

Media and Communications

Hong Kong's lively media and world-class telecommunications provide ready access to a wealth of information and entertainment. Some 694 daily newspapers and periodicals are published in Hong Kong, more than 93 per cent of households are broadband service subscribers and the mobile subscriber penetration rate is about 234 per cent.

Hong Kong has one of the most successful telecommunications markets in the world. Fully liberalised and highly competitive, the market provides a wide range of innovative and advanced telecommunications services to consumers and business users at affordable prices. The city also has a long history of film production and a vibrant broadcasting industry offering a great variety of services.

The Mass Media

Hong Kong's mass media at the end of 2016 included 54 daily newspapers (including electronic newspapers), 640 periodicals, three domestic free-television programme service licensees, three domestic pay-TV programme service licensees, 17 non-domestic TV programme service licensees, one government-funded public service broadcaster and two sound broadcasting licensees.

The availability of the latest telecommunications technology and keen interest in Hong Kong's affairs have attracted many international news agencies, newspapers with international readership and international broadcasters to establish regional headquarters or representative offices here. The production of regional publications in Hong Kong underlines its importance as a financial, industrial, trading and communications centre.

Registered Hong Kong-based press at the year end included 28 Chinese-language dailies, 11 English-language dailies, 10 bilingual dailies and five in Japanese. One of the English dailies publishes a daily Braille edition in conjunction with the Hong Kong Society for the Blind. Of the Chinese-language dailies, 22 cover mainly local and international news, four specialise in finance and the rest focus on horse racing. The larger newspapers include overseas Chinese communities in their distribution networks and some have editions printed outside Hong Kong, in particular in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Hong Kong is the regional base for international titles including *The New York Times* International Edition, *Financial Times*, *The Nikkei*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today International*. Global wire services with significant operations in Hong Kong include Agence France-Presse, Bloomberg, Dow Jones and Thomson Reuters. International broadcasters with studios in Hong Kong include Channel News Asia, CNBC, CNN and Phoenix TV.

Several organisations represent people working in Hong Kong's news media. The Newspaper Society of Hong Kong represents Chinese and English newspaper proprietors. It is empowered to act in matters that affect the interests of its members.

The Hong Kong Journalists Association is the biggest industry-wide union of journalists and one of the most active. Formed in 1968, it has more than 700 members. It pays special attention to press freedom and ethics concerns, professional training and the well-being of journalists.

Other media organisations include the Hong Kong Federation of Journalists, Hong Kong News Executives' Association, Hong Kong Press Photographers Association and Foreign Correspondents' Club.

The Vocational Training Council's (VTC) Mass Communications Training Board works with trade bodies such as the Association of Accredited Advertising Agencies of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Advertisers Association, Hong Kong News Executives' Association, Journalism Education Foundation and Newspaper Society of Hong Kong to run training programmes for media, advertising and public relations professionals to improve their skills.

Dissemination of Government Information

The Secretary for Home Affairs oversees the policy on dissemination of government information, while the Director of Information Services advises the government on the presentation of its policies and on public relations matters generally, in Hong Kong and overseas. The main aims are to ensure an open exchange of information in the community, to keep the media fully informed of government plans, policies and activities, and to promote Hong Kong's image abroad.

Information Services Department

The Information Services Department (ISD) is the government's public relations consultant, news agency, publisher and advertising agent, providing a link between the government and the media and, through the latter, enhancing public understanding of government policies, decisions and activities. The department has four divisions: Local Public Relations, Publicity and Promotions, Public Relations Outside Hong Kong, and Administration.

Local Public Relations Division

The division oversees the work of Information Grade officers who serve as Press Secretaries to Principal Officials or work in the 34 information and public relations units in bureaux and departments. They help formulate and implement public relations and publicity strategies, advise their bureau or department heads on public relations matters, answer media enquiries,

prepare press releases, and organise press conferences, interviews and special promotional activities.

The News Sub-division operates a 24-hour media enquiry service. During typhoons and other emergencies, the ISD's Combined Information Centre coordinates responses to media enquiries and disseminates information and public announcements.

The Government News and Media Information System gives journalists online access to press releases, photographs and video clips through a single interface. All press releases are available on the internet, while major government press conferences and events, including the Chief Executive's annual Policy Address and the Financial Secretary's Budget Speech, are webcast live.

The news.gov.hk website publishes government news and information daily in a dynamic multimedia fashion. Over 7,300 news and feature stories and some 1,600 video highlights were posted in 2016. News items and messages are also disseminated through smartphones, mobile devices and social media, including Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, Twitter and YouTube. The website attracted more than 28 million visitors and 634 million page views in 2016.

The Media Research Sub-division keeps the government informed of public opinion expressed in the news media. It produces daily reports summarising news and editorial comments in the Chinese and English press as well as special reports on subjects of interest to the government.

Publicity and Promotions Division

The division helps bureaus and departments mount publicity campaigns and promotion drives and is responsible for advertising, creative design, photography, videography and the production of a range of government publications. Major local campaigns conducted or supported by the division in 2016 included Appreciate Hong Kong; public consultation on retirement protection; the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme; voter registration; the 2016 Legislative Council Election; and the 2017 Chief Executive Election. The department also started preparations and work on the promotion of events and activities celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the HKSAR.

The division also helps organise major promotional activities such as exhibitions, cultural performances, film festivals and media partnerships overseas and on the Mainland.

The division handles more than 3,000 titles and produces a wide variety of government publications, including this yearbook and its internet and tablet versions. Each year, the division distributes a large number of free publications, including fact sheets, brochures and posters. In 2016, the division sold photographs and, through its sales outlet and online bookstore, over 64,000 government books and miscellaneous printed items.

Public Relations Outside Hong Kong Division

The division helps develop and implement the government's public relations and communications strategy outside Hong Kong, working closely with the government's offices overseas, on the Mainland and in Taiwan. Its Overseas Public Relations Sub-division promotes and monitors Hong Kong's image overseas and liaises closely with some 80 foreign media

organisations based in Hong Kong, handling press enquiries, disseminating news and arranging briefings and interviews. It also runs a programme for visiting journalists and produces summaries of overseas reports on Hong Kong. In addition, it coordinates and implements overseas publicity projects to tie in with senior officials' visits abroad.

The Brand Hong Kong Management Unit handles the Brand Hong Kong programme, promoting Hong Kong as Asia's world city locally and around the world. To ensure the brand's consistent application, the unit develops advertising campaigns and publicity material in print and electronic formats to support the government's Economic and Trade Offices' activities, senior officials' visits and major promotional programmes outside Hong Kong. The unit also seeks opportunities to highlight the brand and collaborates with organisers of major events of international significance in Hong Kong to bolster the city's image. Hong Kong's strengths and advantages are also promoted through social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

The Visits and International Conferences Sub-division runs the ISD's Sponsored Visitors Programme for opinion formers, political leaders and think-tank members to visit Hong Kong to enhance their understanding of the city. The sub-division also helps line up meetings for influential visitors on trips to Hong Kong. In addition, it provides assistance to senior government officials and prominent members of the community to address targeted audiences abroad during their outbound visits, enabling them to better understand Hong Kong's strengths and latest developments.

Promoting Hong Kong Worldwide

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's offices overseas and on the Mainland, as well as the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office in Taiwan, play an important role in promoting Hong Kong globally. They do this through regular meetings with counterparts and contacts in the territories they cover, through visits by senior Hong Kong officials and by staging or taking part in cultural events or promotional activities such as film festivals, exhibitions and performances by Hong Kong artistes.

Europe

In 2016, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (ETO) in Brussels organised the visit of the Chief Executive, Mr C Y Leung, to Paris and Toulouse to boost aviation, innovation, technology and academic exchanges with France. He was accompanied by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung, and the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang. The Secretary for Transport and Housing also promoted Hong Kong as a transport hub in Greece and Spain. The Financial Secretary, Mr John C Tsang, visited the Netherlands, while the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So Kam-leung, travelled to Spain and Ireland.

To attract overseas talent, the Brussels office engaged students and Hong Kong community members in Belgium, France, Ireland and the Netherlands, promoting Hong Kong as an ideal place for further studies and career development.

An exhibition of industrial designer Michael Young's work in Belgium, supported by the office, highlighted Hong Kong as the city for designers to turn their creativity into business. The office also showcased the excellence of Hong Kong films during festivals in Udine, Florence, Prato, Salento, Thessaloniki, Sitges, Carpi and Nantes, and brought Hong Kong musicians to Europe: young clarinetist Calvin Leung played in Rome, while the Hong Kong Children's Choir and Hong Kong Sinfonietta performed in Portugal. An exchange between 10 artists each from Hong Kong and Belgium produced three contemporary art performances in Brussels.

The Brussels office was also the title sponsor of the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in Antwerp and Hong Kong Dragon Boat Regatta in Dublin.

In 2016, the London ETO organised four visits by HKSAR Government principal officials to countries under its purview, including a visit by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, to the UK.

The London office organised and took part in various business events to promote Hong Kong's advantages in different areas. It also worked to promote Hong Kong arts and culture by organising or supporting film festivals in London and Manchester; theatre performances in London and Edinburgh; musical performances in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the UK; and a Dragon Boat Festival in the UK. It took part in the London Lord Mayor's Show. In addition, for the fifth time it held a competition to encourage UK students to study in Hong Kong.

In 2016, the Berlin ETO organised the visits of the Chief Secretary for Administration to Germany; the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development to Switzerland; the Secretary for Security, Mr Lai Tung-kuok, to Germany and Switzerland; the Secretary for Innovation and Technology to Austria and Germany; the President of the Legislative Council, Mr Jasper Tsang Yok-sing, to Hungary; and the delegations of the VTC and the Town Planning Board to Germany.

Besides regular meetings with government officials, business communities and think tanks, the office organised and took part in many business events to promote Hong Kong, including luncheons, receptions, conferences, seminars and trade fairs. It also supported arts and cultural events in central and eastern Europe, such as film festivals, dragon boat races, exhibitions, concerts and other performances.

North America

In 2016, the ETO in Washington, DC, organised the visits of the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Financial Secretary and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development.

The Washington office also presented the 21st Annual 'Made in Hong Kong' Film Festival, co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution.

In the eastern US, the New York ETO promoted a better understanding of Hong Kong as a vibrant international financial, trading, educational and cultural hub by reaching out to businesses, political and government leaders, major universities, arts and cultural institutions

and the media, making 24 visits to 20 states. Trips by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Financial Secretary and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development were organised.

To highlight Hong Kong's soft power, the New York office supported a number of Hong Kong film festivals in New York City and Chicago and introduced a younger crop of Hong Kong actors and filmmakers to the US audience. It also celebrated Hong Kong Ballet's tour in New York City, supported the debut recital of Hong Kong pianist Warren Lee at the Carnegie Hall, and continued arts fellowship programmes with the Asian Cultural Council and the Yale-China Association to develop emerging Hong Kong artists.

In sports, the office sponsored the New York Sevens and Hell Gate Sevens rugby tournaments in New York City, Collegiate Rugby Championship in Pennsylvania, and Hong Kong dragon boat festivals in New York City, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia.

The office continued to engage the younger generation through speeches at universities and its Facebook page. It organised 'Hong Kong Welcomes U' roving talks at eight top universities in the northeastern states to promote Hong Kong's talent admission schemes and facilitation measures.

The San Francisco ETO welcomed five principal officials to California in 2016. It hosted the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Secretary for Education, Mr Eddie Ng Hak-kim, in San Francisco; the Secretary for Innovation and Technology in Silicon Valley; as well as the Financial Secretary and the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in Los Angeles.

Staff of the office visited 11 cities across eight western US states to foster Hong Kong business ties with the US.

Much effort also went into promoting Hong Kong's cultural and creative industries. The office sponsored seven film festivals in five states that featured Hong Kong movies. It also organised and supported various events, including a photo exhibition, a history lecture, a piano recital, other talks, exhibitions and performances by Hong Kong designers and artists, and the annual San Francisco International Dragon Boat Festival.

The Toronto ETO organised visits of the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development to Toronto and Calgary to foster economic and trade ties between Hong Kong and Canada. It also promoted Hong Kong's business opportunities at business seminars in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec.

To promote the Admission Scheme for the Second Generation of Chinese Hong Kong Permanent Residents and other admission schemes, the Toronto office rolled out a publicity campaign which included a dedicated webpage, feature newspaper supplements and seminars for university students.

Under the support of the office, Hong Kong Ballet performed in Ottawa and three other Canadian cities. The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) staged a Cantonese opera show jointly with a local performing group in Toronto.

The office also presented the Hong Kong Spirit Film Showcase in Toronto and sponsored the participation of Hong Kong movies in international film festivals held in Toronto, Montreal and Niagara Region.

North Asia

The Tokyo ETO represents Hong Kong to promote closer economic and trade ties as well as cultural exchanges with Japan and South Korea.

In 2016, the Tokyo office presented or supported a number of arts and cultural events, including a Spring Reception in Seoul, a Special Focus on Hong Kong in the Osaka Asian Film Festival, the Yokohama Dragon Boat Race, Asian Youth Orchestra concerts in Japan and the Hong Kong Cup Student Ambassadors English Programme for university students in Japan.

Visits by government officials were also arranged, including the Secretary for the Environment's trip to Japan to exchange views with his counterparts on nature conservation and environmental protection; the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development's trip to South Korea to promote exchange in creative industries; and a trip by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen Kwok-keung, to South Korea to attend the 5th Asia Pacific Alternative Dispute Resolution Conference.

Southeast Asia

In 2016, the Singapore ETO organised and supported seven visits to member countries of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Secretary for Justice, the Secretary for Transport and Housing, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, the Secretary for Education and the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Clement Cheung Wan-ching. It transferred part of its duties to the new Jakarta ETO in September and is now responsible for strengthening bilateral ties between Hong Kong and Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

To promote Hong Kong's soft strengths, the Singapore ETO organises receptions and sponsors performances of visiting art groups, like Asia Society Hong Kong Centre's exhibition 'Imminent Domain: Designing the Life of Tomorrow', Hong Kong-based artists' visual arts exhibition 'More Than Words', Hong Kong Sinfonietta's *A Soldier's Story*, the Asian Youth Orchestra's performances, stage productions by Spring-Time Experimental Theatre, as well as Hong Kong-Singapore production *fleet* at Singapore's Chinese Theatre Festival 2016.

The office also offers the ASEAN Internship Scheme for Hong Kong Higher Education Students to broaden the perspectives of Hong Kong tertiary students. In 2016, it helped about 150 students take up internships in eight countries and extended the scheme beyond the original eight University Grants Committee-funded institutions to cover the HKAPA, Hong Kong Shue Yan University and Hang Seng Management College.

To enhance Hong Kong's presence in Southeast Asia, a new ETO was set up in Jakarta in June. The Jakarta ETO represents the HKSAR Government in matters between Hong Kong and ASEAN as a whole, and handles matters between Hong Kong and four ASEAN countries, namely

Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines. The Singapore ETO continues to handle matters between Hong Kong and the other six ASEAN countries.

In 2016, the priorities of the Jakarta office were to prepare for the setting up of its long-term workplace and to build up connections. The office met government officials, businesses, think tanks, the academia and the media. It also organised visits by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, to Brunei; the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development to the Philippines; and the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr K C Chan, to Malaysia.

Australia and New Zealand

In 2016, the Sydney ETO organised visits to Australia and New Zealand by the Secretary for Justice; the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Raymond Tam Chi-yuen; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, and the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury.

To promote Hong Kong's soft strengths, the office held and sponsored cultural events, including the City of Sydney Chinese New Year Dragon Boat Races, Auckland Lantern Festival, Vivid Sydney at Chatswood and OzAsia Festival, which featured the Australian premiere of *As If to Nothing*, a production by Hong Kong's City Contemporary Dance Company.

The Sydney office also organised and took part in business events to promote Hong Kong's advantages. It highlighted Hong Kong's career opportunities among young people in Australia and New Zealand through activities such as career talks.

Social media continued to be a tool for the office to share information about Hong Kong with people in Australia and New Zealand.

Mainland and Taiwan

In 2016, the Beijing Office and the four Hong Kong ETOs in Chengdu, Guangdong, Shanghai and Wuhan conducted various activities to promote Hong Kong. These included a roving exhibition organised by the Beijing office; a 'Savouring Hong Kong • Liaoning 2016' series organised by the Liaoning Liaison Unit; 'Hong Kong Exhibitions' in the provinces of Guangdong, Fujian and Yunnan by the Guangdong ETO; radio and television feature programmes with the theme 'Guangdong-Hong Kong Under the Same Roof', co-produced by the Guangdong office and, respectively, Radio Guangdong and Guangzhou TV to highlight the win-win mutual cooperation and deep-rooted bonds between the people of the two places; 'Same Root Same Heart' 2016 Hong Kong Roving Exhibition in the east of the Mainland staged by the Shanghai ETO and a radio serial named *Endless Stories on Hong Kong* in Jinan; the 2016 Chengdu-Hong Kong Festival, a Sichuanese-Cantonese opera performance and exchange, a film festival, and photo and gift exhibitions by the Chengdu ETO; a TV series named *Our Hong Kong* co-produced by the Chengdu office and Shaanxi Broadcast; and the 'Discover A Better World – Hong Kong Film Week 2016', 'Hong Kong's Food Culture' and 'This is Hong Kong' roving exhibitions; a designated Hong Kong webpage in collaboration with an online news platform in Hubei Province, and the radio programme, *Next Station, Hong Kong*, in Hubei in collaboration with the Rural Channel of Hubei Television by the Wuhan ETO.

The Beijing office and Mainland ETOs also organised seminars and visits for Hong Kong business delegations. Investment promotion divisions of the Mainland offices liaised closely with Mainland enterprises that intended to invest in Hong Kong and helped them set up businesses here, and organised events to promote Hong Kong's business advantages.

In Taiwan, the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office continued to establish contacts with various sectors in different cities and counties to strengthen two-way economic, trade and cultural exchanges, promote Hong Kong, and help Taiwanese enterprises set up businesses in Hong Kong. The activities the Taiwan office organised included a roving exhibition named 'Innovative & Diverse – An Amazing Hong Kong' promoting pillar and emerging industries of Hong Kong, and a Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic Cooperation Forum with the theme of innovation and technology.

Code on Access to Government Information

As an open and accountable government, all bureaus and departments are committed to making information available to the public in accordance with the Code on Access to Information. The code entails a presumption of disclosure of government information sought and sets out the grounds on which disclosure may be refused. The public may complain to the Ombudsman if any bureau or department does not comply with the provisions of the code.

Communications Authority

The Communications Authority (CA), an independent statutory body established under the Communications Authority Ordinance, is a unified regulatory body taking over the functions previously performed by its predecessors, the Broadcasting Authority and the Telecommunications Authority. The CA comprises 10 non-officials from various sectors of the community and two public officers. It regulates the broadcasting and telecommunications industries in accordance with the Broadcasting Ordinance, Telecommunications Ordinance, Communications Authority Ordinance, Broadcasting (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance, Trade Descriptions Ordinance and Competition Ordinance. It also enforces the Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance.

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA), the CA's executive arm and secretariat, helps the CA administer and enforce these ordinances.

Telecommunications

The government aims to facilitate the development of the telecommunications industry and enhance Hong Kong's position as the region's telecommunications hub.

The city's telecommunications markets are fully liberalised and keenly competitive. Its pro-competition policy and pro-market approach facilitate an abundant supply of quality and state-of-the-art telecommunications services for consumers and business users to enjoy at affordable prices.

Mobile Communications

Four mobile network operators provide second generation (2G), third generation (3G) and fourth generation (4G) services in the city. As at December 2016, there were 17.23 million mobile subscribers, representing a population penetration rate of 234 per cent, one of the highest in the world. Among them, 15.58 million were users of 3G or 4G services. In December 2016, mobile data usage reached 23,389 terabytes, a 17 per cent rise over December 2015. On average, each mobile data user used 1,434 megabytes per month in 2016. Mobile data services are available at downlink speeds of up to 450 Mbps. The World Economic Forum's *Global Information Technology Report 2016* ranked Hong Kong first among 139 economies in mobile phone penetration rate and mobile network coverage.

Fixed Communications

There is no preset limit on the number of licences that can be issued for fixed communications services, nor any deadline for the submission of applications. By the end of 2016, there were 25 local fixed telephone network licensees, providing 94 phone fixed-line or internet phone services per 100 households, one of the highest penetration rates in the world. It is the government's policy to promote facility-based competition in the local fixed services market. As a result, 87 per cent and 79 per cent of households could choose between at least two and three self-built local fixed customer access networks respectively as at March 2016.

Fixed Broadband

Hong Kong has one of the world's most advanced fixed broadband network infrastructures and a high household fixed broadband penetration rate of 93.1 per cent. According to internet content delivery provider Akamai's *State of the Internet 4th Quarter, 2016 Report*, Hong Kong has the world's fourth fastest broadband, in terms of average connection speed.

The city is ranked fifth globally in deploying an optical fibre access network, according to information published in February 2016 by the Fibre to the Home Council Europe.

Hong Kong's fixed broadband services are competitively priced and very affordable, with a monthly rate as low as around \$159, or US\$20 for broadband internet access service at speeds of up to 1Gbps. The city is also at the forefront in providing public Wi-Fi service, with more than 44,100 Wi-Fi hot spots in about 10,200 areas by the year end.

External Telecommunications

The external telecommunications facilities market in Hong Kong is fully liberalised and, by December 2016, 42 licensees were authorised to provide cable-based and/or non-cable-based external telecommunications facilities. Hong Kong has eight submarine cable landing stations and is connected to 10 regional and trans-Pacific submarine cable systems. It is also connected to the Mainland via 20 overland cables. The total equipped capacity of the external telecommunications facilities in December exceeded 45,073Gbps.

Satellite Communications

Two Hong Kong companies, APT Satellite Company Limited and Asia Satellite Telecommunications Company Limited, are licensed to operate and provide satellite

communications services. As at end-2016, they were operating 10 satellites. Another new satellite is scheduled to be launched in 2017.

Unsolicited Electronic Messages

The Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance regulates the sending of commercial electronic messages, including fax, pre-recorded phone messages, short messages and emails. Under this ordinance, senders of commercial electronic messages are required to comply with specific sending rules. There are three 'do-not-call' registers (DNCs) for fax, short messages and pre-recorded phone messages respectively. Senders are prohibited from sending commercial electronic messages to DNC-registered numbers without the consent of the registered users. By end-2016, more than 2.8 million numbers were registered in the three DNCs.

In 2016, the CA received about 800 reports of suspected contraventions, issued 26 warning letters to senders and instigated one prosecution for non-compliance with an enforcement notice. The number of reports fell from about 2,100 in 2015 to around 800 in 2016, a testimony to the continuing effectiveness of the regulatory regime.

The government works with other jurisdictions to combat spam and unsolicited emails. The OFCA is a member of the Unsolicited Communications Enforcement Network, formerly known as the London Action Plan, which combats spam through international cooperation and the sharing of experience and intelligence.

Protection of Consumers

The OFCA works closely with the industry to safeguard consumer interests in using telecommunications services and to resolve any systemic problems that are manifested in consumer complaints. Together, the OFCA and the industry tackle issues concerning chargeable mobile content services, mobile bill shock, contractual disputes, operators' implementation of fair usage policy, billing information and payment collection, and the performance of fixed and mobile broadband services.

The industry offers a voluntary Customer Complaint Settlement Scheme, which receives funding and administrative support from the OFCA, to help resolve billing disputes in deadlock between consumers and their telecommunications service providers by means of mediation. In 2016, 85 eligible applications were handled, of which 99 per cent were settled.

International Activities

Hong Kong is an active player in international telecommunications forums, including participating as part of the Mainland's delegations to conferences and meetings organised by the International Telecommunication Union and as a member at meetings held by the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity and the Telecommunications and Information Working Group of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Broadcasting

Commercial Broadcasting

Hong Kong is a forerunner in the adoption of advanced broadcasting technologies. The government's broadcasting policy objectives are to widen programme choice and diversity through competition, to facilitate the introduction of innovative broadcasting services, and to enhance the city's position as a regional broadcasting hub. To achieve these objectives, Hong Kong adopts a facilitating and pro-competition approach to promote the use of innovative broadcasting technologies, and provides a liberalised and light-handed regulatory environment for new broadcasting services to flourish.

At the end of 2016, Hong Kong had some 800 satellite and pay-TV channels available in digital format, and was the world leader in deploying Internet Protocol Television technology, with more than one million subscribers. Seventeen licensed satellite TV broadcasters provided more than 190 channels for the Asia-Pacific region. For domestic free-TV programme service, there were eight free-to-air channels, comprising two analogue channels and six digital channels in high-definition (HD) format, operated by two free-TV licensees. A new operator, Fantastic Television, was granted a free-TV licence on 31 May 2016 and will launch a Cantonese channel in one year's time.

As to radio, Hong Kong's two sound broadcasting licensees provided a total of six analogue radio channels as at the year end.

Regulatory Approach

Television programme services and their carriage networks are regulated separately. A service provider may hire any transmission network operator to transmit its service instead of investing in transmission infrastructure itself. This arrangement facilitates market entry and encourages competition.

Under the Broadcasting Ordinance, the four categories of TV programme services – domestic-free, domestic-pay, non-domestic (mainly satellite TV services targeting the Asia-Pacific) and other licensable TV programme services (mainly TV services for hotel rooms) – are regulated according to their characteristics and pervasiveness rather than their transmission modes. Sound broadcasting services are regulated under the Telecommunications Ordinance and Broadcasting (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance.

Hong Kong's liberalised, light-handed and pro-competition regulatory approach has resulted in a vibrant broadcasting industry and a multitude of TV and radio channels with diversified programming.

Public Service Broadcasting

Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) is a government department that serves as the city's public service broadcaster. It provides editorially independent, professional and quality radio, TV and new media services. The RTHK Charter enshrines RTHK's editorial independence and sets out its public purposes, mission and relationship with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, the CA and the RTHK Board of Advisors.

RTHK operates 12 radio channels, with three of them using FM transmission, four using AM and five using digital audio broadcasting (DAB). The station produces more than 1,100 hours of diversified radio programmes in Cantonese, English and Putonghua every week. Its DAB 31 channel broadcasts productions under a Community Involvement Broadcasting Service two hours a day.

RTHK produces TV programmes of public interest for broadcast on free and pay-TV channels. It also operates three digital terrestrial television (DTT) channels, all broadcasting in HD format. Two of these channels have been carried on the analogue platform as well since 2 April. In 2016, RTHK produced 1,369 hours of programmes for broadcasting on its TV channels as well as free and pay-TV platforms. Six fill-in stations were completed during the year, taking the DTT network coverage to more than 80 per cent of Hong Kong's population. RTHK will continue to establish the remaining 16 fill-in stations to extend its network coverage to about 99 per cent of the population, matching that of commercial DTT broadcasters.

To complement the government's education policies, RTHK produces 20.7 hours of new educational TV programmes for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and operates an interactive learning platform, eTVonline. It also provides filming and technical support as well as audio and video signals to local and overseas broadcasters to air events of public interest, such as the National Day celebration and flag-raising ceremony, Chief Executive's Policy Address and ceremonial opening of the legal year.

RTHK harnesses the multimedia potential of emerging media platforms, including providing applications for smart TV as well as mobile services RTHK Cube, RTHK Mine, RTHK News, RTHK On the Go and RTHK Screen, to meet the diverse needs of the public. The station recorded average daily page views of 5.1 million on its website in 2016.

During the year, RTHK produced a series of special programmes for the Rio Olympics and Legislative Council General Election. It also increased the number of productions with simultaneous sign language interpretation and provided Indonesian subtitles in selected programmes.

Recent Developments

The government encourages the use of DTT broadcasting technology to enhance spectrum efficiency and enable the provision of quality TV services. Close to 85 per cent of households receive digital television. The two commercial broadcasters provide digital coverage of at least 99 per cent of the population, about the same as that of analogue television broadcasting. In view of DTT development in Hong Kong and technical considerations, the government decided in 2014 to revise the target for switching off analogue television broadcasting from end-2015 to end-2020, with a review of the target date in 2017-18.

Postal Services

Hongkong Post provides a broad range of reliable postal and related services at affordable prices. In 2016, it handled 1.2 billion postal items, of which 87.5 per cent was local mail.

In response to the growth in e-commerce, Hongkong Post continues to introduce new delivery solutions. During the year, it launched more varied international delivery options, iPostal Stations that allowed for self-service mail collection, and the Hong Kong Trusted Product programme on the ShopThruPost online platform, which supported wider participation of e-commerce merchants.

New Postage Structure

From 1 January 2016, postage for local and international mail up to 2kg was determined by weight and mail format, namely small letters, large letters and packets, in line with global postal developments.

Retail Network

Hongkong Post operated a network of 125 post offices during the year. It introduced e-signatures for mail collection at post office counters.

Stamps and Philately

Thirteen issues of special and commemorative stamps on a diversity of themes were released.

International Cooperation

Hongkong Post is an active member of the international postal community. Through participation in bilateral and multilateral activities, it keeps abreast of industry developments and forges close cooperation with postal counterparts. From September to October, Hongkong Post attended the 26th Universal Postal Union Congress held in Istanbul, Turkey, as part of the delegation of the People's Republic of China.

Film Classification

Hong Kong adopts a three-tier film classification system: Category I, which is suitable for all ages; Category II, subdivided into Category IIA, not suitable for children, and Category IIB, not suitable for young persons and children; and Category III, only for persons who have attained the age of 18. The aim is to allow adults wide access to films while protecting young persons under 18 from exposure to potentially harmful materials. Category IIA and IIB classifications are advisory, while the age restriction for Category III films is mandatory.

In 2016, 2,196 films were submitted for classification, compared with 2,065 in 2015. Of these, 714 were classified as Category I, 730 as Category IIA, 590 as Category IIB and 162 as Category III. Film trailers, instructional films and cultural films intended for public exhibition can be exempted from classification. During the year, 11,131 such films were exempted from classification.

Film classification standards are kept in line with society's expectations through regular public opinion surveys and consultation with a statutory panel of advisers, comprising about 300 members drawn from different levels of society.

The Board of Review (Film Censorship) is empowered under the Film Censorship Ordinance to review the film censors' decisions on film classifications upon request. The board comprises

nine non-official members appointed by the Chief Executive, plus the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development as an ex-officio member.

Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance

The policy objective in regulating obscene and indecent articles is to preserve public morals and protect young people from the harmful effects of obscene and indecent materials while preserving the free flow of information and safeguarding freedom of expression. The publication, including distribution, circulation and sale, and public display of obscene and indecent articles, including printed matter, sound recordings, videotapes, discs and electronic publications, are regulated by the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance.

Under the ordinance, 'obscenity' and 'indecenty' include violence, depravity and repulsiveness. An article may be classified as Class I (neither obscene nor indecent), Class II (indecent) or Class III (obscene). The relevant enforcement agencies are the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration, the police and the Customs and Excise Department. These agencies and the Secretary for Justice may submit articles to the Obscene Articles Tribunal for classification. Publishers, authors, printers, manufacturers, importers, distributors and copyright owners may also submit articles voluntarily to the tribunal for classification rulings before publication if in doubt.

The government is drafting legislative amendments to the ordinance to improve the regulatory regime.

Websites

Access to Government Information: www.access.gov.hk

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau: www.cedb.gov.hk

Communications Authority: www.coms-auth.hk

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau: www.cmab.gov.hk

Digital audio broadcasting: www.digitalradio.gov.hk

Digital TV: www.digitaltv.gov.hk

Government's e-bulletin: www.news.gov.hk

Home Affairs Bureau: www.hab.gov.hk

Hongkong Post: www.hongkongpost.hk

Information Services Department: www.isd.gov.hk

Office of the Communications Authority: www.ofca.gov.hk

Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration: www.ofnaa.gov.hk

Radio Television Hong Kong: www.rthk.org.hk