depiction of massacre which was presented in a very sudden manner. Though a bit far-fetched, the killing was senseless and

indiscriminate and the impact of bloody severed bodies all over the place was mind-boggling. The gory aftermath of the mysterious mass killing was terrifying even to adult viewers.

- 4.4.23 In general, participants considered that given the impact of fear and shock varied from person to person, it would be difficult to decide on the classification of such films as some viewers might find horror films difficult to consume and might have nightmare after watching them, while some others might enjoy the excitement brought by this movie genre.
- 4.4.24 Nonetheless, participants considered that the following factors should be taken into account in classifying films with horror and shocking contents –
- the more realistic the plot / setting, the stronger the horror impact;
 - the longer the lead-in to the horror scene, the greater the impact;
 - the more bloody and morbid details, the stronger the horror impact;
 - the more elements of cruelty and torture, the more they attributed to the building of fear;
 - the more mystical or eerie the sound effect, the larger the fear impact; and
 - the more unnerving the presentation, the stronger the horror impact.

IV. *Offensive / criminal behaviour*

- 4.4.25 Participants were shown three film segments with offensive / criminal behaviour contents. Segment (1) depicted a man who allowed his nine-year old son to drive his car on his lap (OFNAA – Category IIA / Participants – varied but more opted for Category IIA). Segment (2) featured a woman shoplifting a piece of jewellery by putting it into her mouth. She was caught red-handed by the security guard (OFNAA – Category IIA / Participants – nearly half opted for Category IIA). Segment (3) contained scenes showing a boy shooting the head of a gangster with blood spurting effect. There were close-up shots of the bloodstained head and chest of the victim (OFNAA – Category III / Participants – slightly over half opted for Category IIB).
- 4.4.26 Most participants' views were in line with those of OFNAA in two segments with offensive/ criminal behaviour contents, viz. segments (1) and (2), as Category IIA. For segment (3), slightly over half of the participants gave it a lower classification, viz. Category IIB, versus OFNAA's classification of Category III.
- 4.4.27 Relatively more participants classified the child driving scene in segment (1) as Category IIA. They considered that as underage driving was illegal and dangerous, the depiction downplayed the danger of underage driving and might encourage children viewers to take the matter lightly if they watched the film unsupervised.
- 4.4.28 Nearly half of the participants classified the shoplifting scene in segment (2) as Category IIA because they considered that very young children who had not developed their moral sense might imitate the act. Quite some participants, however, thought that a Category IIB classification was necessary as the depiction of shoplifting was detailed and instructional.
- 4.4.29 Slightly more than half of the participants classified the underage murder scene in segment (3) as Category IIB. They considered that the entire scene was a glamorization of violence and promoted revenge as a heroic act. It would instil a wrong concept in youngsters that violence was a way to solve problems. Having said that, they were of the view that the violence depicted was brief and not too gory, and therefore a Category III classification was not warranted.

4.4.30 In general, participants considered that the following factors should be taken into account when classifying films involving offensive / criminal behaviours –

- the seriousness of the crime / inappropriate behaviour in question. Whether the act was dangerous and could cause harm to both oneself and the others;
- the age of the character who engaged in the offensive behaviour or the crime. It was less acceptable if the person was a child or a teenager;
- the level of detail of the depiction, such as the duration and frequency of the inappropriate / offensive behaviour in the film;
- whether it was an instructional demonstration of the unlawful / criminal act;
- whether the content attempted to convey a wholesome message. It was more tolerable if the wrongdoer was punished for his/her misdeeds or a moral lesson was taught;
- whether the act was easily imitable by children or young people; and
- whether torture / violence was involved and the degree of suffering and harm inflicted on the characters.

V. Dangerous drug taking / drug abuse

4.4.31 Participants were shown two film segments with drug taking contents. Segment (1) depicted a man who was given drug by a woman and they were seen rubbing cocaine on their teeth, followed by close-up shots of the man snorting lines of cocaine from a photo frame (OFNAA – Category IIB / Participants – majority opted for Category IIB). Segment (2) featured a man smoking a joint and passing it to two children who shared it with joy (OFNAA – Category III / Participants – over half opted for Category IIB).

4.4.32 Over 60% of the participants gave a Category IIB classification to segment (1). They considered that the topic of addictive / dangerous drug taking should be handled with great caution. Cocaine sniffing, which was an unlawful and unhealthy addiction, was presented in the segment as a pleasurable, casual social activity among successful artists despite the consequences. Youngsters, in particular, would be most intrigued by the aforementioned lifestyle. Also, they considered that the drug taking scene was instructional. It would be prudent to classify it as Category IIB.

4.4.33 More than half of the participants classified the smoking scene in segment (2) as Category IIB given that the joint resembled an ordinary cigarette and that without a strong hint, general viewers would not notice that the children were offered drug. They considered it stringent to classify the scene as Category III given its implicit depiction.

4.4.34 In addition, participants highlighted the following factors to be considered in classification of drug use contents –

- the depiction of drug consumption in the film. It was less acceptable if the activity was depicted in a positive and realistic light;
- the level of detail of the depiction. Whether the scene was instructional and would cause easy imitation by young people and the frequency of the drug taking behaviour in the film. Implicit presentation was more acceptable while prolonged and frequent depiction of drug taking / trading, preparation for drug taking and the exhilarating effect after drug use was less acceptable; and
- the age of the drug user. It was less acceptable if young people or children took part in the activity.

VI. Sexual violence/ perversion

- 4.4.35 Participants were shown three film segments with sexual violence / perverted contents. Segment (1) contained depictions of raping and killing a drunken woman (OFNAA – Category IIB / Participants – over half opted for Category III). Segment (2) contained scenes of a woman reading a book on sadomasochism behaviour intertwined with separate shots of the woman and a man being sexually tortured, with whipping acts and bruises on their buttocks (OFNAA – Category III / Participants – large majority opted for Category III). Segment (3) depicted a woman performing oral sex on a man, followed by scenes showing her cutting the penis of the man with a knife, biting it away and ripping open the erected penis (OFNAA – excisions required for public exhibition under Category III; Participants – majority considered it not suitable for public exhibition even under Category III).
- 4.4.36 The majority of participants held the same view as that of OFNAA for segment (2), viz. Category III, and segment (3), viz. unsuitable for exhibition under Category III.
- 4.4.37 Slightly more than half of the participants, however, held a stricter view (i.e. Category III) than that of OFNAA (i.e. Category IIB) for segment (1). The participants considered that segment (1) should warrant a Category III classification because it involved not only rape of a drunken woman but also serious harm and eventually killing of the woman in a brutal way. They considered it unnerving because of the strong violence and gory effect and that the scene should be restricted to adult viewers only. Nevertheless, a considerable number of participants considered the classification of Category IIB suitable because the presentation of the rape scene was brief and implicit, and there was no nudity and the killing was not overly gruesome.
- 4.4.38 The vast majority of participants classified the sadomasochism scene in film segment (2) as Category III. They commented that the whole sequence was a depiction of sexual perversion whereby the male audience in the film enjoyed sensual pleasure by listening to an erotic novel reading session conducted by a sexually attractive woman. The reading involved rich, intense and titillating verbal description of lustful sadomasochism and sexual intercourse. It was intertwined with scenes showing whipping of male bare buttocks and the fulfilling facial expressions of the listeners. Such depiction should be for adults only.
- 4.4.39 Nearly two-thirds of the participants agreed with OFNAA's decision that segment (3) had exceeded the Category III boundary. They considered that the scene, which involved very graphic sexual violence and brutal castration of a man by splitting and tearing off his penis, was extremely violent, cruel, perverted and unsettling even for adult viewers. It should be banned from public exhibition.
- 4.4.40 In addition, participants considered that the following factors should be taken into consideration when classifying a film or deciding whether a film was suitable for public exhibition –
- the level of detail of the depiction (e.g. duration and frequency of the act in the film, degree of nudity, degree of suffering and harm inflicted on the characters, degree of violence or gore and whether the depiction was gratuitous and exploitative);
 - whether the behaviour was depicted in a positive or negative light. It was less acceptable if the content amounted to promotion or encouragement of such behaviour;
 - whether the depiction would cause strong threat / fear / distress; and
 - whether children or young persons were engaged in the depiction.

VII. Violence / gore / torture

- 4.4.41 Participants were shown three film segments with violence / gore / torture contents. Segment (1) involved scenes of two men imitating the wrestling skills shown on the TV screen in their fight, including twisting arm and leg, locking leg and neck (OFNAA – Category IIA / Participants – half opted for Category IIA). Segment (2) showed how kidnappers executed the captives, with detailed depiction of the strangling acts and the agony of the victims. (OFNAA – Category IIB / Participants – majority opted for Category IIB). Segment (3) depicted three teenagers killing the zombies around, with scenes of several zombies’ heads being slashed by an electric mowing knife and blown off by shotgun with gory impact. (OFNAA – Category III / Participants – majority opted for Category III).
- 4.4.42 Most participants gave the same classifications as those of OFNAA in all three film segments shown to them.
- 4.4.43 Half of the participants considered it acceptable to give segment (1) a Category IIA classification because of the comical effect of the scene, mild violence and no sight of blood. Some participants, however, considered that it should be classified as Category IIB because the lewd and funny wrestling might be appealing to teenagers and would invite imitation causing injury and undersirable behaviour.
- 4.4.44 The vast majority of participants found the strangulation depiction in segment (2) warranted a Category IIB classification. They considered that the execution scene was prolonged and detailed, and the agony of the victim was realistic and unsettling.
- 4.4.45 For the mass zombie killing scene in segment (3), about 60% of the participants classified it as Category III because the gory killing was excessive and was obviously not suitable for children and teenagers.
- 4.4.46 In general, participants considered that the following factors should be taken into consideration when classifying films with violence / gore / torture contents –
- the level of detail of the depiction (i.e. duration and frequency of violence scenes, degree of violence / gore; any inclusion of gruesome details);
 - whether the depiction was realistic or surreal;
 - how unnerving the presentation was to viewers;
 - the degree of harm inflicted on oneself or the others;
 - whether the contents promoted or glorified violence / torture. It was less acceptable if violence was presented in a positive light;
 - whether there was any use of dangerous weapons. It was less acceptable if the use of weapon was involved; and
 - the genre of the film, e.g. there was more tolerance for surrealistic sci-fi, wartime story and sports activities.

4.5 Analysis of Demographic Characteristics and Acceptability

4.5.1 The following general features were observed from participants' feedback to the 28 selected film segments -

- overall speaking, the difference in classification standards between male and female participants was not significant. Male participants were slightly more conservative towards sexual references and horror contents, but slightly more receptive towards nudity and violence;
- older participants were generally more conservative with regard to almost all aspects of film contents, except for horror and shocking contents;
- participants of higher education background were generally more liberal;
- participants with children aged 18 or above or those who had no children were the most tolerant for horror and shocking contents, offensive / criminal behaviour, drug taking / consumption and sexual violence / perversion. For offensive language, sex and nudity and violence / gore contents, there was no significant difference between participants of different parenthood status;
- students were more liberal in all aspects, while housewives tended to be more conservative towards offensive / criminal behaviour, drug taking / consumption and sexual violence / perversion; and
- married participants were more conservative in all aspects than participants who were single.

4.6 General Views on the Three-tier Film Classification System

4.6.1 In general, participants considered that the following factors should be taken into consideration in classifying films: (1) plot and theme; (2) contents and presentation; (3) film genre; and (4) target audience. Participants' general views on the standards of each category are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Category I

4.6.2 Most participants, both males and females, agreed that Category I films should be appropriate for viewers of all ages. The plots of Category I films should be generally positive. They should, if possible, have a wholesome theme, be empathetic, promote virtues and morals and be educational apart from being entertaining. Films targeting children should be pure in nature and should not contain any undesirable contents or controversial issues. Specifically, they should not contain plots on violence / gore, sex and nudity, coarse or offensive language, horror / shocking elements, indecent innuendoes, and unethical behaviours. There should not be any elements that would invite imitation by children for harming themselves or others.

Category IIA

4.6.3 Participants agreed that standards for Category IIA films might be less restrictive than Category I films in almost all aspects. Negative side of the real world could be introduced but such depictions should be discreet, mild, comprehensible and acceptable for children to watch alone, without bringing about any adverse impact on their mental well-being and development.

4.6.4 Occasional or infrequent use of slangs, crude expressions and coarse language was acceptable. However, genuine foul Cantonese language, which was offensive in general

perception, should not be included. A few implicit sexual references that were incomprehensible to children could be acceptable for Category IIA films.

- 4.6.5 In terms of sex and nudity, Category IIA films might contain mild degree of nudity. Plain nudity in a justifiable context (e.g. breastfeeding, naked model for painting etc.) was acceptable. Mild and implicit sexual depictions were also acceptable.
- 4.6.6 Inappropriate behaviours which were not felonies were acceptable in Category IIA films because older children and young people were mature enough to make sensible judgement of the impact of such behaviours. However, it was advisable to build in a positive message at the end. Contents involving serious crimes, such as murder, rape or drug taking, were considered inappropriate for Category IIA films.
- 4.6.7 Mild aggression, unrealistic or fantasy violence with no obvious harm or bloody effect could be acceptable.
- 4.6.8 Adult themes / plots involving sexual violence, perversion, gratuitous and gory killing, drug taking, torture, cruelty etc. should not be shown in Category IIA films.

Category IIB

- 4.6.9 Participants agreed that regulation of Category IIB films could be less restrictive than Category IIA films. The scope of what could be allowed in Category IIB films should be more relaxed to include dark side of society and human nature. Themes / plots like triad contents, sexual violence, incest, drug trafficking and drug abuse could be allowed but the presentation should be sensible and cautious to avoid trivialization or glorification of such acts.
- 4.6.10 Inclusion of offensive language, both in Cantonese and English, could be accepted. While slangs, and crude or coarse expressions were generally acceptable in Category IIB films, the use of offensive language such as genuine Cantonese foul expressions should be contextually justified (e.g. for characterisation purposes) and with discretion. Excessive use of very offensive language should not be accepted for Category IIB films. Foreign undesirable language was generally considered more tolerable than local foul expressions. Implicit sexual references such as sex jokes were acceptable in Category IIB films, but explicit and blatant dialogue on sexual topics was unsuitable.
- 4.6.11 In terms of sex and nudity, Category IIB films might contain bold nudity but depiction with excessive erotic effect should be avoided. Specifically, portrayal had to be restrained and without undue emphasis on the sex organs. Sensuous sex scenes were acceptable so long as the depictions of the movements were mild, brief and partial.
- 4.6.12 Depending on how detailed the depiction was and whether a positive message was given, offensive / criminal behaviours or depiction which involved dangerous acts could be allowed in Category IIB films. However, the depiction should be handled with caution. Detailed or instructional demonstration of dangerous acts or criminal techniques might invite imitation of adolescents and caused harm to themselves or others. Drug use as part of the plot was acceptable for Category IIB films but it should not be glorified or portrayed in a casual manner.
- 4.6.13 Depiction of realistic violence and use of common and dangerous weapons was acceptable in Category IIB films. But overly gory scenes like excessive blood spurting violence or torture in a savage or excruciating manner were not acceptable.

- 4.6.14 Adult themes / plots involving sexual violence, sexual perversion, underage sex, serial killing, psychopath, drug abuse, torture and cruelty etc. could be touched upon but should be restrained in their presentations.

Category III

- 4.6.15 Participants in general considered that there should be little restriction for Category III films as they were restricted to persons aged 18 or above mandatorily by law. Films with repugnant and extremely controversial contents were acceptable for Category III films but their presentation should be restrained to a level that was acceptable to average adults.
- 4.6.16 Specifically, participants considered that violence could be in a brutal and gory form with severe pain and exposure of innards. Sex could be depicted in an erotic and primal manner but actual intercourse with exposure of sex organs might not be acceptable to most adults. Depiction of serious criminal behaviour such as drug taking and triad activities could be included. There should be no boundary for language in Category III films.

Film contents unsuitable for exhibition

- 4.6.17 Some participants mentioned that some topics such as teaching ways of suicide, killing / torturing a person, making a bomb in an instructional manner, etc. should be banned from exhibition since such contents would have severe impacts on society.
- 4.6.18 A number of participants mentioned that intense / brutal violence, and gore and perverted contents which were disturbing and repugnant to adult viewers, were unsuitable for exhibition because they would damage the mental well-being of viewers.
- 4.6.19 Some female participants opined that prolonged, detailed and explicit sexual contents were obscene and would promote promiscuity. These contents should be banned from exhibition as they affect public health and morals.

4.7 Other Views

- 4.7.1 The vast majority of participants considered that the three-tier film classification system was appropriate for Hong Kong because it was not unduly restrictive to either viewers or film makers. Adult viewers were provided with information on what to expect from a film and the flexibility to choose the right film for their children. It was appropriate to restrict children and teenagers from watching Category III films which were, categorically, damaging to the well-being of youngsters.