

Bollywood Batein

Qualitative Research Report, April 2004

PREPARED FOR THE *BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION*

Introduction

Bollywood is Hindi language Indian popular cinema and is called such because one of the centres of film production is in Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay. Indeed, Bollywood cinema is loved throughout all the countries of the Indian subcontinent and may be called South Asian popular cinema. Bollywood is Hindi cinema is also hugely popular with the many diaspora South Asian communities across the world. Indeed, Bollywood films total almost 10% of the BBFC's total film submissions per year and, as such, constitute a significant percentage of the Board's work. That fact is one of the reasons behind the commissioning of this important research project.

When I started working at the Board in 1998 I knew that viewing Bollywood films would be a key part of my work but I came to the task with a mixture of embarrassment and dread. At that time I perceived Bollywood as an embarrassing mix of kitsch and hyperbole and dreaded the task of providing translation for a cinema form that could contain dialogue in a mixture of Indian languages.

One thing that I discovered early on was that approaching the classification of Bollywood film required examiners working to many accepted assumptions about that strand of cinema. For example examiners assumed that Bollywood audiences generally watch such films in family groups and violence is not as important an issues for Bollywood audiences as is sex. However, such working assumptions relied on anecdotal evidence and the experience of the South Asian language speaking examiners rather than any objective empirical or qualitative evidence.

Other issues which arose in reference to classifying Bollywood films were more contentious. For example how could we best take account of the sensitivities of Indian Pakistani politics and the whole issue of Kashmir – can it have consequences for UK South Asians? How important is bad language to the typical Bollywood audience - and does it matter whether the bad language is in English or Hindi? And, do the UK viewers of Bollywood cinema even know that such films are classified by the BBFC- do they even care?

As time passed my embarrassment and dread faded and my response to Bollywood transformed into a deep affection and sense of awe at the many functions served by Bollywood films. Many people refer to Bollywood films as genre movies, as though all South Asian cinema is a genre like horror or thrillers or comedy. The fact is that Bollywood films contain many different genres of movie. There are Bollywood horror films, Bollywood comedies, Bollywood thrillers, Bollywood political satires and Bollywood films which homage Hollywood films– all of which contain the usual Bollywood mix of drama, action, melodrama and song and dance numbers.

Bollywood is more than a genre, it is a form of national cinema albeit spread across an international stage, bearing an increasingly international gloss and with an eye to the revenues to be had from the massive diaspora audiences. Key among the diaspora is that which is to be found among UK South Asians. For diaspora audiences, Bollywood is more than mere entertainment. It is also a vehicle for transmitting and sustaining culture, for fostering a distinctly South Asian sense of identity and for ensuring that the various mother tongues and cultural sensitivities of the subcontinent were kept alive through, if nothing else, the seemingly ever present lush song and dance numbers.

Individual examiners are encouraged to pursue specialist interests and Bollywood was mine. I urged the commencement of a research project which would both interrogate the working assumptions applied to the classification of Bollywood product and gather evidence about the audience for Bollywood cinema. I was pushing at an open door because the Board was, and is, keen to ensure that its classification processes are based on objective evidence; because the Board, mindful of issues of diversity and equality of opportunity, is keen to ensure that its classification of minority cinema also takes note of the peculiar role of Bollywood as transmitter of South Asian culture and identity; and because the Board is committed to being open and accountable to all audiences, including those for minority cinema.

The research project was duly commissioned, conducted and concluded and the report you are now able to read is the fruit of that work. In case you were wondering, Bollywood Batein means Bollywood Stories.

Although the Bollywood Batein report has taken some time to publish, the Board has not been idle in respect to Bollywood cinema. Since August 2003, the BBFC has been engaged in an ongoing 'Diversity Project' that has encompassed media literacy and outreach work such as examiner visits to community centres and schools, liaison with distributors of Bollywood films and an IT initiative which ensures that Consumer Advice for all South Asian films is distributed to cinema exhibitors, media partners (such as the BBC Asian Network) and film reviewers. The Diversity Project has ensured that many of the recommendations of the Bollywood Batein research project have already been acted upon and the Board remains committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and respect for diversity continue to impact the classification process not only in respect to Bollywood cinema but all works submitted for classification.

I am delighted that Bollywood Batein has been completed offer my deepest gratitude to all my fellow examiners and other colleagues at the BBFC, who have had to put up with me banging away about Bollywood for the past several years. In particular, I would like to thank the BBFC's Communications Officer, Sue Clark, whose patient guidance and advice ensured that I persisted with the project and finally saw it completed. Thank you all.

In his recent marvellous book about the Indian city of Mumbai/Bombay, journalist Suketu Mehta writes, "What is a South Asian? Someone who watches Hindi movies. Someone whose being fills up with pleasure when he or she hears '*Mere Sapno Ki Rani*' or '*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*'. Here is our national language; here is our common song". The Bollywood Batein research project demonstrates how true this observation is and I urge you to read it.

Rana Johal
2005

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1 Preface – Bollywood: a brief introduction

'Bollywood' is the common term for the strand of popular South Asian cinema which has its centre of production in Mumbai. Hundreds of films are produced each year from regional film centres around India, such as Madras, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Calcutta, but the Hindi speaking Bollywood films produced from Mumbai are by far the most popular and widely distributed.

Bollywood films have been shown in UK cinemas since the late 1960s. Distributors hired cinemas to cater for the South Asian immigrants who arrived in British industrial towns to provide labour in the textile mills. The market was largely taken over by video during the 1980s but re-emerged again during the 1990s when Asian entrepreneurs took over small cinema houses. In recent years, a number of major circuits – Cineworld, Odeon, UCI and Warner cinemas – have successfully been screening Bollywood films. Dedicated screenings at multiplexes have also increased over the years, with cinemas like Star City in Birmingham and the Safari cinema in Harrow, London showing only Asian films. The overseas market is profitable for the Bollywood film industry, bringing considerable returns on cinema ticket sales. Britain is now one of Bollywood's main overseas markets, with many Indian films scheduled for simultaneous release in India and Britain. Recent Bollywood storylines have even featured non-resident Indians, thus helping to contribute to Bollywood's cross-over appeal to Asian audiences in the West.

Higher marketing budgets and the increased profile of Bollywood and Bollywood films at UK cinemas has seen Bollywood films reach beyond Asian audiences. Films from recent years that have successfully crossed

over to mainstream audiences include *Bandit Queen* (1995) and *Asoka* (2001), which had the biggest ever release for a Bollywood film in Britain. The film's star, Shahrukh Khan, featured in interviews in Time Out magazine and the Channel Four's Big Breakfast which was a first for a major film star from India. Other successful cross over films were *Lagaan* (2001), which featured English actors and received an Oscar nomination for best foreign film, and *Devdas* (2002), which was featured at the Cannes Film Festival. Over the years, Bollywood has also made its presence felt in Western produced films like *Moulin Rouge* (2001), which drew on Bollywood conventions, or Anglo-Indian films like *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002).

The summer of 2002 was crucial in pushing Bollywood further into the mainstream, with Andrew Lloyd Webber's Bollywood inspired musical, *Bombay Dreams*. The music from the musical was composed by a top Bollywood music director, A. R. Rehman, and stock characters were borrowed from Bollywood for the West end production. As the mainstream public's fascination with all things Bollywood continued to grow, the high street store, Selfridges celebrated Bollywood by flying in top Indian celebrities for book signings and fashion shows. This was followed by the British Film Institute's (BFI) *ImagineAsia Festival* which re-released Bollywood classics at cinemas nationwide. Various nationwide exhibitions on Bollywood were also launched, including a collection of film memorabilia at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The cinematic conventions of Bollywood film are distinct and have changed little over the years. Early influences on Bollywood date from popular Parsee theatre, which was characterised by multi-layered romantic plots, comic interludes, dramatic dialogues and music. These ingredients were reworked with the advent of talking cinema, resulting in

films that, even today, blend elements of different genres - action, comedy romance and music – in the one film. It is this characteristic that appears to contribute to the wide appeal of Bollywood. Indeed, it is the twin driving forces of Bollywood movies - music and romance – which have traditionally attracted family audiences.

Music is a key marketing feature of Indian films; in fact, the sales of music from Bollywood films are greater than any other type of Indian music. It is rare for a film not to feature any songs and most Bollywood films feature at least six. Songs have an important function within Bollywood films, and are usually woven into the narrative. They can advance the plot, reveal emotions, or say things that cannot be said in words. Song and dance sequences are broadcast on satellite television in India and abroad before a film's release, meaning if the audience like the songs, they will usually like the film.

Romance dominates the Bollywood genre. Bollywood films regardless of the theme will usually contain an element of romance. Love on the Bollywood screen, however, is usually conducted within strict Indian social mores and the depiction of romance is set in the context of traditional family values. Even where the lives of Bollywood characters seem Westernised, they always revert to traditional modes of behaviour when it comes to major decisions. For instance, the family's permission to marry is given great importance. Although, Bollywood films traditionally shy away from kissing and provocatively dressed women, film makers have traditionally overcome the taboo of physical intimacy by resorting to a standard lexicon of images that symbolise displays of love, for example, waterfalls and gyrating song and dance sequences which provide opportunities to display the female form or hint at eroticism.

Traditionally, Bollywood films are not about realism. They are recognised and loved by Asian audiences worldwide for offering good old-fashioned, relatively straightforward and unsophisticated family entertainment. Bollywood films tend to celebrate noble themes like honour and sacrifice – as with romance, this is often played out within the boundaries of the traditional family context. Nowadays, however, the influence of Hollywood is being felt in Mumbai. Larger budgets are resulting in films with a greater degree of sophistication and a broader variety of themes. With this territory, however, seems to be coming content of a more mature variety not previously experienced by Bollywood film audiences. Films like *Jism* (2003), *Kaante* (2002) and *Company* (2002) represent the new breed of ‘more Westernised’ Bollywood films. Not only are these films challenging Bollywood film making conventions, but it is also assumed they are challenging audience expectations in many ways: in terms of the depiction of contemporary issues, non-traditional gender roles, and also increasingly sexual and violent content.

Given the increasing mainstream profile of Bollywood in the UK, and Bollywood’s long standing family friendly reputation among Asian audiences, this trend has posed more complex classification questions for the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). The trend towards films which address political-religious matters is an additional matter of concern for the BBFC given that some could be seen to have a distinct ‘anti-Pakistani’ bias. Indeed, a number of films have been suspected of contributing to communal (religious) tensions on the Indian sub-continent, and there is a question-mark over whether these tensions might be reflected here in the UK.

Thus the BBFC are keen to keep pace with audience expectations in setting their classification guidelines. It is within this changing context that they wish to explore how audiences' expectations are evolving in relation to this new Bollywood.

2 Executive Summary

2.1 Background

This research was commissioned by the British Board of Classification (BBFC) to explore the attitudes of British Asian communities towards:

- Bollywood movies and their cultural role;
- Specific themes relevant to classification, i.e., sexual content, violence, explicit language, drug use and political or religious themes;
- The current classification system and the BBFC.

The research used entirely qualitative methods, which provide insight and understanding but not statistical or numerical data. The fieldwork was conducted in January and February 2004 and comprised:

- Ten focus group discussions and three family visits among British Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian communities;
- Six in depth interviews with video shop owners;
- A series of short "vox pops" with Asian cinema goers.

We also conducted a brief review of existing research.

2.2 The Bollywood context

Bollywood movies had an important cultural role within Asian communities. They were not only consumed as entertainment, but also offered viewers the emotional satisfaction of keeping in touch with cultural roots, with traditions in people's countries of origin, and with their Mother Tongue. For older respondents, Bollywood movies felt more meaningful than western films, whilst for younger people they offered the opportunity for shared family viewing across the generations.

Bollywood movies were first and foremost associated with family viewing, including younger children as well as older relatives. Cinema goers assumed that Bollywood movies would usually be suitable for the family, by which they meant they would not have explicit sexual scenes. They recognised that recent Bollywood movies were more diverse than the typical family sagas and romances, including gangster films, political films, and also films with more explicit sexual content. However, this did not change their “top of mind” image of Bollywood movies or their initial expectations of what they would contain.

2.3 Classification

Many film goers felt that the British classification system was less relevant to Bollywood movies than to western films. Whilst they might look to the certificates of Hollywood movies for guidance on suitability, they tended to rely on their own judgement when assessing Bollywood movies. They made their choice based on the stars, the directors, the songs, the publicity and word of mouth. Indeed, many were uncertain whether Bollywood films did indeed have British classifications or if the system even applied to these films. Mainly, they were concerned about judging whether or not a film was suitable for family viewing, and their key concern in this area was sexual content.

2.4 Attitudes to specific content

We showed participants a range of clips from recent Bollywood movies, each of which contained examples of specific classification issues. Their reactions were as follows:

- **Sexual content** was the main concern of film goers and generated most discussion in the groups. People did not want to watch even relatively mild sexual scenes in the family context, as this caused great embarrassment. Muslim parents were especially strict on this issue. Bollywood viewers therefore tended to suggest that any form of sexual content in these movies should have higher classifications – e.g., ‘15’ or ‘18’.

- **Violence** was much less of a concern for Bollywood viewers. A certain level of stylised violence – “dushum” – was part of the Bollywood genre, and few were concerned about even quite young children viewing such scenes. Violence was also more acceptable in historical stories, as it was justified by the context. Some parents were concerned about more realistic forms of screen violence, with modern settings and weapons, as they thought children were more likely to be influenced by such scenes. Violence of this sort would therefore require a higher classification.
- Attitudes to **drug taking** seemed highly dependent on the context and the message of the film. In religious or rural settings, consuming drugs as part of rituals might be less worrying and therefore justify a lower certificate. Also, if the drug taking was shown as a bad thing and the character either reformed or got his come-uppance in the film, that too made the scenes more acceptable. Again, more realistic drug taking which might be imitated by local youngsters was much more of a concern and was thought to justify higher certificates.
- **Bad language** was not a strong concern for Bollywood viewers, either in English or Hindi. Clearly, viewers understood Hindi and they recognised swear words, but they did not always know the exact meanings if they were brought up in the UK. Younger children were, reportedly, unlikely to know the meaning of Hindi swearwords, although use of strong language in English was more of a concern. In reality, viewers often seemed not to notice the swear words in the clips we showed them and their reactions were highly dependant on the context – who was swearing at who, how often, and why.
- **Political and religious themes** could be highly controversial. Pakistani and Bangladeshi viewers felt that Bollywood political films often took an anti-Muslim stance, and they found this highly offensive. They felt that such films provoked hatred between communities, and some felt that these films should not be shown at

all. Others were prepared to tolerate them, but felt they should receive high classifications to avoid their being viewed by impressionable youngsters. Indian people were less concerned about these themes, tending to view them as historical films and an opportunity to find out about their past.

2.5 Video shop owners

Video shop owners were important intermediaries who provided advice and guidance to their clients about popular films. Like the movie goers, they frequently felt that the British classification system lacked credibility among Bollywood films, and not all appeared to take the classifications as seriously as they might. Although none admitted it, our group discussions suggest that some video shop owners allow younger children to take out '15' and '18' certificate films and that pirate versions and un-certificated imports are also easily available.

3 Recommendations

As we have discussed, Bollywood film goers did not see BBFC classifications as very helpful or relevant when choosing what to watch. However, as Bollywood films diversify and address more adult themes, the family image of Bollywood may shift and people may require more guidance regarding film content. In this changing context, BBFC classifications may become more relevant to Bollywood viewers.

3.1 Strategy

We therefore suggest that three strategic recommendations flow from this research. The first two recommendations attempt to change attitudes, whilst the third focuses on prompting behaviour change at the Point of Sale. The BBFC should consider engaging in a communications programme which aims to:

1. Raise awareness of classification in the context of Bollywood films: currently, many viewers are uncertain whether BBFC classifications apply to Bollywood movies, or whether they are classified at all;
2. Convince viewers of the value and relevance of classification to them. This might be achieved by:
 - o Communicating with viewers to emphasise the diversity of Bollywood movies and the fact that not all are family films;
 - o Engaging with communities to explain the purpose of classification, why it is important, and how responsible adults can use it for guidance rather than as a restriction;
 - o Adapting or amending the classification guidelines to reflect more closely viewers' expectations;
 - o Providing additional guidance on the matter of sexual content, where it appears that viewers' expectations relate more to suitability for family viewing, than to age-based classification per se.
3. Encourage viewers to stop and think before renting a film or going to the cinema, to consider if the film is suitable for their family or group. Our research suggests that Bollywood viewers are open to considering this issue, but they need to be prompted to do so.

The balance between amending the BBFC guidelines to reflect viewers' expectations, and communicating with viewers to explain the rationale behind the current guidelines, is a matter of policy on which we are not in a position to advise. However, it is a key decision which BBFC need to make and which will guide the content of any communications activities.

3.2 Tactical approaches

In order to achieve the attitudinal and behavioural changes outlined above, we suggest that a community based marketing plan using four

key components will be most effective. The first two tactics aim to achieve attitudinal change, whilst the second two focus on prompting behaviour change

1. A PR based campaign using the Asian media, such as radio stations, the press and television, as well as specialist film media, such as review magazines, websites and programmes. This could include discussions and debates on classification issues, phone-ins with BBFC representatives, and ideally a tie-in with a well-known Bollywood personality or journalist. Other devices such as quizzes or competitions (eg, to guess the certificates of certain films and win a year's free cinema going; or for school children to design a poster about the importance of classification) could also generate a valuable "buzz" in the community. The purpose of this would be to raise awareness of the issue and to generate discussion in the media and community.
2. A community outreach programme, visiting schools, colleges, youth clubs and community organisations to discuss the BBFC's work and explain the rationale behind the current system. This would aim to convince people of the relevance of the classification system to Bollywood, as well as emphasising that the BBFC takes people's views into account and therefore enhancing its legitimacy.
3. A partnership approach with video shop owners and cinema owners, who are important intermediaries and gatekeepers. Specific events might be set up to target these intermediaries, as well as more targeted partnerships with key outlets in areas of high Asian concentration. BBFC would need to identify the most important local outlets and develop a network of key contacts, which clearly has resourcing implications. The benefits for participating outlets could be framed in terms of enhanced status, professionalism and community responsibility. The aim would be to encourage these intermediaries to prompt their clients to consider classification issues at the point of decision making.

4. A range of Point of Sale materials to display in cinemas and video shops. These could contain information about classification and its relevance to Bollywood, as well as advertising any local events which BBFC is running in the area. Posters, leaflets, or competition flyers designed in "Bollywood style" could be effective. Although multi lingual materials would be ideal, we believe that much could be achieved by producing material in English as many Bollywood viewers speak and read English fluently. The aim here would be encourage viewers to stop and think before making their viewing decision, rather than simply assuming that Bollywood movies will be suitable for all the family.

The impact of these activities could be enhanced if BBFC teamed up with a partner organisation which has credibility and name recognition in the Bollywood context – perhaps a distributor, TV channel, or film magazine. This could make it much easier to develop partnerships and also to attract Bollywood viewers to participate in discussions and events.

4 Introduction

4.1 Background to the research

As part of their policy to remain in step with public attitudes towards matters of taste and decency, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is currently undertaking a review of the classification guidelines. This involves a major research and consultation exercise with the general public in order to gauge attitudes on a number of classification issues such as sex and violence.

Bollywood constitutes a small but significant percentage of films classified by the BBFC each year. Bollywood films have sufficient box office success to regularly feature as top ten UK box office hits. As Bollywood has grown in significance, the BBFC have felt the need to have clearer guidelines as to how to approach the classification of such works. Although Bollywood films are classified using the same guidelines as all other works, classification decisions take account of the likely audience for each work, the context in which it is presented, and the manner in which the material is likely to be received. Hence the BBFC have commissioned this separate study – ‘Bollywood Batein’ (‘Bollywood Stories’).

4.2 Objectives

Thus, the purpose of the research was to gain a deeper understanding of the Bollywood genre and its key audiences in order to guide the BBFC’s decision making when classifying such works.

Specific objectives for the research were:

- To explore audience expectations of Bollywood films;
- To gauge their attitudes to key classification issues in this genre (sex, violence, strong language etc.)

- To assess awareness and understanding of the BBFC and certification;
- To make recommendations as to how the current system might be adapted to reflect audience expectations.

4.3 **Methodology**

The research used entirely qualitative methods to gather data.

Qualitative research is designed to provide insight and understanding, not statistical or numerical data. These methods are particularly useful to explore areas where there is little existing data.

The following methods were used in the research:

- **Group discussions**, which are useful for accessing culturally accepted beliefs, community norms and broadly held attitudes. These were conducted among Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshi audiences aged 18 to 65.
- **Individual interviews**, which are suited to more difficult or hard to reach audiences. They are often used for sensitive topics, or for individuals who have a lot to say. We conducted interviews with video shop owners from the Asian community to explore classification issues from the retailers' perspective.
- **In-home family interviews**, a valuable way of gaining additional insight that might not otherwise be accessible doing groups or interviews. They can be a helpful way of exploring differences in opinion across the generations through interviewing members of a single family together. In home interviews also provide an opportunity for the researcher observe behaviour in context, as well as exploring personal video and DVD collections. We visited three

families for this research where children were of varying ages: one Indian, one Pakistani and one Bangladeshi.

Prior to conducting the main research, we also carried out a **preliminary desk research** investigation in order to review existing data. This included audience profile research, and cultural and media sources relating to Bollywood (such as news articles, programmes, reviews etc.). The intention of this exercise was not to provide an exhaustive review of research on this topic; rather, it was to profile the growth of Bollywood in the UK and to seek out any data that might contextualise the main research findings. In terms of cultural perspectives, some of these findings have been incorporated throughout the report. However, in relation to hard data on Bollywood audiences *per se*, we found little evidence of publicly available data that was of value. Commercial database sources such as Caviar and AC Nielsen may contain some data of interest to the BBFC but is only available on subscription. A summary of key sources of information are detailed in the appendices.

4.4 Sample

The total sample for the research was as follows:

- Ten group discussions among men and women aged 18 – 65;
- Six interviews among video shop owners or workers from the Asian community;
- Three family visits.

(See overleaf for details)

The sample consisted of respondents from the three main South Asian communities in the UK:

- Indians (Gujarati and Punjabi)
- Pakistani (Muslim)
- Bangladeshi (Muslim).

We designed the sample with a little more emphasis on the Indian and Pakistani communities, as these were numerically the largest communities in the UK. We also included groups of non-English speakers in the research, as our previous research into media habits of Asian communities had suggested that Bollywood films are particularly popular with older women who speak little or no English.

Fieldwork was carried out between January and March 2004 in London, Birmingham, Bradford and Leicester.

Bollywood Batein - Research sample

Ten focus groups

- Mixed Asian males, aged 18 – 24
- Mixed Asian females, aged 18 – 24
- Indian females, aged 25 – 44
- Pakistani males, aged 25 – 44
- Pakistani females, aged 25 – 44 (non-English speakers)
- Bangladeshi males, aged 25 – 44 (non-English speakers)
- Indian males, aged 45 – 65
- Indian females, aged 45 – 65
- Pakistani males, aged 45 – 65 (non-English speakers)
- Bangladeshi females, aged 45 – 65 (non-English speakers)

Six video shop interviews

- 4 Indian video shops (Gujarati and Sikh)
- 1 Pakistani video shop
- 1 Bangladeshi video shop

Three in-home family interviews

- Indian Gujarati family
- Pakistani family
- Bangladeshi family

4.5 The research team

The research team for the project comprised Lisa Tang, Radhika Howarth, Irna Qureshi and Philly Desai. All are highly experienced researchers with a strong track record of researching Asian communities. Irna and Radhika have a great deal of personal and professional insight into Bollywood, and therefore conducted most of the fieldwork. This included groups and interviews in mother tongue. The project was led and managed by Lisa Tang, and overseen by Philly Desai.

5 Viewing of Bollywood

The sample for this research was selected from people who regularly viewed Bollywood films. Among our sample, the viewing of Bollywood films seemed dominated by a preference for the blockbusters. The kind of films that had wide appeal were romances, family dramas, comedies and action with big name stars like Shahrukh Khan and Hrithik Roshan. There appeared to be little difference between the film preferences of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. Pakistani and Bangladeshi viewers also liked to watch films made in Pakistan and Bangladesh, but

tended to see Bollywood movies as offering the best entertainment and diversity of storylines.

Most of us who have come from Bangladesh watch more Hindi movies than Bangla movies.
Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

5.1 The viewing context

The viewing of Bollywood films still appeared typically to be a family activity. Weekends and school holidays were the most popular viewing times as this was when families had the most time. Often mothers and children would watch films together. Women appeared to be the most avid viewers of Bollywood and it was often mothers and daughters who watched films together. Both men and women enjoyed watching the popular blockbusters, but there were differences between the sexes too. Women seemed largely to enjoy family dramas and romances, while men seemed to prefer fighting and action movies.

Many households subscribed to Asian channels such as Zee TV, B4U, Prime and ARY Digital. But viewers complained about the lack of new films that were screened and preferred instead to keep up with the latest Bollywood releases at home on video/DVD – which they hired or bought - or at the cinema.

Going to the cinema to watch Bollywood films was a popular activity. People tended to go together as a family unit, with mother, father, children, grandparents and other relatives. (Although among the more conservative/ older members of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, cinema-going was regarded as a 'male only' activity and it was not felt to be appropriate behaviour for women to go). Generally a trip to the cinema to watch a Bollywood film was saved for special occasions, such as birthdays, festivals, school holidays, or the release of a

much awaited film. These events generated much excitement and the atmosphere in the cinema was often described as being 'festival-like' with lots of families and children milling around.

If you go to Star City, you'll find a lot of families rather than groups of friends. You'll see a lot of families, elderly people and kids running up and down.
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

Going to see a film in Star City is like going back home. You see so many Asians with families, eating, walking around. It's a really nice atmosphere.
Pakistani male aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

Much as Bollywood appeared to have strong associations as a family activity with Asian viewers, this was not always the case. Muslim viewers, especially those who were older, held ambivalent attitudes to Bollywood movies. On the one hand, they enjoyed the romance, music and action as much as anyone else. But on the other, they felt that some films contained sexual content or behaviour which was not appropriate for Muslims.

We like watching films with Kareena, Rani, Aishwarya and Shahrukh. We just like them and their acting as well. Sometimes we don't like a film of theirs but we still watch because of the actors. Some of Kareena's films are a bit dirty – not that much but enough to embarrass you!

There are films you can learn lessons from, they teach you values. If it's a bit dirty, you might have to keep fast-forwarding if the children are with you.
Pakistani females (non English speaking), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

According to our female respondents, some Muslim men saw the viewing of Bollywood films as a 'frivolous' activity and did not like other members of their religious community to know that their wives or daughters watched Bollywood films at home. Muslim fathers often restricted the viewing of Bollywood films in the home fearing the fantasy love themes and modern influences would lead impressionable youngsters astray but wives and children would watch when they were out. At best, fathers would allow Bollywood in the home but would feel they needed to pass comment to children on any lax moral standards portrayed in films.

My dad doesn't like these films! He doesn't let us watch them. We watch them when he's out or when he's gone to work. He just thinks they are a bad influence: they brainwash you and you'll go and act like that. [He says]: 'All the stories are the same, they're all love stories. You'll probably follow them or something'.
Pakistani female, aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

When they see people falling in love, then they think they must try that. Then they start running around after girls....they don't stop to think whether she is the right caste, the right religion, they just want a love marriage!
Pakistani mother (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

Muslim parents may instead prefer the family to watch Pakistani/Bangladeshi dramas or films which are more conservative and in tone and content than Bollywood (although younger Pakistani and Bengalis may not be interested or understand the regional dialects used in the films). Despite restricting the viewing of Bollywood films in the home, some older Pakistani men admitted they liked to watch Bollywood films, particularly the action movies. They were able to watch during the day at community centres with other male viewers.

With Pakistani films, there isn't the danger that at any time there will be a scene that will embarrass you to the point where your eyes hit the floor, whether it's father and son, or two brothers watching. You don't have that during Pakistani films. But India is copying English films.

Indian films are not capable of being watched with the family, so we just stick to Pakistani family dramas.
Pakistani males (non English speaking), aged 45 – 65, Bradford

In my family they don't encourage women going to the cinema to see Indian films. My husband doesn't like it. It's because there are other Pakistani men there and that's why. There are people who know him and they'll see me sitting with him watching a film, and it doesn't look good for these men to see someone's wife.
Pakistani female (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

The diversification of Bollywood films in terms of different subject matters and mature sexual content appeared to be impacting on the way Bollywood was viewed. People occasionally mentioned watching on their own, with their partner, or with friends, rather than with their families, thus indicating that the viewing of Bollywood films were no longer being

restricted to the family context. What is influencing this changing viewing context is discussed in greater detail later in this report.

5.2 The role and meaning of Bollywood

Bollywood seemed to fulfil an important cultural role for Asian viewers. We found most people talked about Bollywood films and all aspects of the Bollywood movie industry with a great deal of affection and enthusiasm. Respondents young or old, male or female admitted a deep bond for the genre. This was true even of the younger generation who were more critical of Bollywood.

Apart from enjoying it for its entertainment value, the significance of Bollywood for Asian viewers seemed to stem from a number of factors:

Cultural familiarity

Bollywood was felt to be an integral part of Asian culture. The familiarity of locations, the depiction of Asian home life - in particular, the extended family settings - even the jokes and humour used in the films, all made people feel closer to the genre. Where Asian role models are lacking in British mainstream media, younger viewers could identify with role models from their own culture. Furthermore, women liked Bollywood for the glamour as it enabled them to keep up with the trends in Asian fashion, clothing and jewellery.

Bollywood is a part of our culture.

Even if you don't like anything about Bollywood films, you start enjoying them after twenty years. It is inherited, like your ancestors have done it, so it's going to be in your blood. They become a part of you.

Mixed Asian males, aged 18 – 24, London

Cultural heritage

People regarded Bollywood films as a way of keeping in touch with their roots. Second and third generation British born Asians frequently learnt to understand Hindi from watching Bollywood films. The older generation felt that Bollywood had a role in preserving history, customs and traditional aspects of Indian society for young Asians brought up in Western society. Grandparents quite frequently viewed Bollywood as a way of helping the younger generation cultivate bonds with traditional aspects of Asian culture and life, and it was often them who got their grandchildren interested in Bollywood.

We watch Bollywood because it was the way we have been brought up. It is also that you learn Hindi and about your culture to an extent from these films.

You learn Hindi automatically if you watch Bollywood continuously.
Mixed Asian males, aged 18 – 24, London

Emotional resonance

Viewers often identified with the characters and the type of issues portrayed in Bollywood films. This made watching Bollywood a much more meaningful experience. Family issues in particular resonated with viewers especially if these were experiences they could relate to in their own lives. Viewers also identified with familiar themes such as family ties, honour, revenge and sacrifice, common to Asian mythology and culture. Young and older people alike felt a sense of nostalgia when watching Bollywood films. Young people, because it was a key part of family life growing up; the older generation because it reminded them of life as it was in their youth, particularly when they watched the older classics.

I just remember growing up and having an Indian movie on in the background, with everybody sitting down on a Friday or Saturday night to watch Amitabh Bachchan. Bollywood films are more family oriented. With family relationships, they tend to have it more the way we have it at home. So it relates to us more in the family way than it would if you were watching an English film. I tend to get more emotional when I am watching an Indian film than when I am watching an English film
Pakistani female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

Family oriented viewing

Watching and discussing Bollywood was an experience in which all generations could share and enjoy. Whether children, grandparents, aunties or in-laws, it was a form of entertainment that could bring all members of the family together, especially where there were members of the family in the household who spoke little or no English. Thus it had strong associations with home and the family. Some parents saw Bollywood films as an important way of reinforcing traditional family values, and they often commented on the upstanding moral behaviour of characters in films to their children.

[Bollywood is] watching a film with my mum for a good three hours.
Asian male, aged 18 – 24, London

I like films that have a message, films that educate or tell children how to behave and that deal with social issues.
Bangladeshi female (non English speaker) aged 45 – 65, London

5.3 Repeat viewing

If people loved a Bollywood film, it was not unusual for them to watch the whole film, or certain parts of a film, several times over. Quite frequently, people claimed to watch their favourite films as many as five, ten or twenty times. There seemed to be a number of factors which contribute to repeat viewing of films:

- **Romantic or emotional scenes:** women sometimes admitted watching these scenes repeatedly, especially when they favoured a particular actor, or if it was a particularly emotional scene that made them cry.
- **Music** from Bollywood films are released on satellite channels like B4UMusic months before the actual films themselves, and often help to fuel peoples' interest in the films that are due to come out. If the

- music from a film is highly regarded, then there would be a great deal of anticipation for the film, even where people do not know much about the film itself. Thus the music was felt to be one of the key ingredients of a film and people would play back favourite tracks at home. DVD format, (which appeared to be popular), allows viewers to skip straight to the songs.
- **Dance routines** are a popular feature of Bollywood films. We visited one family who sent their young daughter to a Bollywood dance academy where she could learn routines to the music from Bollywood films. Video/ DVD compilations of song and dance routines from the films of big Bollywood stars like Shahrukh Khan are available to buy and are popular with both adults and children. Women and children enjoy imitating the routines from films at special events like weddings.
 - **Fashion and jewellery:** women frequently said they liked to watch Bollywood films for the fashion and the glamour. They could keep up with trends by studying what the stars wore in films. If they liked a particular costume, they could get it custom-made in the UK or India.

You find that people actually go out there just to watch a film because there's good songs in there. People will actually buy the film and just watch the songs, not even watch the film. So the songs can really influence it. You'll find that if the songs are doing well, then as soon as the film comes out, then everybody will go and watch it.
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

I've rented Kuch Kuch Hota Hai so many times. I used to go to the cinema every Friday to watch it. We used to blag school every Friday to go and watch it, at least eight times! And even after that, I rented out that film. I've got the DVD now!
If I've got an hour or something, then I'll put a DVD on and just watch the songs and that's it, or see some of the scenes that I like - some of the scenes which affected me or which were emotional - the scenes which get me really emotional.
Pakistani female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

We've had Kuch Kuch on continuously for two weeks. My children just loved it. They love Kajol and Shahrukh and Rani. I told them off time and time again to take the film back but they just kept on playing it.
Pakistani female (non English speaking), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

In addition to viewing the films many times, viewers often took as much interest in the off-screen lives and personalities of favourite stars as much as the on-screen characters they portray. Fuelled by celebrity gossip in the media, the cult of celebrities like Shahrukh Khan means that the reality of their lives and personalities off-screen can be blurred by their on-screen personas. This perhaps helps to enhance the appeal of the films they feature in. In the research, this seemed to be indicated by the fact that quite frequently people talked about their favourite films in terms of their favourite stars, rather than mention individual titles – for example, ‘my favourite films are Shahrukh Khan films’ or, likewise, ‘Sunny Deol films’.

6 Expectations of Bollywood cinema

6.1 “Typical Bollywood movies”

People had clear notions of what constituted a ‘Bollywood film’ which went beyond the simple fact of its production in Bombay (Mumbai, as it is now known). Generally what was expected was:

- Music, song and dance
- Exotic locations
- Beautiful costumes and spectacle
- Fantasy and escapism (handsome heroes, beautiful heroines, high drama, emotion, and happy endings)
- ‘A bit of everything’ – comedy, action, tragedy – but most especially, romance.

It’s a bit of escapism isn’t it? They’re quite – well, ‘fluffy’ is the wrong word to say – but they’re not too serious really are they? So that’s what I like about it – they’re not too realistic!

Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

I like Bollywood films – they are very colourful, very interesting and very magical. They take you to another world

Indian females aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

One respondent described Bollywood films as “masala” – in other words, like the spice mix, the movies were a unique blend of genres that offered ‘something for all’ viewers. Equally strong in peoples’ minds, as the above, was of Bollywood as family friendly entertainment. In their view, Bollywood movies were mainstream entertainment made to be enjoyed by all generations of the family.

A typical Bollywood film for me would be a love story.

Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

They have some comedy, tragedy, romance scenes, songs, fights, everything. They are made for the masses.

90% of Bollywood films are “masala” films.
Indian males aged 45 – 65, London

Most of them are films you can watch with your family. Whereas if you are watching an English film, then you know there is probably going to be a sex act in there or something. Whereas with Bollywood films, you needn't worry about that so much. It's a film you can watch with your family without feeling embarrassed or anything.
Pakistani female, aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

We always expect Bollywood films to be such that we can watch with our family. And even if they are not, we don't expect them to be that explicit.
Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

Very realistic films like *Bandit Queen* were not felt to be typical of the Bollywood genre. It had no singing and dancing, moreover, it contained strong scenes of a sexual and violent nature.

[Bandit Queen] was an excellent film – I'm not sure if it was Bollywood or not. That was real life. The acting was very realistic.
Asian male, 18 – 24, London

I know these off-beat films like Bandit Queen. I would watch them but I would never make a decision to watch with my children.
Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

Younger people tended to be critical of the genre, although they did watch many of the big block busters like *Kal Ho Naa Ho* and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*. They criticised recurrent themes and unoriginal plots, often commenting that the storylines were so predictable you could work out the plot of the film in the first fifteen minutes. Young males in their teens and early twenties were the most critical of Bollywood and compared them unfavourably to what they felt were more sophisticated Hollywood films. They complained of a lack of realism and described Bollywood films as unrefined, unoriginal and simplistic in terms of the acting, effects and overall production values. Bollywood was not only felt to produce bad remakes of Hollywood films, but stories were invariably dominated by romance.

Bollywood to me is copying Hollywood films. They copy a lot of films – they are not original.

Like the recent film, *Koi Mil Gaya* – which is a copy of *ET*. The original film is about *ET* and you see the aliens but in the Hindi version you see him just once and the main plot is about the romance that is going on.

I understand they have songs, but they appear from nowhere. They appear in the middle of the story just when you are getting into it.

I look at these films as pure entertainment, you can't watch them for any other reason. You watch one Bollywood and you watch them all.
Mixed Asian males, aged 18 – 24, London

They've all followed the same line for the last twenty years. The only difference has been that the skirts have got shorter – they don't really wear saris anymore. But that's changed because we've changed and because Asian culture has changed.
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

They are about families – two brothers get separated and meet in the end. It's always a happy ending.
Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

6.2 Changing Bollywood

Despite their criticisms, recent, and less conventional Bollywood films like *Kaante* (2002) and *Company* (2002), epitomised the way that the genre was changing. Younger viewers appreciated the fact that bigger film-making budgets were translating on screen as better quality films.

'Newer' types of Bollywood films were felt to be an improvement in terms of:

- Acting, storyline and dialogue;
- Sophisticated camerawork, effects and cinematography;
- More realistic plots and action sequences;
- A greater variety of themes and sub-genres;
- Contemporary settings/ issues (e.g. drugs, gangland warfare) and characters;
- More mature ways of handling sexual and violent content.

The films made earlier had the same type of story and were based around revenge and fights but now it has changed and you get different stories.
Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

Men (generally those under 35) in particular welcomed the greater diversity of genres and themes that Bollywood now offered, for instance, gangster/ crime (e.g. *Kaante*), political stories (e.g. *Satta*), thrillers (e.g. *Raaz*), or sexual themes (e.g. *Jism*). Those born in the UK felt they could identify better with contemporary characters and settings which were a reflection of their own hybrid Asian and Western identities. Although female viewers and the older generation tended to favour more traditional Bollywood films, 'family movies' like *Lagaan* (2001) were popular with all types of viewers, who praised it for its realism and different kind of storyline.

I like the typical Tapani (gangster) movies. Tapani are street thugs and have a certain type of street language and slang.
Mixed Asian males, aged 18 – 24, London

The films are changing now, like the film Company. It was completely different to a Bollywood film and the story didn't have a happy ending, and everyone was acting well. The photography was good, and the way they were killing – and film shots were more like Western films.
Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

The older generation who frequently expressed dismay and concern at the 'Western influences' in modern Bollywood films. One woman whose father-in-law was visiting from India described how she made him watch nothing else but *Ramlakhan* during his stay as it was the only way she could guarantee that he saw nothing that would offend him!

My father-in-law came from India and we just made him watch the same old film again and again and again – Ramlakhan – because that was a decent film. I thought if he watches any other film and I'm there, I would be really embarrassed. Say if there's hugging and all that. I didn't want him to think, 'Oh my God, look what they are watching on TV'. So to be safe, I know that film, I know what they are going to be up to and everything.
Indian female aged 45 – 65, Leicester

Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents and elders who were already quite disapproving of Bollywood tended to be the most conservative. They saw

the way Bollywood films were changing as a confirmation of lower moral standards in Indian society, compared with Muslim Pakistan or Bangladesh. For some, the 'Westernised' lifestyles portrayed in films like *Company*, for instance, were eroding traditional Asian values and culture. Parents in particular worried about the influence of bad Asian role models, especially that of female role models, on the young (e.g. wearing sexy clothing, smoking, drinking or frequenting bars) and feared that the younger generation would think this was acceptable behaviour for Asians. One young female Muslim respondent admitted she preferred to watch 'the old classics' at home because these were less likely to be disapproved of by her watchful father.

The Indian original culture and tradition is fading and these new Western themes are coming in.

Indian male aged 45 – 65, London

Things are changing a lot now. I wouldn't watch it now because everything's getting really modernised – like the way they are dressing and the sex scenes which you didn't see ten or fifteen years ago.

In the latest films, they have actually got kissing in them. And you're like 'wow – they're doing that! What's going on? It is like 'bloody hell, they've gone there now! What are they going to do next?'

Asian females, aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

The films being released these days are just not suitable to watch with your family.

Pakistani male (non English speaking), aged 45 – 65, Bradford

Certainly, women playing more empowered and explicitly sexual roles was unusual for all Asian audiences but those brought up in the UK tended to be relaxed about such changes – and reasoned that Bollywood was simply 'catching up with the times'. Moreover, they felt that Bollywood was not just reflecting the lives of Asians living in the West, but also in modern Indian cities like Mumbai and Delhi. A few even felt that Asians parents living in the UK (who had migrated from rural areas) were more conservatively minded than in urban India.

The films are so much more Westernised, the girls are wearing tighter clothes.

These days they show a proper kiss in a film - I think it was in Raja Hindustani (1992) – rather than the actor and actress hiding behind the flowers or the bush.

I think these changes are more shocking for our parents than us.
Indian females aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

7 Attitudes and awareness of certification

I've never noticed the certification because of people's expectations. They always look upon [Bollywood] as being clean cut, bit of dancing and a bit of a love story with a bit of fighting but that's it. No one expected it to go past the boundaries that were always set around Bollywood movies. That's probably what it is.
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

Awareness of UK certification (U, PG, 12, 15, 18) was varied among the viewers we spoke to. Younger, or British educated, audiences were more aware of the certificates and understood what they meant. Parents said they often used certificates as a guide when hiring, or taking their children to see Western films. Non-English speakers, however, were much less aware. This included older Indians, and women and the older people from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani community. In fact, many among this group found it difficult to appreciate the differences between certificates and tended to think in terms of material acceptable to be watched by all, or material that should be suitable only for adults or "married people."

I just think we're programmed to always look for [certification] when we watch English films. But how long have they been using the certification system in Bollywood movies? Is it something that they've always done from the beginning or is it something that's been introduced now? Because I have never noticed it!
Pakistani female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

Many viewers were surprised to discover that Bollywood and other Asian films were certificated under a UK system. They said they simply had not noticed. Even parents who claimed they checked for certification on Western films said it had not occurred to them to do likewise for Bollywood films. The low profile of UK certification in relation to Bollywood may be explained by the following:

- Bollywood films, despite recent trends, retained a strong family image. Western films were expected to contain higher levels of violent and sexual content and therefore respondents could understand how certification could be a useful guidance. The vast majority of Asian films on the other hand were expected to be no more than 'U' or 'PG' level – in other words, 'family films'. Even viewers who admitted they had noticed UK certificates on Bollywood films tended to disregard them.

When you get a film certificate on an English film, you know what to expect, but I don't really pay attention when it comes to Indian films.
Every Indian film for me is a PG. I have never seen a film that has shocked me.
Asian male, aged 18 – 24, London

With Western films I always want to know if the film can be watched with my daughter – I always check the certificate, but I never think of this with Indian films.
Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

- Many people were watching pirate copies or uncertified imports of Bollywood films which did not have any obvious UK certification. This fact was corroborated by the video shop interviews we conducted which indicated that pirate films were widely available. Quite commonly, it seemed that people were watching copies of copied films which did not have a marketed sleeve. This contributed to the lack of awareness of certification on Bollywood films.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Asian cinemas and video shops were using wide discretion and not adhering to regulations on certification when allowing entry or hiring to children. This appeared to add to the confusion about the applicability of UK certificates.

I didn't even know Indian films had certificates.
Asian males, aged 18 – 24, London

Thus UK certificates lacked salience with Bollywood viewers and there was a tendency to regard them as not helpful or relevant to Asian films. Even the trend for more realistic scenes of violence in Bollywood did not seem to make a difference to peoples' attitudes. Parents appeared to be easy going about children watching '15' or even '18' certificated Asian films – they seemed to see little harm in this. Indeed, there were strong indications that this attitude was true of the wider Asian community. Clearly some Asian cinemas were allowing children into '18' certificate films and parents were taking children to see them, as one woman commented:

I went to the Star City cinema to watch Company which was 18. It was late at night and there were kids watching the film as well. I was thinking these kids should be tucked up in bed and they should not be watching this film.
25 – 44 year old Indian female

I get my 12-year-old brother to go and get an '18' film. With our video shops, they're not as precautionary as BlockBusters where a 12-year-old child can't go and get an 18 film. They won't allow it, whereas at the corner video shop, it's no problem. That's probably a reason why we have never noticed the certification.
Pakistani female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

7.1 Video piracy

The credibility of the UK classification system seems to be undermined by the widespread availability of pirate videos (illegal copies made in the UK, or uncertified copies from abroad). Our discussion with viewers and reports from video shop owners suggest that viewers are largely unconcerned about piracy, in fact, some were scarcely aware that they were watching illegal copies of films. Pirate versions of Bollywood films could be easily obtained from local video outlets. In conducting the recruitment for the research, we were informed that many Asian video shops were refusing to participate in the research fearing we were from Trading Standards. Clearly the widespread availability of piracy was meeting a strong demand by viewers in the community who:

- Did not want to wait for UK certificated versions to be released;
- Were attracted by cheaper hire and purchase prices of pirate copies;
- Were unconcerned about watching low quality prints (although some did check for original version when they were buying);
- Wanted to watch original edits of films, rather than official UK releases which, they thought, had 'cut' scenes.

You can pretty much find any film in this country that is not officially released. They are all imported from places like Holland, America or Japan. The films are released officially there much before they are in the UK.
Indian video shop owner

Distribution of pirate copies seemed to come from a variety of sources. Video shops were supplied by wholesalers or independent sellers bringing videos or DVDs back from abroad. Much of the supply seemed to be coming from countries like Pakistan, Japan Holland and the US. Viewers holidaying abroad in India or Pakistan also brought copies of films back to watch for themselves, or got relatives to send the latest films over. Pirate DVDs seemed to be popular with viewers because they offered better quality than videos.

7.2 Attitudes to the British Board of Film Classification

Awareness of the BBFC varied among respondents in this research but was generally quite low. Although some recognised the BBFC logo from cinemas and videos, most people did not have a clear notion of the BBFC as an organisation, nor of its role in determining what certificates films should be. Many claimed not to have heard of the BBFC at all - this appeared to be as much the case for younger British born Asians as it was for the older generation and non-English speakers.

People felt their attitudes relating to certification and Bollywood was somewhat justified when we showed them clips of films that had been certified by the BBFC. This exercise seemed to confirm peoples' views that the criteria by which the BBFC set standards for classification were not the same as those used by the audiences to judge films. Indeed, it led many to assume that classification decisions on Bollywood films were made by White examiners with little understanding of Asian values and customs. That the classification of Asian films with sex scenes was 'too low' seemed to demonstrate to audiences the BBFC's lack of appreciation of the family viewing context in Asian culture.

No offence, but [the BBFC] haven't got that background knowledge to know what would be suitable for us or not.

English people don't have to watch a movie thinking: 'I can't watch that with my dad'.
Asian females, aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

Some expressed the opinion that films with violence and strong language were being classified too strictly. Nonetheless, some British educated audiences were willing to be open to the rationale behind the BBFC's classification decisions. The knowledge that Bollywood films were classified by the same system as Western films prompted some mothers to reconsider their perception of Bollywood films and different aspects of content besides sex. Others, however, were willing to accept the effects of content like violence on children, but thought it was a matter of judgement for the parent.

The research suggests that that the status and profile of the BBFC could be raised among the Asian community if the fact that the BBFC employed Asian examiners was made more widely known. People seemed to feel they would take more confidence from Asian examiners and they often suggested that it should be Asian examiners who classified Asian films so that they could take account of Asian culture and values. Pakistani

viewers wanted the added assurance of examiners who were Pakistani as they felt that this meant the religious and moral sensitivities of Pakistani audiences were more likely to be given its proper due. While some people were willing to accept that the current guidelines could be adapted for Asian audiences, others felt that there should be separate guidelines altogether.

At the end of the day, we're a different culture: we've got different values, different ways that we have been brought up. So they can give us the same system, the same way of doing things, but they need to localise it to our needs, our culture [and] our standards.
Asian female, aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

Only our own people can decide what is suitable for our children. Those English people don't have a religion or anything – they can watch what they like! Anything goes with them anyway!
Pakistani female (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

Thus, there was little sense that Bollywood viewers looked to certification as a guide when watching films with their families and friends, nor that they felt the current system was very relevant. However, when asked about the issue in more detail and in the context of the changing Bollywood scene, some could be persuaded that they should pay more attention to certification than currently they did. However, they needed strong prompting to do so.

There is a total lack of understanding of our culture. They give a higher certificate just because of the bad language whereas they would give a Western film with lots of sex scenes a much lower certificate. It doesn't make sense. The BBFC haven't got it right when it comes to classifying Asian films.
Indian video shop owner, Birmingham

They need to respect Asian families and their values and bear this in mind when classifying Asian films.
Pakistani male, aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

They should not stop making films just because they are bold or different. It should be for people/ adults to decide if they want to watch it.
Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

Bollywood films are evolving – they are developing in a different dimension and obviously they have to be classified as well.

Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

8 Viewing decisions

The family context meant that in making a choice about what to view, and with whom to view, people made a decision based on two key criteria: 'suitable family viewing' and 'not suitable' family viewing – thus suitable family viewing meant what was appropriate for watching with children, but also for watching with parents, elders, female siblings, spouses or other members of the family. People had a clear notion of what was and wasn't acceptable viewing. As mentioned earlier, this tended very much to relate to sexual content rather than other forms of content, more specifically content such as:

- Kissing;
- Sex scenes;
- Suggestive dialogue, song lyrics or dancing;
- Female characters dressing or behaving in an overt sexual manner.
- Any kind of nudity or partial exposure.

I'd watch family films like Hum Saath Saath Hain and Maine Pyar Kiya, probably not in front of my dad but in front of my mum. My mum and I have got a different relationship. My mum's that naïve that she thinks 'is there such a thing as girlfriend and boyfriend?' That's how naïve my mum is! My mum is such a gullible person. And when she sees it, she's like 'I can't believe it. That just happens in films. It doesn't happen in real life!' She does not believe that there is such a thing as falling in love, and love before marriage.
Pakistani female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

I would watch anything with my friends because that's quite different. You're quite open with them!
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

They shouldn't have kissing scenes in Indian films. You can't watch them. Children feel embarrassed watching in front of their parents, and mothers even feel embarrassed in front of their daughters. How are they supposed to respect their mothers if they watch this sort of thing? So it's not good! Not even if the children know the facts of life – it should still not be shown!
Pakistani female (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

You know that English films have these sorts of scenes in them, but my son is seventeen and he is sensible. He grabs the remote and switches the channel until it has passed.
Pakistani male (non English speaking), aged 45 – 65, Bradford

As UK certificates were not helpful in this context, viewers used their own judgement to assess the suitability of a film. The set of criteria by which viewers looked to in order to make a decision were:

- The **key actors and actresses**: The actress Bipasha Basu (who starred in *Jism* and *Raaz*) for example, had a strong association with more risqué types of films. Conversely, other stars like Shahrukh Khan were known for making family friendly films.
- **Film songs and music** would be released months before the film. Song lyrics and music videos would give viewers a strong clue as to the nature and theme of a film.
- **Marketing materials**: viewers would usually be careful when selecting films with titles or covers that hinted at sexual or intimate content. *Jism*, for example, means 'Body' and *Raaz* which had the male and female protagonists staring intently at each other on the front cover means 'secret' leading viewers to wonder at the nature of this secret. Young Muslim females even commented that they had to be careful about what Bollywood films they left lying around the house in case their fathers saw it and threw it in the bin!
- **Word of mouth**: friends and family would warn each other about the content of certain films. Young men, for example, would be told not to watch with their mothers and females siblings around, likewise, married couples would be told not to watch with their children, parents or in-laws around.

My friends know that I watch films with my older sister and her husband so they say: 'watch that film, it's really good and it's watchable!'. Or they'll say to me 'that's a really good film but it's not really appropriate for watching with your sister and brother-in-law'.

Pakistani female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

- Viewers also looked to **reviews and articles** in Asian media such as 'CineBlitz', 'Movie Magazine' or film websites such as 'Planet Bollywood' which promoted up-coming films. These gave them a good idea about films, film stars and directors.
- More dedicated film fans would also know from the reputation and track record of certain **film directors**. Yash Chopra - dubbed 'the King of Romance' - always produces films popular with family audiences. The director Ram Gopal Varma, on the other hand, is known for films with more mature themes and content, such as *Company* and *Bhoot*.

I look at the title and star cast and assume it's a family film.

I read the storyline at the back if I haven't heard about the film.

I sometimes ask the shopkeeper.

Indian females aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

It's like Urmila – she shows a lot of body and sheds her clothes in films so I would think twice before bringing such a film home for the family.

Pakistani male aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

We were informed by video shops that in the video rental market, 'family films' were by far the most popular with audiences. This suggests that people largely go for films that are regarded as 'safe' family viewing. The greater variety of films and bolder levels of content, however, has meant that Bollywood viewers are still occasionally caught out by inappropriate or sexual content when watching with other members of the family. Frequently, respondents described how the reaction to such awkward and embarrassing situations was to make distracting conversation, or to engage in some sort of diversion activity (e.g. leaving the room to put on the kettle). Sometimes parents or elders of the family would censor viewing altogether by making a decision to switch off the film. Parents

often commented with pride about children who took the initiative to change the channel or fast-forward through an inappropriate scene. This kind of action in their presence was felt to be a sign of respect and obedience.

The children are really quick and they close their eyes. If it's a dance then they don't bother, but if it's kissing or something, then they will.
Pakistani female (non English speaking), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

Our people don't give a damn to the certificates. They come in and just look at the star cast and judge the film by the cover and take the film.
Pakistani video shop owner, Birmingham

9 Attitudes to specific content

The research involved showing five to six clips of films to respondents and gaining their reactions to the content. The clips contained scenes pertaining to the following types of classifiable content:

- Nudity
- Sex
- Violence
- Strong language
- Drug use
- Religious and political themes (this was a new category, which the BBFC felt needed to be taken into consideration for Asian audiences).

(A full list of the clips used in the research is appended at the end of this report).

Respondents were asked to think about the different categories of film certificates (from 'U' to '18') and to indicate what they felt the rating should be for each clip. The research found a number of common factors which seemed to influence how people viewed aspects of content in a film. These were:

- The perceived moral message of a film;
- The length and frequency of certain types of scenes or aspects of content;
- How individual aspects of content combine to contribute to an overall effect (e.g. violence + bad language + tone of scene)
- The level of detail or graphicness;

- The overall context, nature, or type of film.

In summary, the findings were that:

- Sex and nudity were the main concerns;
- Attitudes towards violence were relatively relaxed;
- Swearing, unless very strong, can go unnoticed;
- Drug taking prompted varied reactions;
- Muslims were very upset by films that contained political or religious bias.

Attitudes to specific elements of content are detailed below.

9.1 Nudity and scanty clothing

For viewers used to seeing female stars in saris, fashion which exposes the legs, arms, shoulder or cleavage were traditionally felt to be inappropriate. It is only relatively recently that more Western styles of clothing have been adopted in Bollywood films. Attitudes were evidently changing among both Muslims and non-Muslims, but it was clear that viewers still expected a level of decency of Asian films which extended to the way actresses dressed in films. Differing attitudes to nudity and revealing clothing were very pronounced between Muslims and non-Muslims, but also between older and younger Asians.

British born Indians were generally more accepting of nudity and revealing clothing as they had grown up in the UK. When prompted by a clip of a dance sequence from the film *Company*, one young male viewer dismissed this as: "you get worse on MTV". Older Indians were often conservative in outlook, although this was changing as a result of their exposure to western media.

They see adverts on TV with naked women having a shower, rubbing soap on, so it doesn't massively shock them to see women in Indian films with short dresses. It might shock them initially because it's a new thing for Indian movies.
Indian video shop owner, London

I have been seeing Indian movies since I was a child so I can notice that nowadays women are wearing more revealing clothes. That is because back in India, it is very Westernised anyway. The films are a reflection of what is happening there.
Indian video shop owner

Older Indians did however, still very much object to some of the more explicitly revealing costumes in films.

The costume is sometimes see-through and sometimes it shows too much. It's just like a bikini sometimes and it's just not suitable for sitting down and watching with the family.
Indian female aged 45 – 65, Leicester

Overall, Muslims were much more conservative than Indians in their attitude to sex and nudity. However, there was also evidence that they were changing a little in their outlook. *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, for example - where college students are seen in mini skirts - is such a popular family film that some older Muslim viewers were very forgiving of it. Non-English speakers were the most conservative - we showed *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* to get attitudes on swearing but this caused viewers to comment on the short skirts instead! Muslim viewers, especially older Muslims, tended to see this kind of changing fashion as an indication of low Bollywood morals. And Muslim mothers in particular expressed concerns about daughters imitating the fashion. Nonetheless, the outcome where the characters revert to traditional social norms (i.e. getting married) helped to add to its family appeal and social acceptability. Though not explicitly stated, one suspects that characters that dress in a similarly 'sexy' manner but behave outside of traditional gender norms (such as in films like *Company*) are probably viewed in a much more disapproving manner.

The clothes aren't right. Mostly their arms and legs are naked these days – well that's quite normal for [Indians] now! [But] you can't watch that with the family!

Pakistani female (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

Despite changing attitudes to revealing clothing, people were still conservative about nudity in Asian films. This, however, seemed to be more about the association with sex than nudity *per se*. *Jism* and *Aks* for example, where there is no explicit nudity, seemed to elicit more of a shocked reaction than the film *Mera Naam Joker* where bare breasts and female rear nudity is seen from a distance. Given the nature of small samples in qualitative research, it is difficult to draw any clear indications about how attitudes to sex and nudity as separate entities differed. Moreover people were far more compelled to talk at length about sex instead. People did not expect to see nudity in Bollywood but clearly there are rare exceptions to this such as *Mera Naam Joker* which was a well known film by a respected director. In instances such as this, viewers may be more forgiving. One viewer who had seen *Mera Naam Joker* commented that apart from 'that one useless scene', it was a good film.

Comments on 'Kalass' dance sequence in *Company* ('15')

That wasn't too bad; I'd probably forward it or something!
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

I wouldn't give it a '15' certificate because of that. I think '12' or 'PG' would be fine. The dancing is suggestive but then you see Beyonce on TV shaking her stuff and this is nothing compared to her.

My dad would say, 'what kind of film are you watching?'

If I was watching with my husband and in-laws, my husband or someone would get up and do something to distract. Someone would get up to make a cup of tea!
Indian females aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

9.2 Sexual content

It's just the way we have been brought up. Certain things are not acceptable in our culture.
Pakistani male, aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

Sex was generally regarded as a shameful topic for open discussion in Asian society - therefore, Bollywood films with any kind of sex scenes in them were regarded as controversial but also highly unusual. Even though none of the clips we showed in the research were above a certificate '15', they had a high shock and embarrassment factor for the majority of viewers. Many respondents thought that having sex scenes in Asian films was unnecessary – indeed, some reacted to the scenes as if they were watching pornography.

Those brought up in the UK were surprised to see sex scenes in Asian films but were more sanguine in their attitudes than the older generation. Younger married Indian women felt that they had been brought up thinking sex was shameful and dirty and they did not want their children to be taught the same thing. They felt it was time for old-fashioned attitudes to sex in Asian society to move on even though most - as many others did – felt that only adults (above 18) should view these films.

We have been brought up to believe that sex is dirty and as you grow up you find out that it is not and that it is wrong to think like that.

We do need to move forward, we shouldn't make [sex] such a big issue.

Times are changing – even my nine year old daughter knows where a baby comes from.

We don't want sex to be such a big issue with our kids when they are growing up yet we don't want them to think they can go out and do it.

Indian females aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

Many admitted they were far more tolerant of sex scenes in Western films because the West was a much more 'open society', but they were more likely to view comparable scenes in an Asian film as requiring a higher certificate. This was mainly because they did not want their children to think it was acceptable behaviour in Asian society but also because they did not expect to see such 'open' scenes in an Asian film.

If it's an English film, children know it's an English film. So we expect that. It's as simple as that. Whatever, the open scenes, the sex, this, that – whatever, we expect that. [Children] are aware that this is not our culture but this is English culture.
Indian female aged 45 – 65, Leicester

My wife would say, 'if you want to watch that then why don't you get an English film? Why do you have to get it in an Indian film?'
Pakistani male aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

It would still be a problem if it appears in a Hollywood film but not that much because it is so common in these films but would be very distressing for me if the same scene appeared in a Bollywood film.
Indian male aged 45 – 65, London

Of most concern to people was the potential embarrassment of watching these scenes in the presence of their parents or other elderly relatives. It was felt to be disrespectful and shameful to watch sex scenes in front of elders. This was as true of the younger generation living at home as those who were married with their own children.

I would never expect [a sex scene] in an Indian film.

If this scene [in Satta] came on and I was with my in-laws, I would start talking to my baby and ask if she wants a nappy change.

If there was a sex scene, I would feel very uncomfortable watching with my parents [but] I wouldn't be fussed watching with my partner.
Indian females aged 25 - 44, Birmingham

In our Asian culture, we are brought up to respect our elders. Seeing such scenes in their presence is a sign of disrespect and thus not done in our culture. This does not apply to English culture, they are very open about such scenes with children.
Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

Younger males, especially, were much more likely to have heard of 'controversial' films like *Jism* and *Ek Chhotisi Love Story* (both '15') and were quite prepared to watch these films on their own or with friends in the future! A few married men felt their wives would be open-minded enough to watch films with sex scenes with them. But the taboo surrounding sex in Asian society meant that in reality, they got few opportunities to see them. One married Pakistani viewer commented that

his attempts to borrow *Jism* were repeatedly thwarted by his video shop owner cousin.

My cousin runs this video shop. I have been trying for three weeks to get this film *Jism*. He knows that this film would offend my family and is so scared to be told off by them that he refuses to give me the film. Every time I ask for *Jism*, he says it's out!
Pakistani male (married) aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

Older Muslim and Indian viewers had a much more conservative outlook to sex scenes than those raised in the UK. Indeed, Muslim viewers felt very offended by the scenes as they felt Islam did not sanction watching such scenes. The more traditional Muslim women were quite distressed by the scenes and tried to shield their eyes or look at the floor. They and older respondents were more likely to feel that sex scenes should be censored, or at least given an '18' certificate. Some called for such films to be banned. Muslims viewers frequently commented that such scenes should only be viewed by those who were married and should carry some sort of clear warning.

It doesn't even warrant even being classified! You'd have to be married to be able to watch this!
Pakistani female (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

You know, everything used to be a secret until the day you married. I mean my mum didn't even tell me about sex. Everything was hush hush until the day you were married. It was one of those things you found out about after you were married, not before!
Indian female aged 45 – 65, Leicester

Although some viewers debated whether the length of the scene or the sound effects made a difference to how a sex scene might be perceived, the general consensus was that the BBFC was rating 'too low' for sex scenes in Asian films. The over riding feeling was that Bollywood films with sex scenes should be at given at least a '15' certificate. People were astounded that films with sex scenes, such as *Satta* could merit a '12' certificate, even by Western standards.

If the scene is only a small part of a film and the rest of the film is OK, then the level of sex scenes showed is more acceptable and would not be taken than badly.
Indian male aged 45 – 65, London

Comments on *Satta* ('12')

Seriously? I'm shocked at that! I want to know who gave that a 12 certificate?

I find it disturbing that a 12 year old could then go down to the video store and pick that movie up. That concerns me then if you say that's a 12 certificate!

If I decided to have a night of it with children of 8 and 12 in a family grouping, and I took that film *Satta* home because I thought it was going to be alright because it's a 12 (certificate), and that came up, I'd be furious!
Asian females aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

It should be '18' because it is an Indian film.
Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

This is pornography for Bollywood films

This is very graphic.

That film is for the bedroom to watch with the wife.
Pakistani males aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

Comments on *Jism* ('15')

I've never seen Asian films like that! I wouldn't say they were explicit but you are definitely seeing a lot more than you are used to!
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

It's a raunchy scene. I wouldn't let my fifteen year old daughter watch it.
Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

You don't expect any family acting or films from her (Bipasha, lead actress in *Jism*)
Indian male aged 45 – 54, London

9.3 Violence

There were few strong concerns about violence among the respondents interviewed in this research. Action and fighting scenes were felt to be a common feature of Bollywood films and a rarely at a level unsuitable for family entertainment. The type of violence in most Bollywood films was expected to be unrealistic and cartoon like in quality; this was commonly referred to as *dushum dushum* to describe the heavily exaggerated sound effects that often accompanied action sequences in Bollywood movies. *Dushum* was traditionally associated with hand to hand combat (as in the

film *China Gate*), but it was apparent from the research that people also felt it applied to fight sequences using modern weapons such as guns. Violence was accepted as an integral part of the Bollywood tradition, along with romance, song, dancing and comedy. Unlike the more realistic violence which people expected from Western films, people did not expect to take Bollywood violence seriously and rarely seemed to restrict the viewing of violent scenes among younger members of the family.

Children these days are mature, they know this is fake and can make their own judgement – this won't influence them.

Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

You know the usual 'dush-dush' – like the actor bashing the villain. You can almost laugh at it.

Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

I think it's alright. Fair enough we don't want them watching dirty films. But if they can't watch fighting films, then what is left for them to watch?

Pakistani female (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

Although many audiences recognised that the violence portrayed in recent and contemporary style Bollywood films was of a more realistic quality than in traditional Bollywood films, this seemed to have little effect on their behaviour. Occasionally parents admitted to misgivings but this was after they had taken a child to see a movie and usually only when it was felt to contain excessive levels of violence. Generally, however, films like *Kaante* ('15') were felt to be acceptable for young children to watch. This relaxed attitude to on-screen violence seemed to be shared by the wider community with reports that Asian parents frequently took young children to '15' and even '18' certificated Bollywood films. Where parents did make exceptions about restricting the viewing of violent films, it was largely due to practical concerns such as young children getting scared, or finding it difficult to sleep at night, rather than concerns relating to socio-psychological effects. In fact, most parents, especially non-English

speaking parents, seemed unaware about the potential effects of young children watching '15' and '18' level violence in Bollywood films and rarely commented on this.

In reality everyone has seen a Kaante film – even a seven year old.
Bangladeshi male aged 25 – 44, London

Not all were totally unconcerned about exposing children to violent content. Parents were more likely to distinguish between different levels and types of violence, with British-born mothers, in particular, being the most sensitive to what young children viewed. A variety of factors seemed to contribute to how violent content was perceived in films.

These were:

- The context of the film: modern contemporary settings (e.g. gang warfare) were more likely to raise concerns, as were the use of very strong language in relation to scenes of violence;
- The presence of weapons, for example, the use of knives and guns were likely to elicit more of a reaction;
- Graphicness of the violence: people were more likely to react if there were close up shots of blood, or excessively gory detail;
- Nature of the film: people were more accepting of violence in historical or political films and justified them on the grounds that they were reflecting a cultural reality. For example, *23rd March 1931 - Shaheed* ('15') which portrayed the life of a Punjabi freedom fighter was felt to be of educational value to children who knew little about their cultural or historical roots.

Comments on Kaante ('15')

I would have no problem showing such films to my kids when they are 7 or 8 years old. I would rather educate my son or daughter earlier so they know what the world is and what to expect.

This scene is more realistic, they are not fighting in some cave or fields.

Asian males, aged 18 – 24, London

Living in this sort of country, you get to see this form of violence on TV or Western films, so the kids are used to it. There is no need to [even] make it a '12'.
Indian male aged 45 – 65, London

Comments on *China-Gate* (PG)

It wasn't suitable for somebody who's 12 because obviously there's a bit of bloodshed, and the use of knives, fighting with knives. But there wasn't any cutting or stabbing or somebody bleeding to death for it to be an 18. But there was enough violence in there for it to be a 15 and above. I think violence on films does influence younger children. So that's why I chose 15.

I gave it a PG probably because I don't see Indian films as being that risqué, as in I don't think there's such a break from reality. Because I think most Asian films will have some sort of violent scene in it.
Asian females, aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

9.4 Language

We used two approaches in the research to explore reactions to strong language in films:

- We showed people clips from two films, one of which contained the English word "shit" (*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*) and one of which contained strong Hindi swearwords (*Kaante*).
- We showed people cards with English and Hindi swear words written on, so that people could rank them and discuss the words without having to say them.

Interestingly, reactions to language varied depending on how the words were presented. When viewed in isolation on the cards, people tended to be more censorious, demanding higher certification for stronger words. However, when viewed in the context of the film clips people were less concerned, and it appeared to us that they often did not even notice the swearing.

Indeed, when discussing swearing in films, reactions were highly dependent on the context in which the words were used. For example, if a film character was swearing at his mother that would be more offensive

and merit a higher certificate. If the language was used by a character who was a gangster, this was seen as more justifiable on the grounds that such people would indeed swear and, probably, because they were not presented as good characters in the films.

People in a situation like that would use that kind of language. If you make a film on gangsters then you have to portray the characters correctly.
Asian male, aged 18 – 24, London

Similarly, a single swearword used in passing might go unnoticed, but repeated use of very strong language might merit a higher classification.

In general, Bollywood viewers seemed relatively unconcerned about swearing in films – it was certainly not a subject raised spontaneously when discussing changes in the film scene. Younger viewers felt they would be uncomfortable watching a scene with excessive strong language in front of their parents but this was more a matter of respect than a matter of certification

Personally my parents would not say anything but I would feel uncomfortable if there was swearing in front of my parents. This is out of respect for my parents, it's just part of our culture.
Asian male, aged 18 – 24, London

Asians use swear words very casually in films – it's quite normal.
Indian female aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

Nevertheless, there were differences in reactions to swearing in English and in Hindi. Overall, swearing in Hindi was seen as less offensive than swearing in English. The words “maderchod” (‘motherfucker’) and “bhainchod” (‘sisterfucker’) were agreed to be the strongest swearwords and to merit higher certification. However, even these words were thought by some to be relatively common and not truly shocking. Other swearwords used in Bollywood movies were generally considered mild

and might pass without comment. These included “salaa” (‘damn/bloody’), “kuttiya” (‘bitch’) and “kameena” (‘bastard’).

It’s so common to use “Kameena”. Sometimes my wife uses it with my kids. It’s no big deal.

Pakistani male aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

Fluency in Hindi varied among the younger generation, with many younger viewers (those under thirty) and some older Bangladeshis who were vague about certain use of terms or more complex sections of Hindi dialogue. Sometimes this meant that they did not understand the exact meanings of the swearwords in Hindi – they just knew they were bad. Parents also commented that their children did not recognise Hindi swearwords in films, so they were not so concerned.

If I’m with somebody that knows what’s going on, there’s points in the film where you’ll stop and ask. When you get to the serious parts of the film and the dialogue is getting quite complicated, then you’d say to somebody, ‘what did they say just there?’ Apart from that, because the films are quite visual, I think you can work out what’s going on anyway. I don’t understand it completely. I get most of the gist of it.

I thought “chootiya” means ‘liar’.

Asian females aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

English swearing is more understandable and you don’t always know the swear words in Hindi.

Indian female aged 45 – 65, Leicester

There was more concern about English swearwords, especially use of the word “fuck” which all agreed to be offensive and to require higher certification. Younger children were more likely to pick up and imitate English words, and they were therefore more embarrassing and potentially more damaging to young viewers. But words like “shit” were felt to be common and harmless.

It’s not something you hear in an Asian film. You don’t get the “F word” a lot!

Asian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

“Shit” is so commonly used these days. Even in an Indian village where there is no electricity, you can hear the people saying “shit”.
Shit is harmless, these days when people are using “fuck” in almost every sentence, shit is so mild in comparison.
Indian males aged 45 – 65, London

9.5 Drug taking

Reactions to scenes of drug taking in films varied and there was no clear consensus. Nevertheless, overall patterns in the data were as follows:

- The older generation and those who spoke little or no English were, interestingly, less concerned about scenes of drug taking than younger people. This was because they often lacked knowledge about the UK drugs scene and they therefore tended to interpret scenes of drug use in the context of life in the sub-continent. For example, a scene of cannabis smoking as part of a village festival in rural Indian was seen as relatively innocuous, rather than a dangerous precedent for young people. Also, they sometimes did not understand the scene we played them, which showed a character injecting heroin and suffering hallucinations.
- People under the age of forty, especially mothers who were born or educated in the UK, were much more concerned about scenes of drug taking. They were more aware of the drugs problems which faced their children in the UK and felt that drugs issues needed careful handling in film, in order to avoid encouraging young people to experiment by presenting drugs in a positive light.
- People who lived in areas where drugs were a high profile problem, such as the Bangladeshi mothers in East London, were very worried about drugs in general and therefore more sensitive to representations of drug taking in film.

The context of the drug taking was also an important influence on reactions to scenes. For example, if the drug taking was in a traditional rural setting this might make it less worrying, whereas if it were presented in a modern context a higher certification would be appropriate. Also, the level of detail and type of drugs shown affected reactions – smoking a cannabis pipe was less of a concern (as in the film *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*) but scenes of heroin injecting or inhaling cocaine were more worrying and certainly not suitable for younger children.

Finally, the message which the film conveyed about drug taking affected perceptions of the appropriate certificate. If the character taking the drugs was shown to be a bad person, if he was punished for his behaviour, or if he reformed his character during the film, this was more acceptable. On the other hand, if the drug taking was seen as acceptable and incurring no negative consequences, this would suggest a higher certificate to avoid encouraging young people to experiment with drugs.

Comments on *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* (“15”)

Nowadays that would probably be seen as quite controversial because kids nowadays are really educated about drugs. When I was younger, I wouldn't have known what I was doing.
Indian female aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

9.6 Religious and political themes

On the Indian sub-continent, films dealing in sensitive political and religious issues have been known to cause civil unrest between different religious and ethnic communities. Screenings of *Border* – a film set against a backdrop of the Indian-Pakistani partition - for example, caused outraged Muslims to burn down cinema halls in India. Whether similar films could exacerbate tensions between UK Asian audiences was an area which this research set out to explore. Even for UK audiences, anecdotal evidence had suggested that this was an area which merited attention as a

potential classification issue. And indeed, the research found this to be the case. Pakistani and Bangladeshi respondents believed Bollywood films containing a political-religious theme to convey a strong anti-Pakistani or anti-Muslim bias. Films like *Maa Tujhhe Salaam* (a short clip of which we showed in the research) and similarly, *LOC Kargil* and *Mission Kashmir*, were perceived to have an overt anti-Muslim bias. Some respondents took a censorious view, and called for a ban on these and similar films - they accused the Indian government of being behind such 'propaganda'.

They go out of their way to show Muslims in a poor light. Whichever film they (Indians) make, they show that they are the good people and the Muslims are the bad ones. That I don't like. They do it deliberately. They don't show that people are people and that there is good and bad in everyone whether Hindu or Muslim! But they just show that Muslims and Pakistanis are baddies.

Pakistani female (non English speaker), aged 25 – 44, Bradford

Others, though no less offended by the film clip we showed them, felt that certification decisions should take into account the maturity of viewers. Parents were concerned that younger viewers would get a distorted notion of Indian-Pakistani relations, particularly those surrounding historical events like the partition. Thus '15' was felt to be an age by which most young viewers would be able to make a sensible and objective judgement of the situation portrayed in these films. Many felt there was a genuine possibility that such a film could create tension between the UK Asian communities, especially given heightened anti-Muslim sentiment post -September 11th and fears surrounding terrorism.

This is how hatred can spread. This sort of film can come between friendships.

Pakistani male (non English speaking), aged 45 – 65, Bradford

Indian audiences, however, enjoyed what they regarded as 'patriotic' / historic war films; therefore, they were much less likely to express concerns that such films could contribute to inter-community tensions among Asians

in the UK. Moreover, they felt that war films were educational for children to learn about their country's history.

Films like this do influence people, makes one feel more patriotic and motivates you to get more involved in Indian things.

We were not there but these films are informative, they assert our identity.

These films make us think like Indians, makes us forget our caste and community differences, and makes us feel united.

Indian males, aged 45 – 65, London

There was a lot of violence but you expect it because the film is about wars. I would give it a '12' and other such films about war because you want your children to know what happened and what sacrifices our people made.

Such violence is accepted in war films so they shouldn't be '18'.

Indian females aged 25 – 44, Leicester

The treatment of political and religious themes obviously varied a great deal between films and this seemed to have a bearing on peoples' attitudes – whether they were Muslim or not. How films were received by audiences seemed to relate to key factors such as:

- The **balance of events** shown: *Gadar*, a love story set against the backdrop of the 'partition' was felt to give a fair and balanced portrayal of historical events, and was reported to be very popular with Pakistani viewers by one video shop owner;
- **Stereotyping**, for example, of Pakistani terrorists in films like *Maa Tujhhe Salaam* and *LOC Kargil* were felt to have a very anti-Muslim bias.
- The **nature of the film**, for example, the central focus of the film, *Pinjar*, was on a love story rather than religious-political events *per se*.

Comments on *Maa Tujhhe Salaam* ('18')

It's the portrayal of Muslims as terrorists. It's bad enough with the English media doing that without having our own Bollywood media doing the same thing.

They're trying to stereotype it. And the thing is, it does cause a lot of problems between the Muslim community and the Indian community. I know quite a few films which have caused a lot of problems about things like that. It's disgusting!
Muslim females aged 18 – 24, Birmingham

These sorts of films are always putting the other country down. They never show Hindus like this. It is always the Muslims, the Mujahadeens or Palestinians. We don't watch films like that.
Pakistani male aged 25 – 44, Birmingham

10 Video shops

Our sample included video shops in Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi areas. These ranged from small family run to slightly larger outlets with staff. Apart from stocking Bollywood film for sale or hires, many also stocked Asian music, magazines and other Asian films. Video shop owners appeared to be quite influential and well known figures. They had long established customer bases and knew most of their customers and families very well. In fact, they seemed to pride themselves on having personal knowledge of their customers and their preferences when it came to what films they liked to watch.

I know most of my customers. Before you make them a member, you take a deposit. You get to know them and you talk to them for a few minutes. You're talking about films with them and you get quite friendly with them. It's not like you are just serving them.
Indian video shop owner, London

First I see what type of personality a customer has. Initially I would say 'you choose yourself'. But when he has been with me for some time, then I will understand what type of film he likes. Then I'll have an idea of his taste.
Indian video shop owner, London

The views of video shop owners to film classification reflected that of the main sample. As with other viewers, they felt that BBFC certificates were not a helpful guide for Asian audiences, and preferred to rely on their own judgement. They used criteria such as the cast, the title and the look of the film by which to assess suitability for family viewing. Even though they were more aware of certificates on Bollywood films than their customers, this did not seem to encourage them to act on age-related certificates

even within their own families. Bollywood films were felt not to contain a level of violence that meant they should be restricted viewing for children.

I wouldn't stop my five year old son from watching anything. I allow him up to '15' - or even '18' if I'm there. He's allowed. He's seen Kaante. He went to the cinema with me to see it. He was quite young when that film came out, but he was allowed into the cinema to see it. At the end of the day, I think it should be the parents' choice. It's really up to the parents how they bring up their kids.
Indian video shop owner, London

There isn't anything particularly inappropriate in our Asian films that requires you to pay too much attention to the certification. There are very few scenes which are for adults really, like Western type scenes. But even then, they are not that bad. I mean in English films, you have full nudity and all that. But in Asian films there isn't nearly so much that you are often embarrassed if you are watching with your parents. Everybody's modernised now so if you compare these scenes with the way society is moving, then they are not really that bad.
Indian video shop owner, London

It seemed common for parents to get their children to pick up videos on their behalf, especially in Pakistani and Bangladeshi areas where it was less appropriate for women to go to video shops themselves. Reports suggested that video shops do not always adhere to the law when hiring films to children. Video shop owners were perhaps cautious about what they admitted to in our presence, but it did seem that some were prepared to be flexible to accommodate their customers especially as they did not want to interfere with the film choices made by parents – they asserted that they only hired films to under aged children on special request by parents they knew well. Indeed they generally seemed less concerned by '15' certificated films (which were still considered family viewing), but claimed to take more care to adhere to guidelines with '18' certificated films.

Even if a film is '15', it is likely to be watched by the entire family.
Indian video shop owner, London

To most video shop owners we interviewed, classification appeared to them to be inconsistent and confusing between Bollywood films; they

were mystified as to why some films were given more restrictive certificates: they cited family films like *Kal Ho Na Ho*, *Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gham*, or *Koi Mil Gaya* which, they said, had no sex or violence and mentioned they could not understand why they were not given lower 'U' or 'PG' certificates.

Koi Mil Gaya has a lot of comedy. There is no bad language or sex so I don't understand the reason for them giving it a '12'. It's such a harmless film.
Indian video shop owner, Birmingham

The BBFC usually apply guidance over strictly to Bollywood films.
Indian video shop owner, London

The research suggests that video shops are a potentially important intermediary between the Asian community and the BBFC. Customers trust them to know their preferences and often ask them for their recommendation on films. Video shop owners in turn feel they have a duty of care to their customers; this translates as making appropriate recommendations according to personal preferences (for example, the release of a new film) as well as warning them when they feel a film might cause offence or embarrassment to the viewer or to any members of the household that might be present.

We don't recommend films like Boom [1] to families because they are too explicit and would offend them. Our culture is very conservative and such films don't go down well. The language is very strong and so are some of the scenes.
Pakistani video shop owner, Birmingham

Some mentioned that this was often the case with young men who were more likely to hire contemporary type Bollywood films which contained sex scenes. Some video shop owners were as concerned as parents about the influence of increasingly liberal content and bad Asian role models on the younger generation. As one Bangladeshi video shop owner commented:

¹ Please note that 'Boom' had not yet been classified for UK video distribution at the time of the interview

I am sorry to say that Indian films have a more sexual touch to them. They have become very advanced. Bollywood is becoming more erotic.
For many young people, Bollywood films represent Asian culture, so the film producers must be responsible when making such films.
Bangladeshi video shop owner, London

Indeed, the change in Bollywood films over the years seemed problematic for video shops: if they were not careful, they would get customers or their parents coming back with complaints about rude content. One owner mentioned that he often got customers demanding a refund on films that surprised them with 'rude' or 'steamy' scenes, especially when female members of the family were also watching.

I do keep an eye on [young men] and tell them whether it is a Bengali or Indian film. I tell them if you borrow this, you must definitely not see this with your brother or your sister.
Bangladeshi video shop owner, East London

If a young lad, who's say twenty, comes in for a movie like Jism, then I feel it is my duty to tell him that if you are taking this home and have your mother or sister at home, then it will cause embarrassment. It then gives him a choice. He would normally take the film if he is watching on his own or with friends.
Pakistani video shop owner, Birmingham

Video shop owners seemed more likely to adhere to age-related restrictions on Western films. This was partly because of the much greater likelihood of intimate content such as kissing, or sex scenes, but also for one owner who did not want to give customers refunds on Western films with higher hire prices!

We are very strict with the English films. We have to be! Anything can happen in an English film. An '18' film could be rude or it could be anything! If a young child comes in, I'll be honest with you, we won't be checking their passports, but we look at them and if they look under aged, we won't give it to them!
Indian video shop owner, London

As mentioned earlier, reports by viewers and other anecdotal evidence suggested that many Asian video shops stocked pirate films for hire or purchase. Some outlets reportedly produced their own copies of films on site. Not all video shops we spoke to were willing to admit they stocked

pirate versions of films (although it was clear from looking at their shelves). One video shop owner, who did not, complained bitterly that the demand for piracy was such that he lost business to other video outlets that did. Some blamed the increase of piracy on slow classification and distribution processes which delayed the official release of Bollywood titles to the UK market.

We are just losing money and losing time. And the reason is we are not doing pirate!
Whenever we get someone through these doors, he wants one thing only – the latest film which is showing in the cinema. We don't supply pirate copies so we tell them we'll only have the latest film for hire when it's officially released. So the customer leaves!
Indian video shop owner, London

11 Appendices

- List of film clips shown
- Desk research sources
- Discussion guides
 - Focus groups
 - Video shop interviews
 - Family interviews
- Recruitment questionnaire

11.1 Bollywood Film Clips

The following clips were shown to respondents throughout the research. We split what clips we showed across the sample to ensure equal exposure of all the key classification issues, although not all groups viewed all the clips.

FILM CLIPS	CERTIF.	DESCRIPTION	DUR. (MIN)
LANGUAGE			
<i>Kuch Kuch Hota Hai</i>	U	College scene. Two uses of English 'shit'	01.23
<i>Kaante</i>	15	Use of Hindi strong language and physical violence.	00.30
NUDITY			
<i>Mera Naam Joker</i>	PG	Female rear nudity and partially bared breasts	1.48
SEX			
<i>Khalnayak</i>	Cinema: PG Video: 15	'Choli Ke Peeche' [transl. 'Under the blouse'] teasing song and dance sequence	01.00
<i>Company</i>	15	Song and dance sequence in a contemporary setting – scantily clad female dancing in the rain	01.13
<i>Satta</i>	12	Married couple making love under the sheets	00:51
<i>Jism</i>	15	Intense ice cube lovemaking; scenes of partial nudity	03:00
<i>Ex Chhotisi Love Story</i>	15	'Free love' sex scene watched by voyeur	02:00
<i>Aks</i>	Cinema: 12 Video: 15	Passionate fetishist sex with shiny knife between a gangster and his moll – kissing and partial nudity	01:57
DRUGS			
<i>Hare Rama Hare Krishna</i>	15	Song/ sequences about marijuana smoking	02:27
<i>Abhay</i>	15	Scenes of violence and taking of class A drugs followed by an extended drug trip sequence	03:06
VIOLENCE			
<i>China Gate</i>	PG	Dushum knife fight in a cave	01:33
<i>23rd March 1931 - Shaheed</i>	Cinema: PG	Scenes of police torture of main protagonist	00:33

	Video: 12		
<i>Kaante</i>	15	Extended street shoot-out sequence in a contemporary setting with police and bank robbers	01:19
RELIGIOUS/ POLITICAL			
<i>Maa Tujhhe Salaam</i>	18	Pakistani terrorist stared down by 'hero' Sunny Deol 'wets' himself	01:40
<i>Earth</i>	15	Heated round-a-table discussion about partition	03:00

11.2 Desk research

There are currently no organisations that collect statistical data on Bollywood audiences in the UK *per se*, so we were unable to determine the size and profile of Bollywood audiences. Bollywood films in the UK are tracked only in terms of box office takings. PhD theses were not consulted for this research given their theoretical nature and lack of statistical data.

The organisations listed below have all conducted some form of research into Bollywood.

1. AC Nielsen EDI

AC Nielsen EDI is the centralised source for box office information. The London office currently tracks all films for all distributors from 865 theatres, covering 4,600 play dates per week across the UK and Ireland. Data regarding takings for Bollywood film have been tracked since 1998 but these are only available on subscription.

2. British Film Institute

Surrey Social and Market Research conducted a qualitative and quantitative study into Black and Asian film and cinema audiences during July 2000 on behalf of the British Film Institute. This formed the basis of the *Towards Visibility: A Three-Year Cultural Diversity Strategy (Phase 1) – Consultation Draft* which pre-empted the BFI's festival of South Asian cinema in 2002. The research involved 400 street surveys (219 African Caribbeans and 182 South Asians) and 10 focus groups in areas of high ethnic concentration. Results were compared with CAVIAR surveys to draw a number of conclusions. These should be read with caution,

however, given the small number of South Asians surveyed (182 of a total 400).

The survey concluded that a quarter of South Asians go to the cinema 2-3 times per month or more, which is more frequent than the mainstream population. There is a correlation between cinema going and affluence, with higher income grades going more often. Cinema going is most popular among young ages with over 40% of 16-29 year olds going 2-3 times a month or more. Whilst the final conclusion parallels with the UK population as a whole, the study notes the different age profiles of Asian and white populations - 42% of all South Asians are under 29 years old, compared with only 20% of white population.

3. Cinema & Video Industry Audience Research (CAVIAR)

Now in its 20th year, CAVIAR is the most comprehensive survey about cinema going and film viewing in the UK. CAVIAR is commissioned by the Cinema Advertising Authority and conducted by BMRB International. The CAVIAR research comprises two sections. The annual report provides information on cinema consumption, attitudes towards film and cinema and leisure activities etc. Over 3000 face-to-face interviews are conducted for the report. The film monitor provides quarterly film profile data, with over 120 films profiled every year. The film monitor has recently started to include major Bollywood films. Bollywood films that have been profiled include *Kabhie Khushie Kabhi Gham*, *Devdas*, *Chalte Chalte* and *Baghban* (all big budget romances). Access to this information is only available by subscription at a cost of £2,450 + VAT.

4. Dodona Research

Dodona conducts research on film production, distribution and exhibition. Their '*Cinemagoing Reports*' are key sources for data on cinema attendances and box office. The organisation produced a national industry report on Bollywood in 2001, although this focused largely on the industry in India. This data is only available on subscription.

5. UK Film Council

The UK Film Council's Research and Statistics Unit (RSU) gathers film industry data. They confirmed that there is a dearth of statistical data relating to Bollywood film audiences. The organisation has recently begun work with Taylor Nelson Sofres to identify and study the cinema-going patterns of disabled people and people from minority ethnic groups, as well as their access to film via television and VHS/DVD. This project has yet to be completed.

6. Other sources

The UK's main Bollywood film distributors, **Eros** and **Yashraj Films**, were also contacted. They confirmed that they do not compile data on Bollywood audiences.

Books on Bollywood are either historical accounts of the film industry, biographies of particular actors or directors, coffee table style picture books, or collections of academic essays which take a theoretical approach.

Data sources

AC Nielsen EDI reports.

Banker, A: *Bollywood*, Pocket Essentials, 2001.

BFI: *Towards Visibility: A Three-Year Cultural Diversity Strategy (Phase 1) – Consultation Draft*, Surrey Social and Market Research Ltd (SSMR), July 2000.

CAVIAR reports.

Dodona Research: *Bollywood: India's Film Industry*, Dodona Research, 2001 (report focuses largely on Bollywood in India, and not Bollywood in UK)

Dwyer, R: *All You Want is Money, All You Need is Love*, Pippin Publishing Corporation, 2000.

Dyja, E, ed: *BFI Film & TV Handbook 2004*, BFI, 2004.

Kabir, N M: *Bollywood: The Indian Cinema Story*, Channel 4 Books, 2001.

UK Film Council: *Film in the UK 2002, Statistical Yearbook*, UK Film Council, 2002.

Useful contact details

CAVIAR, Pearl and Dean Cinemas Ltd, 3 Waterhouse Sq, 138-142 Holborn, London, EC1N 2NY. Tel: 0207 882 1113 (Nick Cullen)
Email: nick.cullen@smg-outofhome.com
Web: www.pearlanddean.com/research/caviar.html

Dodona Research, PO Box 450, Leicester, LE2 2YE
Tel: 0116 285 4550, Fax: 0116 285 4575
Email: customer.service@dodona.co.uk
Web: www.dodona.co.uk

AC Nielsen EDI, Sixth Floor, Endeavour House, 189 Shaftesbury Avenue, London,
WC2H 87J

Tel: 0207 170 5200

Web: www.nielsenedi.com/international/uk

Research & Statistics Unit, UK Film Council, 10 Little Portland Street, London, W1W
7JG

Tel: 0207 861 7861, Fax: 0207 861 7862

Email: info@ukfilmcouncil.org.uk

Web: www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk

11.3 Bollywood Batein – Topic Guide for focus groups

1. Introduction [10 mins]

Name, ages, family, occupation, how often they watch Bollywood movies
Do they understand Hindi, how much do they understand?

Respondents to discuss in pairs for 5 mins:

- **“Three reasons why they like Bollywood movies”**

Put thoughts on a flip chart and ensue with general discussion on:

- What do they look for in a ‘good’ Bollywood movie?
- What do /don’t they expect to see? For example, compared to Western TV
- How do their expectations for Bollywood films differ to that for Western movies?

2. Attitudes to Bollywood [10 mins]

For younger people and the men, ask:

Why do they watch Bollywood films compared to Western movies? Reasons could be:

- Entertainment
- Boredom/lack of choice
- To feel closer to their cultural roots
- To learn Hindi (younger generations mainly)
- For certain actors and stars
- Because other members of their family watch them (who?)

How would this be different for other members of their family?

For older people or women you may wish to ask:

How much do they watch Bollywood movies compared to Bengali/Pakistani or other regional films?

Do they think Bollywood movies have changed over the years? How have they changed?
Are these changes for better or for worse?

What different movies are there? Do these films attract different audiences?

3. Viewing context [15 mins]

What kind of Bollywood films do they like or choose to watch?

Probe:

- Are there certain films they only watch with certain members of the family or friends present – i.e. mums and daughters/husbands and wives/brothers and sisters/with friends your age?
- Are any types of films associated with any particular occasions (e.g. Kitty parties, hanging out with your mates etc.)?

Do they ever go to the **cinema** to watch Bollywood films? How often? Where do they go? Who do they go with? On what sorts of occasions? How do they find out about new films to watch?

Do they watch Bollywood movies on **TV**? If so, what Asian channels do they watch? What films tend to be shown? When might they be watching? Who would usually be with them? At what times of the day do they usually watch films?

Do they ever hire or buy Bollywood **videos** or **DVDs**? How often? With whom/on what sorts of occasions? From where do they buy or hire? Do they ever bring them back from abroad?

Do they ever buy or hire **counterfeit/pirate** copies? From where do they obtain these? Are they aware it is illegal? Can they recognise the difference? Does it matter to them?

Are there Bollywood films that they or members of their family tend to watch more than once? Which ones? In what manner do they tend to re-view films? Do they re-watch a film all the way through, or only certain scenes/songs? What scenes do they like to go back to?

How is this different for those who own DVDs compared to people who watch on video?

4. Classification issues [20 mins]

At the video shop, who tends to choose the films to watch at home?

If it is themselves, how do they usually make a decision as to what to watch? How might this differ for Bollywood, Western or other Asian films?

If there are younger members of the family who are likely to watch films, how do they make a judgement as to whether Bollywood films are /aren't suitable? Is this something that they, or other members of the family, are concerned about, or take action on?

Do they use film certification as a guide in these instances? If not UK ones, which ones – if any?

Are they aware of film certificates? Do they recognise the UK ones or the ones used in India/Bangladesh/Pakistan? Do they know what they mean?

Do they understand what is the difference between UK certificates of U, PG, 12/12A, 15 and 18? What do they think are the differences between the certificates in terms of who the content is suitable for?

How seriously do they take it when viewing:

- films at the cinema
- borrowed films
- films on TV?

Have they ever seen anything in a Bollywood movie (at home or in the cinema) that has offended, embarrassed or upset them, or another person watching with them?

Probe: details of film, viewing context and what their reaction was.

What do they think different sorts of people would find acceptable or unacceptable in a Bollywood movie? Probe for:

- Older and younger people
- People of different ethnicity/religions, background

Does what other people think about a film's content ever influence their reactions to a film? How?

Can they give examples of films that they personally find or have heard are controversial or pushing the bounds of acceptability? What was it about?

5. Film clips section [25 mins]

Show a selection of 4-5 clips with examples of the following:

- Bad language
- Dishum/violence
- Sex/nudity
- Drugs

[Rotate order of clips you show in each group]

After each clip, probe:

- What are their first impressions? Have they seen the film/ what have they heard about it? Is there anything about the scene that they find surprising or unusual for a Bollywood film?
- Can they imagine watching this scene with different members of their family or friends? Who would they feel comfortable/ not comfortable watching this type of scene with?

- Are there any elements they would they pick out as of concern if younger members of the family were watching? (Probe on elements of content in detail)

Exercise A

What certification would they expect it to be? (U, PG, 12/12A, 15, 18) – Check and compare differences in attitudes among the group. What is their reaction to the certification imposed by the BBFC?

- What's the difference between the clip shown and one that would be clearly classed as a slightly higher or lower certificate – i.e. U/PG/12/15/18 certificates?

(Probe elements of content in detail to see how it affects their views on certification. Check what they mention spontaneously about language before gaining their views in Exercise B).

Exercise B

Use sort cards of offensive terms and check what certification they would impose on them. Check their understanding of the terms.

Tell them how it compares to BBFC imposed categories and check their reactions. Are there any contexts where use of certain words/terms could be deemed acceptable or unacceptable? Do they notice use of English swear words? How do their attitudes differ?

- How does the context of the rest of the film influence their attitude? (E.g. if a couple were married in a love scenes/if it was a violent film but with a historical context like *Shaheed*? Check how attitudes of those who have seen the film before differ from those who have not seen the film before)

Show politically/religiously themed clip:

- What are their first impressions?
- Have they seen films with similar themes? How do they differ? Does having violence or bad language in these films make a difference compared to a film with a different theme, say a gangster movie?
- Do they think these kind of themes could raise tensions among UK Asian communities?
- Should this impact on who they should be shown to or what certification they should be given?

6. The role of the BBFC [10 mins]

What are their attitudes to the film classification system in the UK? How do they think it compares in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh?

Do they have a better understanding of certification? How does this change their views
Is it something they or their family would pay attention to, or look to for guidance?

Have they heard of the BBFC? What do they understand about their role? How do they feel about them classifying S. Asian films? Would they trust their judgement?

If not, on what basis would they make decisions about suitability of viewing? What/who might they turn to for guidance instead?

Would they ever consider writing to the BBFC to complain if they disagreed with their guidelines on certain films? Did they know they could do that? Do they think their views would be listened to?

Explain reason for research:

The BBFC – the British Board of Film Classification – are an independent body responsible for the classification of films. They want to ensure that the certificates they give Bollywood films reflect the views of the people who watch them – hence this research.

Check for final thoughts and comments

Thanks, incentives and close.

11.4 Video shops Topic Guide

1. Background [10 mins]

Name of respondent, their role, size and nature of the business (if other than just video rental), other workers/employees, their ethnic background

What kind of films or other videos do they stock (Bollywood, Pakistani, Bengali, Western) etc?
Are there ones they stock more than others?

How do they decide which films to stock? Do they ever watch the films they stock themselves?

2. Customer profile [15 mins]

How would they describe the local area and population?

Do they see themselves catering for a particular community? What kind of customers do they get in? Probe:

- Age/ ethnicity/gender
- Regularity of visits
- How they come in/ who they tend to come in with
- Whether people hire films for themselves or for other members of the family?

When are their busiest times of the day/week/year? Why do they think that is?

What are the popular types of films? Who hires/watches them?

What differences do they notice between the communities and the films they hire?
E.g. to what extent do Pakistani/Bengali people hire Bollywood films over Pakistani/Bengali produced films?

Are there any trends they have noticed in terms of the types of films that come out and/or who views them?

How do people tend to select films? Have they noticed whether families/ older or younger couples/ groups of young people choose different films?

3. Distribution [5 mins]

Where do they get their films?

- Are they distributed by a UK based company?
- By a distribution company based abroad?
- Or are they brought back from abroad by a personal contact?

Do all the films they stock for hire and purchase have UK certificates on them? Where are non-UK certificated ones sourced?

Are there any other differences between these ones and ones that are UK distributed/have UK certificates on them?

4. Views on films and UK certification [20 mins]

What about UK certification? Do they ever use this as a guide? How useful is it? Do they think it is of any importance?

Do they understand the differences between U/PG/12/15/18? Do they understand the difference between 12 and 12A? Do they think customers understand or pay attention to these? What do they think are the differences between the certificates in terms of who the content is suitable for?

How do they think these certificates apply to Bollywood films compared to Western films?

Are there any films where they think the UK certificates have been applied inappropriately? Why? Probe by looking at films in their collection:

- What examples of films would they pick out as 'family viewing'?
- What would be 'non family viewing'?
- What elements of the content make it suitable or unsuitable? (Check for: bad language, violence, sex/nudity, drugs, etc.)
- How do their views compare to the UK certificate on the films? Why do they account for the difference in opinion, if there is one?
- What elements of content do they think customers find unacceptable?

Do they ever comment if they think someone was about to hire an inappropriate film? Do they see themselves as having a responsibility towards this?

Do they ever offer advice or guidance to a customer - or customers seek their advice - about suitability of content? What kind of advice do they offer/is asked for? Does the customer ever offer advice or reprimand them?

How do they think attitudes differ between different types of customers when it comes to what is considered 'suitable' or accepted content?

Are there any films they have refused to stock in the past? Why?

What films can they recall from the past or present as being particularly controversial? Why was it controversial?

5. The role of the BBFC [10 mins]

If films they have are certificated abroad (e.g. India), do they understand what the certification there means? Do they ever use it as a guide?

What are their attitudes to the film classification system in the UK? How do they think it compares to classification systems in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh?

Which are they more likely to take their guidance from? Which - if any - do they think their customers are more likely to take their guidance from?

Have they heard of the BBFC? What do they understand about the BBFC's role? How do they think about them classifying S. Asian films? Would they trust their judgement? What advice would they give them about classifying Asian films?

Thanks, incentives and close

11.5 Family visits Topic Guide

Approach this as a very informal in-home interview. It is an opportunity to:

- **Get contributions from family members (together or on their own) to see how views compare on Bollywood, film certification etc.**
- **Observe personal video or DVD collections – and see how views on certification and content really work in reality!**
- **Spend more time showing video clips and probing on reactions**

The following is a guide to general areas of discussion with members of the family and need not be done in any particular order.

Find opportunities to speak to members of the family together or individually.

Introduction

Spend the first 20-30 mins introducing yourself, explaining the purpose of your visit (that you're here to find out about their attitudes to Bollywood) and generally getting to know the family and putting them at ease with your presence.

Ask if they will take you on a tour of the family home.

Generally of interest are:

- **Who are the different members of the household; what are their ages; what do they do? What are their individual interests?**
- **What is the household like? What are the different rooms used for?**
- **What rooms have TV/ videos/ DVD/satellite or cable?**
- **What interests do the family have? What signs of these can you see in the house?**

General TV/viewing habits:

- **Does the family subscribe to Asian channels? Who in the household watches it?**
- **What Asian films or programmes do they watch?**
- **What do other members of the family like to watch?**
- **Are there any Asian or Western programmes or films the family watch together?**
- **How does TV fit into their weekly routine? Are there times of the day or week dedicated to certain activities or TV/film viewing?**

What is the balance of films they watch on TV compared to DVD/VHS? What is the balance of Asian and Western films/TV they watch? How is this different for different members of the household?

Attitudes to Bollywood

- Who in the family likes/ watches Bollywood? What do they like about it?
- What types of films do they watch? Who do they watch it with? Where do they sit to watch it? When/how regularly do they watch? Are there any films that they watch alone or without certain members of the family present? Do they ever do other things whilst watching the films?
- What do they look for in a 'good' Bollywood movie? What do /don't they expect to see? Look at the video/DVD collections – which are their favourites?
- Do they ever go to the cinema to watch a Bollywood movie? Which cinema do they go to? How often? What films have they seen recently and with whom? How do they find out about new movies?

For those not into Bollywood:

- Which members of the family are not interested in Bollywood? Why not?
- Do they ever watch it anyway because other members of the family are watching it?
- What do they prefer instead?
- How are other films they watch different? Do they prefer Western films?
- Do other members of the family watch Western films with them? What do they think?

The video/DVD collection

Make the most of this as a basis for exploring other areas of the discussion guide.

Things to note:

- What films do the family have in their collection? Are these DVD/VHS?
- Are there any rental films?
- Are they pirate or counterfeit? Are they BBFC certified?
- What types of films do they tend to be? Who do they belong to? What certificate are they?
- Which films would they all watch as a family?
- Are there films they would not watch with younger or certain members of the family around? Why not? What would happen if a member of the family – like a son/father – walked in when they were watching this film?
- Do younger members of the families have their own separate collections? What kind of films do they have (Western or Asian)? Are there films their parents would not approve of?

Repeat viewing:

- Are there any films that are watched more than once? How are they watched?
 - Do they watch the whole thing again, or do they only re-watch certain scenes or songs? What are the best bits?

Ask them to describe the scenes they re-watch, or to show the scene/s in question.

Hiring or buying

- From where do they get their films? Who usually goes to the video shop to select the films to watch?
- Do they buy any films? From where do they buy? Who usually buys them?

General attitudes to content within the family

(You may wish to refer to films in their collection in this section)

- Have they ever seen anything in a Bollywood movie that has offended, embarrassed or upset another member of the family?
- What is acceptable/ unacceptable? Do attitudes of different members of the family differ? Probe:
 - How do Bollywood or other Asian films compare to Western films?
 - How do they think their views on this would differ from Western audiences?
- Can they give examples of films that they have heard are controversial?
- **With parents:**
 - Are there any films that younger members of the family watch that they disapprove of?
 - How do they make a judgement as to whether Bollywood (or other) films are /aren't suitable before they have watched it? Is this something that they, or other members of the family, are concerned about, or take action on?
- **With younger members of the family:**
 - What are their parents like about films they are/or are not allowed to watch?
 - Do their parents restrict their viewing of films because of their certificate? Or for other reasons?
 - Or are their parents relaxed about this sort of thing?
 - Is there a difference between boys and girls as to what is deemed acceptable or not acceptable by their parents?

- Do they ever watch things (TV or video or cinema) that they know their parents disapprove of?

Film certificates

- Are they aware of film certificates? Do they understand what is the difference between U, PG, 12/12A, 15 and 18? Do they pay attention to these at all?

How seriously do they or other members of the family take it when viewing:

- films at the cinema?
- films at home?

Film clips

Show a selection of as many clips as convenient. You can do this individually, or with other members of the family around.

Some you will obviously not be able to show with younger members of the family present; with others (like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* or *China Gate*), let what the parents' attitudes about what is/isn't suitable be your guide:

After each clip, probe:

- What are their first impressions? Have they seen the film/ what have they heard about it? Is there anything about the scene that they find surprising or unusual for a Bollywood film?
- Is this something they would watch themselves? / With which members of the household could they/would they normally be watching this sort of thing with? / What would they do if a member of the family walked in watching something like this?

Exercise A

What certification would they expect it to be? (U, PG, 12/12A, 15, 18) What is their reaction to the certification imposed by the BBFC?

- What's the difference between the clip shown and one that would be clearly classed as a slightly higher or lower certificate – i.e. U/PG/12/15/18 certificates?

(Probe elements of content in detail to see how it affects their views on certification. Check what they mention spontaneously about language before gaining their views in Exercise B).

Exercise B

Use sort cards of offensive terms and check what certification they would impose on them. Check their understanding of the terms.

Tell them how it compares to BBFC imposed categories and check their reactions. Are there any contexts where use of certain words/terms could be deemed acceptable or unacceptable? Do they notice use of English swear words? How do their attitudes differ?

- How does the context of the rest of the film influence their attitude? (E.g. if a couple were married in a love scenes/if it was a violent film but with a historical context like *Shaheed*? Check how attitudes of those who have seen the film before differ from those who have not seen the film before)

If you have showed a politically/religiously themed clip:

- What are their first impressions?
- Have they seen films with similar themes? How do they differ? Does having violence or bad language in these films make a difference compared to a film with a different theme, say a gangster movie?
- Do they think these kind of themes could raise tensions among UK Asian communities?
- Should this impact on who they should be shown to or what certification they should be given?

The role of the BBFC

This is not an important part of the family visit, but if you wish, you can ask a couple of questions on this:

- Have they heard of the BBFC? Do they know what they do?
- How do they feel about them classifying S. Asian films? Would they trust their judgement? Or would they prefer to pay attention to classification from 'back home'?
- Has this visit made them feel any differently about film classification? Is it something they would pay attention to, or look to for guidance in the future?

11.6 Recruitment Questionnaire

DATE OF GROUP:

TIME:

GROUP ref.:

DO NOT REVEAL CLIENT

Q1. We are carrying out a market research project about people's attitude to Indian films and are looking for people to participate.

Do you or do any members of your family or close friends work in any of the following occupations or organisations, either now or in the past?

READ OUT AND CODE BELOW

NO

YES

MARKET RESEARCH		1	2
MARKETING/MEDIA/ADVERTISING/PR	1	2	
JOURNALISM		1	2
FILM/ FILM DISTRIBUTION or RELATED INDUSTRY	1	2	
VIDEO SHOP OWNER/ EMPLOYEE	1	2	

IF YES TO ANY OF THE ABOVE, CLOSE INTERVIEW

Q2. Have you attended a market research group discussion in the last six months?

YES

1 ASK Q2b

NO

2 ASK Q3

Q2b. If yes, what was the subject? (WRITE IN): _____

IF SUBJECT WAS RELATED TO FILM OR FILM CLASSIFICATION, CLOSE INTERVIEW

Q3a. Please tell me how often you do the following?

READ OUT AND CODE BELOW

		AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK	AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH	AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR	NOT AT ALL
A	Watch a Bollywood /Indian movie on satellite/cable TV E.g B4U, ARY Digital, Star Plus etc.	1	2	3	4
B	Watch a Bollywood/Indian movie on DVD or video	1	2	3	4

RESPONDENTS MUST CODE 1 – 2 FOR AT LEAST 1 ITEM ABOVE

Q3b. When was the last time you went to the cinema to watch a Bollywood movie?

- Within the last month
- Within the last 3 months
- Within the last 6 months
- Within the last year
- More than a year ago
- Not at all

FOR GROUPS 7 & 8:

RECRUIT AT LEAST ½ WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS

FOR GROUPS 9/13/14:

RECRUIT AT LEAST ½ WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

FOR ALL OTHER GROUPS:

TRY TO RECRUIT 1 OR 2 WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, IF POSSIBLE

Q4. Do you subscribe to any Asian TV channels at home – e.g. Star Plus, B4U movies, Prime TV etc.?

YES / NO

AT LEAST ½ OF EACH GROUP TO SUBSCRIBE OR HAVE ACCESS TO AN ASIAN CHANNEL AT HOME

Q5. What is your marital status?

Single

Co-habiting

Married

Divorced/separated

Widowed

Q6. Do you have children?

YES

NO

18-24 YR OLDS: TO BE SINGLE WITH NO CHILDREN OF THEIR OWN.

25-44 YR OLDS AND 45-65 YR OLDS ALL/MOST TO BE PARENTS.

If YES:

Q6a. Do your children live with you?

YES/NO

Q6c. Please state the ages of the children who live at home with you

FOR THE 25 – 44 YEAR OLDS:

INCLUDE A MIX OF PARENTS WITH OLDER & YOUNGER CHILDREN

FOR THE 45 – 65 YEAR OLDS:

AT LEAST ½ TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 18 LIVING AT HOME. (TRY TO INCLUDE 1 OR 2 EMPTY NESTERS IF POSSIBLE).

Q7. What do you currently do?

- Working full-time (30 hrs/week plus)
- Working part-time

PLEASE STATE OCCUPATION:

- Full-time student (University)*
- Full-time student (6th Form/College)
- Unemployed seeking work
- Looking after family
- Long term sick
- Retired

***18-24 YR OLDS:**

NOT MORE THAN ½ TO BE GRADUATES. AT LEAST ½ TO BE WORKING.

FOR OLDER GROUPS:

INCLUDE A MIX OF WORKING AND NON-WORKING

Q8a. What is your highest qualification? (Please specify below)

INCLUDE A MIX OF EDUCATIONAL & PROFESSIONAL LEVELS
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Q9a.	What is your ethnic origin?	
	Asian – Indian (Punjabi)	
	Asian – Indian (Gujarati)	
	Asian - Bangladeshi	
	Asian - Pakistani	
Q9b.	Please state religion:	
	Hindu	
	Sikh	
	Muslim	

Q10.	PLEASE WRITE IN EXACT AGE: _____			
	[Tick for groups below]:			
	Age range 18-24		Age range 25-44*	
	Age range 45-65**			

- * ½ the group to be aged 25 – 35 and ½ to be aged 36 – 44
- ** ½ to the group to be aged 45 – 50 and ½ to be aged 51 – 65

Q11.	Gender:	
	Male:	Female:

Q12.	Name of respondent (incl. first name):	
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Q13.	Address:	
	Postcode:	

Q14.	Telephone No		
	Work:	Extn:	Home:

INTERVIEWERS DECLARATION:

This interview was conducted in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and this respondent is not a relative or friend of mine.

FACE TO FACE	TELEPHONE	STREET	DOOR TO DOOR
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INTERVIEWERS SIGNATURE:DATE:

We sometimes wish to get back in touch with people we have spoken to for research purposes. If you don't wish to be re-contacted, please tick box