

Who's filling the aisles?

Poll explores cinema and theater-going habits

This third segment of Information International's opinion poll exploring cultural consumption habits reviews the results of a survey on the Lebanese public's tastes and demands for cultural activities relating to cinema and theater.

The survey consisted of a sample of 600 Greater Beirut residents, with a gender distribution of 41.2% female and 58.8% male respondents.

Cinema attendance

Only 30% of those polled go to the movies, as shown in **Graph 1** and females are more likely to go than males, with 34% of the females polled who are movie-goers, compared to 27% males. The majority of those who don't go to the cinema said they spend their spare time watching TV or visiting friends and family.

The 18–24 age bracket accounts for the lion's share of total attendance, at 57%, and in older age groups, the share of total attendance gradually falls.

The average frequency of cinema attendance, according to the poll, is 24 times a year and the highest frequency of attendance is observed among people aged 18 to 24. **Graph 2** illustrates the frequency of attendance on a monthly basis.

Movie preferences

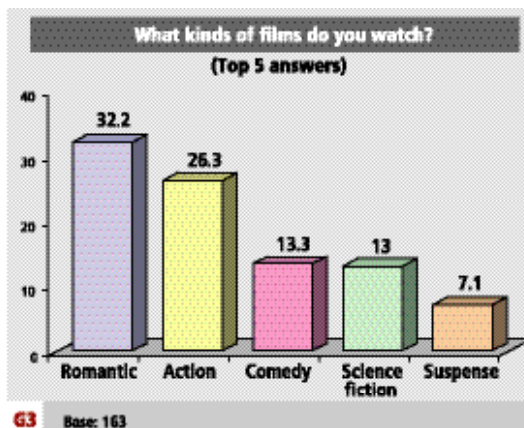
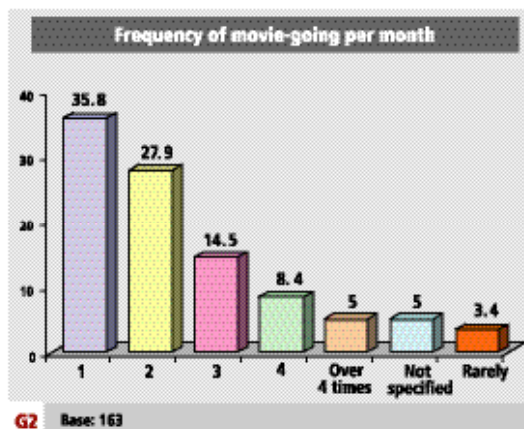
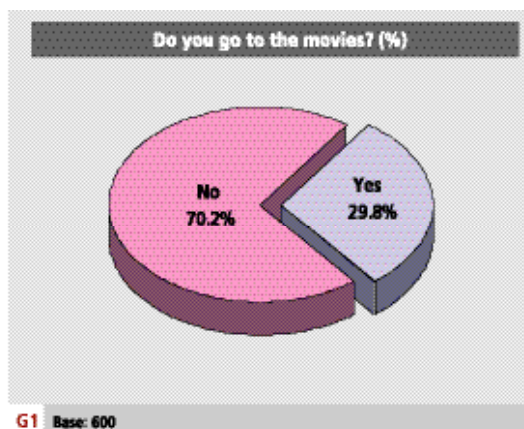
The poll showed that foreign productions attracted a bigger percentage of the market than Arabic ones, with 91% of cinema-goers attending foreign films compared with 56% of audiences preferring Arabic movies.

However, when asked to describe which language they were most comfortable using, 80% replied that it was Arabic, 10% said English and 7.4% said French.

In the 18–24 age bracket, 28.4% said they attend Arabic films, compared to 51.4% who attend foreign films. In the 25–34 age bracket, 18.4% watch Arabic films, as opposed to 26.5% who watch foreign productions, and the figures decline comparatively in the older age groups.

Romantic films were the most popular category in terms of foreign films, according to 32.2% of those polled (see **Graph 3**). This is followed by action movies (26.3%), comedies (13.3%), science fiction films (13%) and suspense thrillers (7.1%).

In the Arabic category, romantic and sentimental pictures had an even greater attraction, adding up to 49% of



respondents, with comedies being preferred over action movies, at 28.4% and 20.9% respectively.

In terms of age, action movies were the most popular for those in the 18–24 age bracket, followed by comedy and science fiction productions. In the older age brackets however, romantic films scored highest, followed by action and comedy films.

The majority, or 79.5% of those polled go to the movies with their friends, whereas 15.7% go with their families, and only 2.7% said they go to the cinema on their own.

Gender preferences

The poll revealed that romantic and comedy films were preferred by female audiences, with 55.6% of females preferring to watch romantic films, compared with 44.4% males, while in the comedy category, the proportion was 52% females and 48% males (see Graph 4). Men tend to watch action films, making up almost two-thirds of audiences for that category.

Theater-goers

According to the poll, almost 90% of respondents never go to the theater, as shown in Graph 5.

The core of regular theater-goers is formed of those aged 18-24 years and audiences are made up of more women than men. Out of those polled, only 8.8% of men said they go to the theater, compared with 13.7% of women.

A little over half of theater-goers attend one show every month, with a mere 1.5% who see two shows a month and approximately 12% who go only once or twice a year, as indicated in Graph 6.

While theater-goers are most likely to attend a show with their friends, as indicated by 53.6% of those polled, it is also more of a family outing than the cinema.

Almost 41% of respondents go to the theater with family members, compared with a figure of 15.7% who go to the movies with family. Those who go to the theater alone are also slightly higher than lone movie-goers.

Finally, the poll found that due to population trends, those aged 18-24 constitute the largest audience group for both movies and the theater, as a percentage of the total. ■

