EXPLORING THE FPB CLASSIFICATION

GUIDELINES AND VIEWING CHOICES OF CHILDREN

The Film and Publication Board (FPB) commissioned a research study, exploring parent's perception and attitudes towards children's media viewing habits and the use of FPB classification guidelines when making viewing choices. The study is part of the FPB ongoing research not only to ensure that classification guidelines reflect the norms, values and levels of tolerance amongst the South African society but also to provide South Africans with relevant media content information and to protect children from exposure to age-inappropriate materials.

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FOREWORD

The classification or rating of films in the best interests of children involves the use of guidelines which identify not only what is potentially disturbing or harmful to children but also what is generally accepted by the South African community as inappropriate viewing for children in the relevant age-groups. What is potentially disturbing or harmful is based on the findings of empirical research on the impact of the media on the cognitive, emotional, psychological and social development of children. What is age-inappropriate, however, is a matter of family values and public attitudes towards, mainly, depictions of violence, sex, nudity and the use of bad language in films. In order to establish, classification guidelines as accurately as possible given the demographic, cultural and religious diversity of South Africa, the Film and Publication Board (FPB) "consults" the public in a number of different ways.

The FPB publishes draft guidelines at the end of each year and invites representations from the public on the appropriateness of the guidelines and the classification system. Every complaint which raises questions about a classification decision is noted and discussed with the classification panel and where appropriate, factored into the classification process. The FPB participates in research initiatives and workshops organised and conducted by media groups like broadcasters as well as public audience participation programmes where members of the public have an opportunity to examine and classify films, providing the FPB with first-hand information about public sensitivities.

The FPB also conducts its own research to gauge public attitudes on a number of classification issues, like the premature exposure of children to adult experiences, violence, racial and gender prejudice and bad language. All these initiatives open windows onto public attitudes about what is inappropriate viewing for children at different age-groups. Public sensitivities thus inform all guidelines and decision-making in the classification process. Public complaints, public audience participation programmes, public feedback on the guidelines and the Board's research initiatives ensure not only that the classification system, process and guidelines reflect, as accurately as possible, the norms, values and standards of contemporary South African society but transparency in the regulation of the distribution of films and certain publications.

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PART ONE

Executive Summary

This report presents the results and findings from research commissioned by the Film and Publication Board (FPB). The study consisted of gathering both qualitative and quantitative data by means of focus group discussions and personal interviews with parents of children between the ages of eight and 16 years.

The scope of the research involved exploring parents' perceptions and attitudes towards children's media viewing habits, in particular cinema, video and DVD; parent's involvement in ensuring that children do not watch unsuitable content; parental controls employed; and FPB classification guidelines.

Nine focus groups were held across the nine provinces of South Africa during September of 2007. This was followed with 1 000 personal interviews during November 2007 using a semi-structured questionnaire as data gathering instrument.

Summary of main research findings

Table 1: Main research findings

		Total (n=1000) %
TV viewing and parental control	Number of households where children mostly/always watch TV alone	41%
	Controls most of the time/always used by parents:	
	• *Classification guidelines (age & content ratings)*	*69%*
	• Parental control function offered by DSTV	57%
	• Watch film/program with children	54%
	• Read about film in guides, newspapers etc.	52%

Cinema attendance and parental control	Parents and/or children that visited the cinema/drive-in together at least once during the past 12 months	54%
	Children going to the cinema alone/without adult supervision (n=537)	
	• Never	37%
	• Sometimes	38%
	• Most of the times	25%
	Can recall the last film the children watched at the cinema (n=537)	42%
	Most of the times/always use the following controls to prevent children from watching unsuitable cinema films (n=537)	
	• *Use classification guidelines (age and content)*	*71%*
	• Read about movie in guides, newspaper, etc.	57%
	• Watch the film with my children	49%
	• Buy tickets for children and ask sales consultant about film	41%
	Can recall where the classification guidelines for a particular film are shown at the movie theatre	65%
	Have ever watched a film at the cinema with your children only to realise the content is not suitable for them	15%
DVD's and parental control	Parents and/or children that do rent/buy DVD's	94%
	Children rent DVD's without parent or adult being present (n=936)	
	• Never	54%
	• Sometimes	25%
	• Most of the times/always	20%
	• Uncertain	1%
	Can recall the last DVD children watched (n=936)	45%
	Most of the times/always use the following controls to prevent children from watching unsuitable DVD's	
	• *Use classification guidelines (age and content ratings)*	*73%*
	• Accompany my children when renting DVD's	
	• Watch the film with my children	63%
	• Read about movie in guides, newspaper, etc.	61%
	• Ask store attendant for suitability	57%
		36%
	Can recall where classification guidelines for particular film are shown at the DVD store	76%

	Have ever watched a film on DVD with your children only to realise the content is not suitable for them	36%
	Factors that influence decision to watch a film at the cinema, rent or buy a DVD, which will also be watched by the children	
	• *Age restriction*	*87%*
	• Storyline of the film	83%
	• Preview of the film	79%
	• Pictures on the poster/DVD cover	74%
	• Actor(s) in the movie	72%
	• Consumer advise	67%
	• Recommendation by sales consultant	54%
	Responsibility to make sure children don't watch unsuitable films at the cinema or DVD's	
	• *Parents*	*91%*
	• Government through classification guidelines	26%
	• Children's own responsibility	20%
	• Government through censorship	20%
	• Movie theatre house	19%
Awareness of FPB and understanding of classification guidelines	*Mentioned FPB as organisation in South Africa that is responsible for classification of new film/games/some printed media for their suitability*	*6%*
	Classification symbols correctly identified	
	• V(Violence)	87%
	• S(Sex)	86%
	• PG(Parental guidance)	82%
	• L(Strong language)	81%
	• 10,13,16,18 (Age ratings)	78%
	• N(Nudity)	76%
	• A(All ages)	72%
	• 10M	33%
	• P(Prejudice)	23%
	• B(Blasphemy)	20%
	Think age ratings of 10,13,16 and 18 are appropriate for classification purposes	*87%*
	Proposed average age children be exposed to	
	• Violence	16 years
	• Unnecessary violence	16 years
	• Sexual behaviour in context	16 years

	• Explicit sex	18 years
	Current classifiable elements identified by FPB – language, violence, sex, nudity, prejudice and blasphemy, cover all parental concerns	*84%*
	Following should be included as classifiable elements	
	• Drug abuse	87%
	• Criminal techniques	80%
	• Youth suicide	82%
	• Cult/occult themes	76%
General statements about the FPB	Agreement with statement (agree & totally agree):	
	1. *The FPB, through their classification guidelines, is doing a very good job in informing the public of harmful content in new released films and DVD's*	*77%*
	2. The movie houses should take an active role in controlling harmful/unsuitable material watched by children	94%
	3. I belief watching unsuitable content lead to unacceptable behaviour in children	93%
	4. Parents should take an active role in controlling harmful/unsuitable material watched by children	93%
	5. The Government should take an active role in controlling harmful/unsuitable material watched by children through <u>classification guidelines</u>	91%
	6. The Government should take an active role in controlling harmful/unsuitable material watched by children through <u>censorship</u>	89%
	7. The guidelines issued by the FPB is visible at movie houses and on DVD's	77%
	8. The guidelines issued by the FPB should be better communicated/marketed to the public	76%
	9. The guidelines issued by the FPB can be trusted by parents as a true indication of the suitability of a movie	73%
	10. The guidelines issued by the FPB is understood by parents	73%
	11. The guidelines issued by the FPB is sufficient to inform the public	69%
	12. The guidelines issued by the FPB is representative of the different culture communities in South Africa	65%
	13. The guidelines cover all harmful content	65%

	14. The guidelines issued by the FPB is strict	59%
	15. The guidelines issued by the FPB is understood by children	54%
Importance vs. Urgency of knowing FPB classification guidelines	• Importance of children knowing FPB classification guidelines	97%
	• Urgency of children knowing FPB classification guidelines	92%

- The research study has yet again identified and emphasised the importance of classification guidelines for South Africans. It is the 'control mechanism' most often used by parents to protect their children from exposure to unsuitable media content. It is also important to note that parents do not distinguish between classification guidelines shown on TV and those used in cinema and on DVD's. In the minds of the public the guidelines should be similar in interpretation. This finding emphasise the significant role of the FPB as classification authority in the lives of many South Africans and the likelihood that they will support the FPB and its operation.

- Based on the research findings it is apparent that parents recognise the role the media plays in children's lives and the impact of harmful media content. Therefore they attempt to control children's exposure to different kinds of media including, television, movies and games. This forms the basis for the FPB to play a significant role in the lives of South African parents wanting to protect their children form the exposure to harmful material in the media. Parents of younger children also impose stricter measures than those with older children.

- The biggest constraint for the FPB as classification authority is a lack of awareness of the FPB and its classification guidelines. The research study identified a low level of awareness of the organisation amongst South Africans. The fact that many individuals are able to identify classification elements used by the FPB could be ascribed to the fact that these elements are commonly used in the regulation of media content. They are not necessarily known by South Africans due to their awareness of the FPB and the work of the FPB as a classification authority.

- Classification elements specific to the FPB such as P (prejudice), B (blasphemy) and M – ratings are not well known by South Africans and need to be revised or changed. It is not constructive for

the FPB to use classification elements which are not known and understood by most South Africans.

- The research study identified that South Africans recognized the right to freedom of expression but still feel that children should be protected from inappropriate viewing material and that government has a role to play in this regard.

- The research findings indicate that it is critical for the FPB to implement awareness campaigns focusing on the organisation and its responsibility as classification authority amongst the South African society. Increased awareness will lead to knowledge, understanding and ultimately trust in the FPB classification guidelines. In order for individuals to use the guidelines effectively they must trust the FPB as a credible classification authority. Trust in the FPB was also identified as the primary driver of the perceived image of the FPB.

- The image of the FPB as classification authority is driven in part by the FPB's ability to put forth guidelines that are representative of the diverse culture of South Africa and which can be used by the public with confidence. FPB examiners need to take note of cultural differences and be as objective as possible during the classification process. The fact that culture and individual make-up influence both the classification decision and acceptance thereof cannot be ignored.

- Based on the research findings it can be concluded that the current classification guidelines cover most areas of concern. However, a need was identified for additional classification elements. Drug abuse, criminal activities and occult themes portrayed through the media are issues which parents feel children should be protected against. The FPB should respond to these concerns and consider the feasibility of adding additional classification elements. Most importantly classification guidelines need to be flexible and be able to incorporate new elements as issues are identified by society which could have a negative impact on children. At the same time it should be kept as simple as possible for all to understand and interpret.

- The FPB classification guidelines should be more conservative. South Africans prefer more conservative ratings especially for violence, sexual behaviour and more so for explicit sex scenes in movies.

Examiners need to take cognizance of this since it reflects the main areas of concern amongst South African parents. In most cases a minimum age rating of 16 and 18 for explicit sex scenes were considered acceptable. The classification guidelines need to allow for a more conservative interpretation by examiners to accommodate public values.

- The discrepancy between the FPB classification guidelines and public's perception emphasizes the need for 'audience participation groups' including both parents and children in establishing whether or not FPB classification practices are acceptable to the general public. Guidelines must result in classification decisions which are accepted and tolerated by most South Africans.

- It is important for the FPB to note that parents acknowledge through the research study that they play the most important role for protecting children form indecent exposure and making sure that they do not watch unsuitable films. This sets the opportunity for the FPB to implement educational/awareness campaigns for parents. If guidelines are not known by parents, they cannot positively respond to it and correctly enforce it amongst their children.

- It is important for parents that children know and understand the FPB classification guidelines. There is a need for FPB classification material specifically aimed at children. Parents cannot always control their children's exposure to the media, but if children have a basic understanding of the classification guidelines and implication thereof, self-regulation can be encouraged amongst the youth.

PART TWO

Background Information

2.1   Introduction

The scope of the research fell on exploring parents with children between the ages of 8 and 16 years, perceptions and attitudes towards children's media viewing habits, in particular cinema, video and DVD; parent's involvement in ensuring that children do not watch unsuitable content; parental controls employed; and FPB classification guidelines.

The research consisted of two inter-linking phases. The first phase of the primary research involved focus group discussions in all nine provinces of South Africa and was qualitative in nature. It entailed the collection of primary data from group members using conversational exchange.

The second phase in the research followed a structured and quantitative data gathering approach. It entailed the collection of quantitative data from participants (respondents) through face-to-face and telephone interviews using a semi-structured data gathering instrument.

2.2   Research Objectives

The primary research objective was *to gain information on the concerns regarding inappropriate viewing and reading material for children and generally accepted levels of tolerance towards classification elements.* More specifically, the research aimed to explore the:

- Current image of the FPB as classification authority and how it affects its present role.
- Importance of freedom of information and its impact on classification.
- Manifestation of community standards within the present FPB guidelines.
- Limitations of the current FPB classification system and its affect on the application of the guidelines.
- The acceptable classification levels in terms of elements such as violence, language, nudity and sex.
- Classification of material for adults only and level of tolerance regarding pornographic material.

- Level of trust of South Africans in the FPB as a source of guidance and information on media content.

2.3   Research Design

2.3.1   Phase one – Focus group discussions

During the first phase of the research, nine (9) focus group discussions were held, one in each province. Parents with children between the age group of 8 to 16 years were recruited to participate in the group discussions.

Each groups consisted of seven (7) to eight (8) members. An equal mix of male and female participants was sought. At the end, a total of 71 members participated in the nine group discussions. The groups were held between 13 September 2007 and 2 October 2007. The main group specifications are listed in the table below.

Table 1: Focus group specifications

GROUP	PROVINCE	CITY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	GROUP DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	Gauteng	Pretoria	8	LSM 8 – 10 (White) Afrikaans	13/9/2007
2	North West	Mafikeng	8	LSM 5 – 6 (Black) Tswana	18/9/2007
3	Western Cape	Cape Town	8	LSM 6 – 8 (White) English	20/9/2007
4	Free State	Bloemfontein	8	LSM 5 – 6 (Black) South Sotho	20/9/2007
5	Limpopo	Polokwane	8	LSM 5 – 6 (Black) North Sotho	25/9/2007
6	Northern Cape	Kimberley	8	LSM 5 – 6 (Coloured) Afrikaans	26/9/2007
7	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Durban	7	LSM 8 – 10 (Indians) English	27/9/2007
8	Mpumalanga	Nelspruit	8	LSM 5 – 6 (Black) Zulu	1/10/2007
9	Eastern Cape	East London	8	LSM 8 – 10 (Black) Xhosa	2/10/2007

The groups were facilitated by trained and experienced moderators. A focus group agenda was used to steer discussions. During the sessions an open-ended questioning method was used. This gave the respondents the opportunity to communicate their opinions, perceptions and thoughts. Occasional probing assisted the group moderators in steering the discussion in a desired direction. All group discussions were recorded for use in analysis.

2.3.2   Phase Two – Personal interviews

During phase two, 1 000 interviews were conducted with parents of children between the ages of 8 and 16 years. The sample was drawn to reflect proportional similarities of estimated South African household population figures on key demographic and geographic characteristics.

The sample excluded lower LSM (living standard) groups (LSM 1 – 5) due to the very low incidences of cinema attendance and DVD consumption amongst this group. Furthermore, the sample predominantly focused on households residing in the main metro areas of South Africa. Interviews were conducted during November 2007. Completed questionnaires were coded and data captured in SPSS, a statistical software package.

Table 2 below shows the number of interviews conducted by province and metro area. The distribution of interviews insured that a well-spread geographical representation was obtained.

Table 2: Interviews amongst parents – Geographic distribution of sample

	n = 1 000
Province:	
Eastern Cape	
Port Elizabeth	60
East London	40
Free State	
Bloemfontein	70
Gauteng	
Greater Pretoria	100
Greater Johannesburg	155
KwaZulu-Natal	
Durban	65
Pietermaritzburg	30
North Coast	34
South Coast	31
Limpopo	
Polokwane	70
Mpumalanga	
Nelspruit	40
Witbank/Middelburg	29
North West	
Mafikeng	45
Rustenburg	25
Northern Cape	
Kimberley	70
Western Cape	
Cape Peninsula	100
George	36

The sample distribution by race approximates population proportions, with the majority of interviews having been conducted with blacks/Africans (55%), followed by whites (29%), coloureds (12%) and Indians (4%). The sample design also made provision for the inclusion of different LSM (living standard measurement) groups based on population estimates.

This proportional split of race group by LSM is consistent with population characteristics. LSM is also positively correlated with household income. Lower LSM groups are associated with lower household income.

The sample also made provision for the inclusion of male and female parents. Other characteristics identified include household income and marital status. The sample distribution for these variables is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Sample distribution of phase two

	Total *n = 1 000*
Gender	
Male	42%
Female	58%
Household income	
Up to R4 000	40%
R4 000 - R11 999	40%
More than R12 000	21%
Marital status	
Married/living together	66%
Single	34%
Have children	
8 to 12 years	35%
13 to 17 years	33%
Both age groups	32%

PART THREE
Research Results

3.1   TV Viewing and parental control

Although the FPB is not directly involved in establishing classification criteria for TV media content, the exploring of preventive actions employed by parents for TV media content is considered related to those used when watching DVD's.

The following table provides a summary of the main results relating to TV viewing.

Table 4: TV Viewing and parental control

	Total
	n = 1 000
Households where children mostly/always watch TV alone	**41%**
Most of the times/always use the following controls to prevent children from watching unsuitable TV content	
Use classification guidelines (age & content ratings)	**69%**
Use the Parental Control function offered by DStv	**57%**
Watch the film/progarmme with children	**54%**
Read about movie in guides, newspaper, etc.	**52%**

The analysis revealed that in 41% of households surveyed, parents acknowledged that children mostly watch TV alone, without any direct parental control. Amongst the different race and LSM groups, this phenomenon is most prevalent amongst Indian (66%) and black (50%) households and lower LSM groups.

Group members from the various focus groups agreed that it is difficult to keep track of their children's TV consumption and that they have limited knowledge regarding the amount of hours their children watch TV per week, or the type of media material they watch during the day. Some parents commented that due to work responsibilities it is difficult to monitor their children during the day, and that their children watch TV alone most of the time.

A few participants did however mention that when they are at home they are aware of what their children watch. Female respondents (representing mothers) were more likely to indicate that they watch the TV program with their children as compared to male respondents (representing fathers).

The results also show that the use of classification guidelines showed on TV before a program starts is considered the most common parental control used to prevent children from watching harmful media content. It is however notable that the higher LSM households, which are more probable to have access to DStv, use the Parental Control function offered by DStv.

From the results it is also evident that in households where there are younger children, parents are more inclined to use the classification guidelines, movie guides and movie reviews in newspapers as a measure of control to prevent their children from watching inappropriate content.

3.2   Cinema attendance

Going together to the cinema as a family provides parents the opportunity to enforce parental control with regard to the film watched.

Probing those parents that have gone to the cinema at least once with their children during the past 12 months, one in four parents (25%) acknowledged that their children actually go to the cinema alone most of the times. Thirty-eight per cent (38%) said their children 'sometimes' go alone while the remaining 37% said the children 'never' go alone. These results are shown in table 5 below.

When the cinema attendance habits of younger (8 to 12 years) and older children (13 to 17 years) are compared one can see significant differences. Parents of younger children are less likely to allow their children to attend cinemas without adult supervision. Older children seem to have more freedom when it comes to attending cinemas alone.
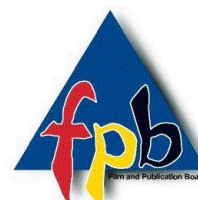
Table 5: Children going to the cinema alone

	Total
	n = 537
Children going to the cinema alone/without adult supervision	
Never	**37%**
Sometimes	**38%**
Most of the times	**25%**

Asking to recall the last film their children have watched at the cinema, less than 50% of respondents were able to do so (42%) (refer to table 6). Those that could recall noted 'Shrek', 'Ratatouille', 'Rush Hour 3' and 'Harry Potter' as the four most watched movies.

Table 6 also lists the controls enforced by parents to prevent children from watching unsuitable cinema films. As was the case with TV viewing, parents in general seem to be dependent on the classification guidelines provided for a film (71%). Second to this, parents consult movie guides (57%) or try to watch the film with children (49%) (although the results suggest that parents more than often do not go to the cinema with their children). Forty-one percent (41%) of parents also indicated that they buy tickets for their children.

Table 6: Cinema attendance and parental control

	Total
	n = 537
Can recall the last film the children watched at the cinema	**42%**
Most of the times/Always use the following controls to prevent children from watching unsuitable cinema films	
Use classification guidelines (age and content ratings)	**71%**
Read about movie in guides, newspaper, etc.	**57%**
Watch the film with my children	**49%**
Buy tickets for children and ask sales consultant about film	**41%**
Can recall where the classification guidelines for a particular film are shown at the movie theatre	**65%**
Have ever watched a film at the cinema with your children only to realise the content is not suitable for them	**15%**

Sixty five per cent (65%) of respondents interviewed indicated that they are aware where the classification guidelines are shown at the movie theatre. Seventy two per cent (72%) noted that it is located on the film poster, followed by 27% indicating that it is shown at the start of the film and 25% in the film guide. Again, higher LSM groups were more likely to recall where the classification guidelines are shown.

Only 15% of respondents remarked that they have been in a situation where they have watched a film with their children only to realise the content is not suitable. Of these respondents, one in two (50%) said there was nothing they could do at the time and continued to watch the movie. Another 34% said they walked out of the theatre while 17% said they told the children to close their eyes.

From the results one can also draw a comparison between the behaviour of parents with younger children against those of older children. It is evident that parents of younger children will more strictly incorporate controls into their cinema viewing. Some of these controls include abiding by the classification guidelines, watching the film with their children or buying the movie tickets and asking the sales consultant about the suitability of the film.

3.3   DVD's

The research study explored the issues of parental control relating to DVD's. Nearly all respondents surveyed (94%) have rented or bought DVD's during the past 12 months. Incidences of DVD rentals are positively correlated with LSM. There is no observed difference between the DVD renting/buying habits of parents of younger and parents of older children.

Of those that rented or bought DVD's, children are less likely to watch the DVD alone. In 54% of cases, the respondents remarked that a parent will be present (refer to table 7). Group members from the focus group discussions mentioned that they try to exercise some control over the content their children watch; however parents seem to have more control over children's home viewing (DVD's) than what they watch at cinemas. Furthermore, they mentioned that when it comes to watching of DVD's children sometimes watch without adult supervision. Parents also do not always have control when children watch at friend's houses.

Table 7: Children watching DVD's alone

	Total
	n = 936
Children rent DVD's without parent or adult being present	
Never	**54%**
Sometimes	**25%**
Most of the times/ Always	**20%**
Uncertain	**1%**

Younger children are monitored more frequently by their parents as they are not often allowed to rent a DVD without a parent being present. The same cannot however be said about older children, whose parents seem to allow them more often to rent DVD's without their supervision.

Table 8: DVD's and parental control

	Total
	n = 936
Can recall the last DVD children watched	**45%**
Most of the times/Always use the following controls to prevent children from watching unsuitable DVD's	
Use classification guidelines (age and content ratings)	**73%**
Accompany my children when renting DVD's	**63%**
Watch the film with my children	**61%**
Read about movie in guides, newspaper, etc.	**57%**
Ask store attendant for suitability	**36%**
Can recall where classification guidelines for particular film are shown at the DVD store	**76%**
Have ever watched a film on DVD with your children only to realise the content is not suitable for them	**36%**

As indicated in table 8 the results again highlight the importance of classification guidelines as a parental control measure. In 73% of cases parents noted that they use the guidelines. This is followed by 63% of parents that would accompany their children when renting DVD's, 61% that would watch the film with their children, 57% that would read about the movie in guides or newspapers; and 36% that would ask the store attendant.

Seventy-six per cent (76%) of respondents interviewed indicated that they are aware where the classification guidelines are shown when renting or buying DVD's. Seventy-two per cent (72%) noted that it is located on the DVD back cover, 31% on the DVD front cover, and 16% on the movie poster. Higher LSM groups were more likely to recall where the classification guidelines are shown.

One in three respondents (36%) noted that they have been in a situation where they have watched a DVD with their children only to realise the content is not suitable. Of these respondents, 57% said they switched the DVD off, 31% said they asked the children to leave the room, and 14% indicated that they have done nothing and continued to watch the movie. During the focus group discussions, group members noted that not all parents envisage the same boundaries for their children. Some parents are stricter than others. Culture also plays a role as well as the individual framework of the parents. There was however general agreement that parents have the responsibility to educate their children on what is acceptable viewing material and what is not.

Younger children's DVD viewing is controlled to a greater extent than those of older children. For all of the controls mentioned, parents of younger children indicated that they are more inclined to implement measures of control. This might be the reason why only 28% of parents of younger children have found themselves in the situation where they watched a DVD with their children and found that it was not suitable for them, compared to the 41% of parents of older children who have found themselves in a similar situation.

3.4   General issues relating to parental control

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent various aspects, such as age restrictions, consumer advice, actors in the movie, etcetera, would influence their decision to watch a film at the cinema or on DVD.

Age restriction (87%) and storyline of the movie (83%) were rated as having the most influence. This was followed by preview of the film (79%), pictures on posters/DVD cover (74%), and actors in the movie (72%). Although rated lowest, consumer advice (67%) and recommendation by theatre or store consultant (54%), it is still regarded as influencing decision-making to some extent.

Table 9: DVD's and parental control

	Total
	n = 1 000
Factors that influence decision to watch a film at the cinema, rent or buy a DVD, which will also be watched by the children (some to large extent)	
Age restriction	**87%**
Storyline of the film	**83%**
Preview of the film	**79%**
Pictures on the poster/DVD cover	**74%**
Actor(s) in the movie	**72%**
Consumer advice	**67%**
Recommendation by theatre sales consultant	**54%**
Responsibility to make sure children don't watch unsuitable films at the cinema or DVD's	
Parents	**91%**
Government through classification guidelines	**26%**
Children's own responsibility	**20%**
Government through censorship	**20%**
Movie theatre house	**19%**

Lastly, respondents were asked to indicate whom they think should be responsible for making sure children do not watch unsuitable films. Just more than 90% noted that it is the responsibility of the parents (91%). Government through classification guidelines were noted by 26% of respondents. These results are shown in table 9 above.

3.5   Awareness of the FPB and classification guidelines

Only 6% of respondents were able to correctly identify the Film and Publication Board as the organisation in South Africa responsible for classification of new film, games and some printed media releases for their suitability. This result is shown in table 10. It was recommended by group members during the focus group discussions that the FPB, as classification entity should become more visible to the public. This could mainly be done through education and awareness campaigns. This means that the focus should not fall on only being aware of the FPB or recognizing their logo, but on what their meaning is and what they stand for. That is what they envisage for the public, namely to enable the public to make informed decisions about media content.

According to some group members, the FPB is fulfilling its role regarding the guidelines and age restriction symbols they provide to the public. There were however other members that disagreed noting that the FPB is 'not doing their job properly'.

When prompted to explain the various classification symbols, respondents were more successful. Symbols such as V (for violence), S (for sex), PG (for parental guidance) and L (for strong language) were correctly identified by more than 80% of respondents. N (for nudity) and A (for all ages) were also correctly recalled by more than 75% of respondents. 10M (unsuitable for children younger than 10 years unless accompanied by an adult), P (for prejudice) and B (for blasphemy) were however not easily recalled (by less than 40% of respondents).

Table 10: Awareness of FPB and understanding of classification guidelines

	Total *n = 1 000*
Mentioned FPB as organisation in South Africa that is responsible for classification of new film/games/some printed media releases for their suitability	**6%**
Classification symbols correctly identified	
V (Violence)	**87%**
S (Sex)	**86%**
PG (Parental guidance)	**82%**
L (Strong language)	**81%**
10, 13, 16, 18 (Age ratings)	**78%**
N (Nudity)	**76%**
A (All ages)	**72%**
10M (Not suitable for children younger than 10 years unless accompanied by adult)	**33%**
P (Prejudice or negative stereotyping)	**23%**
B (Blasphemy)	**20%**

Respondents were also asked to indicate if they think that the existing age categories of 10, 13, 16 and 18 are appropriate for classification purposes. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of respondents agreed.

Group members from the focus group discussions debated whether classification guidelines could be trusted or not. The main outcome of the debate was that the public do not have much choice in using the classifications as guide when exercising parental control as it is the only guideline available to them.

Table 11 presents the average ages that were proposed by respondents when children should be exposed to violence and sex. For violence, unnecessary violence and sexual behaviour in context the average age proposed is 16. For explicit sex the average age is 18. It is interesting to note that Indians and whites proposed on average slightly lower ages across all four categories.

Table 11: Proposed average age children should be exposed to violence and sexual content

	Total
	n = 1 000
Proposed average age children be exposed to	
Violence	**16**
Unnecessary violence	**16**
Sexual behaviour in context	**16**
Explicit sex	**18**

Table 12 below presents the results of respondents' evaluation of media content with regard to its harmfulness towards preschool children, primary school children and high school children. More than 90% of respondents felt that all four categories, namely violence, unnecessary violence, sexual behaviour in context and explicit sex would be harmful to preschool and primary school children.

With regard to high school children, more than 60% of respondents felt that violence, unnecessary violence, and sexual behaviour in context would be harmful to watch. Eighty-per cent (80%) of respondents felt that explicit sex would be harmful for high school children to watch.

With regard to pornography group members from the focus group discussion shared similar views and indicated that the level of tolerance will differ from individual to individual but that a minimum of 18 and 21 are suitable ages to be exposed to pornographic material. Some participants were concerned about the ease with which children can access inappropriate material and felt that the media is pushing the boundaries in regard to the publication of inappropriate material.

Table 12: Media content considered harmful

	Total *n = 1 000*
Media content considered harmful to preschool children	
Violence	96%
Unnecessary violence	95%
Sexual behaviour in context	97%
Explicit sex	98%
Media content considered harmful to primary school children	
Violence	93%
Unnecessary violence	93%
Sexual behaviour in context	96%
Explicit sex	98%
Media content considered harmful to high school children	
Violence	61%
Unnecessary violence	63%
Sexual behaviour in context	67%
Explicit sex	80%
Think current classifiable elements identified by FPB - language, violence, sex, nudity, prejudice and blasphemy - cover all parental concerns	84%
Think following should be included as classifiable elements	
Drug abuse	87%
Criminal tecqhniques	80%
Youth suicide	82%
Cult/occult themes	76%

The results also showed that 84% of respondents feel that the current classifiable elements identified by FPB - language, violence, sex, nudity, prejudice and blasphemy - cover all parental concerns. However, at the same time, parents interviewed noted that areas such as drug abuse, criminal techniques, youth suicide and cult/occult themes should be included in the classifications. No observed differences were evident between the responses of parents with younger children and those of older children.

3.6   General perceptions about the FPB

General statements regarding the FPB and its function as classification authority were rated by respondents participating in the research study.

The first statement measured respondents overall perception of the FPB and the job they do in informing the public of harmful content in newly released films and DVD's (refer to table 13). Seventy-seven per cent (77%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Differences between race groups were evident with blacks (86%) and Indians (85%) being most positive about the FPB.

Rating the trustworthiness of the FPB and classification guidelines, 73% of parents interviewed agreed that the guidelines used by the FPB can be trusted as a true indication of the suitability of the movie. The lower LSM groups were most in agreement.

The rating of statements regarding the FPB and its function also revealed that although the majority of respondents (73%) felt that the guidelines can be understood by parents, only 54% felt that it can be understood by children.

According to the ratings, parents (93%), movie houses (94%) and government through classification guidelines (91%) should take an active role in controlling the media content children see. It is also of interest to note that 89% of respondents felt that government should take action through censorship.

Sixty-five per cent (65%) of respondents felt that the guidelines issued by the FPB are representative of the diversity of South African cultures. Higher LSM groups were however less in agreement with this statement.

Lastly, 77% of respondents felt that FPB guidelines are visible at movie houses and on DVD's. A further 69% felt that the guidelines are sufficient to inform the public of harmful content. Nonetheless, 76% still felt the guidelines could be better communicated. In addition, although 65% felt that the guidelines cover all harmful content, the compliment of 35% of respondents gives reason to believe that not all harmful content is covered.

Table 13: Agreement with general statements about the FPB

	Total
	n = 1 000
Agreement with statement (agree & totally agree)	
The FPB, through their classification guidelines, is doing a very good job in informing the public of harmful content in new released films and DVD's	77%
The movie houses should take an active role in controlling harmful/unsuitable material (films, DVD's, games, printed material) watched by children	94%
I belief that watching unsuitable content lead to unacceptable behaviour in children	93%
Parents should take an active role in controlling harmful/unsuitable material (films, DVD's, games, printed material) watched by children	93%
The Government should take an active role in controlling harmful/unsuitable material (films, DVD's, games, printed material) watched by children through classification guidelines	91%
The Government should take an active in controlling harmful/unsuitable material (films, DVD's, games, printed material) watched by children through censorship	89%
The guidelines issued by the FPB is visible at movie houses and on DVD's	77%
The guidelines issued by the FPB should be better communicated/marketed to the public	76%
The guidelines issued by the FPB can be trusted by parents as a true indication of the suitability of a movie	73%
The guidelines issued by the FPB is understood by parents	73%
The guidelines issued by the FPB is sufficient to inform the public	69%
The guidelines issued by the FPB is representative of the different culture communities in South Africa	65%
The guidelines cover all harmful content	65%
The guidelines issued by the FPB is strict	59%
The guidelines issued by the FPB is understood by children	54%

Lastly, two statements were posed to respondents in order to establish firstly the importance and secondly the urgency of children knowing and understanding the FPB classifications. An argument can be put forth that certain aspects of life, although regarded as important, are not necessarily urgent. This issue is measured through the two statements.

Nearly all respondents (97%) regarded the classifications as important for their children to know. Although slightly lower, a similar high percentage of respondents regarded it as urgent (92%). It is interesting to note that the biggest difference in importance versus urgency are evident amongst Indian and white respondents.

There were hardly any differences between the responses of younger children's parents and those of older children. Both groups of parents deemed it important for their children to know the FPB classification guidelines (98% of parents with younger children agreed and 97% of parents with older children agreed.) The same can be said for the urgency of children knowing the FPB guidelines as 94% of parents with younger children agreed and 93% of parents with older children agreed.

This result signifies the crucial role that the FPB plays in the process of informing the public (parents and children) of media content.

3.7   The image of the FPB

Employing advanced statistical data analysis, the 'drivers' of respondent's overall perception of the FPB's image and the job they do in informing the public of harmful content can be identified.   The results suggest that the perceived image of the FPB amongst respondents is closely linked to the general perception of **trustworthiness**. Secondly, if the guidelines are **not known and understood**, respondents cannot have a positive perception towards the FPB's image.

To a lesser extent, the image of the FPB is also driven by respondents' perception towards the guidelines' **representativeness** of the different cultures in South Africa and that the image of the FPB is dependent on respondents' perception that the guidelines **cover all harmful content** and is **strict** in setting guidelines.

The drivers of the FPB's image =

1.   Trustworthiness of the FPB guidelines
2.   Knowledge of the FPB guidelines
3.   Representation of the FPB guidelines
4.   Adequacy of the FPB guidelines
5.   Strictness of FPB guidelines

PART FOUR
Conclusion

4.1   Concluding Summary

Current image of the FPB as classification authority and affect on its present role

- The research showed that only 6% of respondents were able to recall the Film and Publication Board as the organisation in South Africa responsible for classification of new film, games and some printed media releases for their suitability.

- The FPB (through its classification logo) is mostly perceived in a positive light, given the fact that the public is not that aware of what the FPB is except through its classification logo.

- In spite of the low awareness, respondents were able to correctly identify most of the classification symbols. The symbols 10M, P and B were however identified by less than 30% of respondents.

- The image of the FPB is greatly driven by the publics' perceived trustworthiness of the guidelines. Image is furthermore driven by the publics' recognition and understanding of the guidelines.

- The general feeling is therefore that the FPB can do more when it comes to raising awareness about their purpose as well as the aims of the organisation as this is not currently understood by the general public.

- The FPB should focus on emphasizing their role as an entity whose intent is to provide guidance through their ratings and classifications and thereby enabling informed decision making by media users.

Importance of freedom of information and the role of the FPB in regulating the distribution of films

- Freedom to information is an important part of the South African constitution. Parents, however, agree that children should be protected against unsuitable and harmful content which has the potential of influencing them negatively.

- The majority of respondents were of the opinion that parents are ultimately responsible for ensuring that children do not watch unsuitable material. However, government through classification guidelines has an important role to play in informing the public of potential harmful content.

- The importance of the classification guidelines were confirmed, as the majority of respondents' noted that it is used as primary parental control measure when watching films at the cinema or renting/buying DVD's. Classification guidelines are equally used for TV programs.

Manifestation of community standards within the present FPB guidelines

- The research showed that the image of the FPB is also driven in part by the FPB's ability to put forth guidelines that are representative of the different cultural communities in South Africa.
- Although the levels of acceptability differ from one individual to the next, respondents participating in the research study voiced their concerns about harmful media content.
- The perception exists that there is room for improvement and fine tuning by the FPB.

Limitations of the current FPB classification system and affect on application of the guidelines

- Although the majority of respondents agreed that the guidelines cover all parental concerns, further probing showed that aspects such as drug abuse, criminal techniques, youth suicide and cult/occult themes should also be added in the classification guidelines.
- Age ratings of 10, 13, 16 and 18 are perceived to be most suitable. Furthermore, parents agree that children should be protected against viewing material containing scenes of violence, sex, nudity and strong language
- Classification guidelines should be fully explained and made to be more understandable to the general public for example, the groups revealed that the classifications for blasphemy and prejudice as well as the 10M age ratings are not always understood.
- The FPB guidelines should also be made more accessible and should accommodate the needs of illiterate media users as well.

Classification of adults only material and tolerance regarding pornographic material

- The general consensus amongst parents is that children should not be exposed to pornographic material and that a minimum of 18 and 21 are suitable ages for individuals to be exposed to adults only material.

Level of trust of South Africans in the FPB as a source of guidance and information

- Respondents participating in the research study debated the trustworthiness of some of the classifications and the feeling amongst some was that the classifications should be stricter.
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4.2   Future research considerations

It is strongly recommended that this research be conducted on a yearly basis to monitor key measurables such as:

- the awareness levels of the public towards the FPB
- the perceived image of the FPB
- knowledge and understanding of classification guidelines and the adequacy of guidelines

The research will also be able to investigate the impact of FPB communication strategies on the public.