



Kuwait PR Country Landscape 2010

Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management

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Acknowledgments

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Country Profile

State of Kuwait

Location: Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf, between Iraq and Saudi Arabia; strategic location at the head of the Persian Gulf (The world fact book, 2009).

Area: 17,820 sq km (6,880 sq mi); approximately the size of the state of New Jersey (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Borders: Iraq 240 km, Saudi Arabia 222 km (The world fact book, 2009).

Map:

(U.S. Department of State, 2009)



Time Zones: UTC+3 (eight hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time) (The World Fact book, 2009).

Population: As of June 2008 the population was estimated at 3,399,637 including approximately 1.05 million Kuwaiti citizens and 2.34 million non-Kuwaiti nationals (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Age Structure: As estimated for 2009, between 0 – 14 years: 26.4% (male 361,150/female 348,518), 15 – 64 years: 70.7% (male 1,219,075/female 683,587) and 65 years and over: 2.9% (male 49,163/female 29,665) (The world fact book, 2009).

Ethnic Groups: Kuwaiti – 45%, other Arab – 35%, South Asian – 9%, Iranian – 4%, other – 7 % (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Religions: Muslim – estimated 85% (Sunni 70%, Shi'a 30% among Kuwaitis), with sizable Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and Sikh communities (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Languages: Arabic is the official language, though English is widely spoken (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Climate: Summers are intensely hot and dry with average highs ranging from 42° – 49°C (108° – 120°F); winters are short (Dec. – Feb.) and cool, averaging 10°– 30°C (50°– 80°F), with limited rain (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Capital City: Kuwait City (The world fact book, 2009).

Government Type: Constitutional hereditary emirate (The world fact book, 2009).

Administrative Divisions: 6 governorates (muhafazat, singular - muhafazah); Al Ahmadi, Al 'Asimah, Al Farwaniyah, Al Jahra', Hawalli, Mubarak al Kabir (The world fact book, 2009).

Independence: June 19, 1961 (from U.K.) (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

National Holiday: National Day, February 25, 1950 (The world fact book, 2009).

- *Constitution:* approved and promulgated November 11, 1962 (The world fact book, 2009).
- *Legal System:* Civil law system with Islamic law significant in personal matters; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction (The world fact book, 2009).

Executive Branch:

- *Chief of state:* Amir SABAH al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah in position since January 29, 2006. Crown Prince NAWAF al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah since February 7, 2006 (The world fact book, 2009)
- *Head of government:* Prime Minister NASIR AL-MUHAMMAD al-Ahmad al-Sabah in position since April 3, 2007 (The world fact book, 2009).

Legislative Branch: Unicameral National Assembly or Majlis al-Umma (50 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms; all cabinet ministers are also ex officio voting members of the National Assembly)

Elections: last held May 16, 2009 (next election to be held in 2013)

Election Results: percent of vote by bloc – Not applicable- seats by bloc – Sunni Muslim groups 11, liberals 7, Shiite Muslim groups 6, Popular Action Bloc 3, unaffiliated tribal groups 23 (The world fact book, 2009).

Judicial Branch: High Court of Appeal (The world fact Bbook, 2009).

Political Parties: Islamists; merchants; political groups; secular liberals and pro-governmental deputies; Shia activists; tribal groups (The world fact book, 2009).

Currency: Dinar or KWD (The world fact book, 2009)

Brief History

The origin of the state of Kuwait is usually placed at about the beginning of the 18th century, when the Banū (Banī) Utūb, a group of families of the Anizah tribe in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula migrated to the area that is now Kuwait.¹

Kuwait's modern history began in the 18th century with the founding of the city of Kuwait by the Uteiba, a subsection of the Anaiza tribe, who are believed to have traveled north from Qatar.

Threatened in the 19th century by the Ottoman Turks and various powerful Arabian Peninsula groups, Kuwait sought a treaty relationship with Britain. In 1899, the ruler Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah signed an agreement with the British Government that pledged himself and his successors neither to cede any territory, nor to receive agents or representatives of any foreign power without the British Government's consent, in exchange for protection and an annual subsidy.²

Mubarak was succeeded as ruler by his sons Jabir (1915-17) and Salim (1917-21). Kuwait's subsequent rulers have descended from these two brothers. Sheikh Ahmed al-Jabir Al Sabah ruled Kuwait from 1921 until his death in 1950, a period in which oil was discovered and in which the government attempted to establish the first internationally recognized boundaries. The 1922 Treaty of Uqair set Kuwait's border with Saudi Arabia and also established the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia

¹ History of Kuwait - <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/325644/Kuwait/93657/History>

² US Department of State: Kuwait - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35876.htm>

Neutral Zone, an area of about 5,180 sq. km. (2,000 sq. mi.) adjoining Kuwait's southern border.

Kuwait achieved independence from the British under Sheikh Ahmed's successor, Sheikh Abdullah al-Salim Al Sabah. By early 1961, the British had already withdrawn their special court system, which handled the cases of foreigners resident in Kuwait, and the Kuwaiti Government began to exercise legal jurisdiction under new laws drawn up by an Egyptian jurist. On June 19, 1961, Kuwait became fully independent following an exchange of notes with the United Kingdom

KUWAIT³

History	
1600s	Northeast portion of Arabian peninsula becomes part of the Turkish Ottoman empire.
1700s	Settlers arrive at the site of present-day Kuwait City from the interior of the Arabian peninsula. The settlement grows into a bustling trading hub by the early 1800s.
1756	Kuwait comes under the control of the Al-Sabah family, predecessors of Kuwait's present rulers. A degree of semi-autonomy from Ottoman Turkey prevails.
1899	Fearing direct rule from Turkey, Sheikh Mubarak "the Great" strikes a deal with Britain and Kuwait becomes a protectorate. Britain provides naval protection in return for Kuwait allowing London to control its foreign affairs.
1937	Large oil reserves discovered by the US-British Kuwait Oil Company. Exploitation is delayed by World War II, but thereafter fuels the country's development into a modern commercial centre.
1951	Major public-works program begins; Kuwait's infrastructure is transformed, residents enjoy a high standard of living.
Independence	
1961	Kuwait becomes independent with the end of the British protectorate; the sheikh becomes an emir. The country joins the Arab League. Iraq renews claims that Kuwait is part of its territory but backs down after British military intervention.
1963	Elections held for National Assembly, under terms of newly-drafted constitution.

³ Kuwait Timeline – adapted from: http://www.ekwt.com/kuwait_history_timeline.html

1976	Emir suspends National Assembly, saying it is not acting in the country's interests.
1980	Iran-Iraq war: Kuwait supports Iraq strategically and financially.
1981	National Assembly recalled; dissolved again in 1986.
1985-86	Domestic security concerns, particularly about Iran's perceived influence over the Shiite minority, prompt the deportations of thousands of expatriates, many of them Iranian.
1990	Iraq complains to OPEC, accusing Kuwait of stealing its oil from a field near the border. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein threatens military action.

Bank (National) Holidays⁴

2009	Holiday Name	Observance
Feb. 26	Liberation Day	Bank & Gov't Holiday
Sep. 22	Eid al-Fitr Holiday	Bank & Gov't Holiday
Sep. 23	Eid al-Fitr Holiday	Government Holiday
Sep. 24	Eid al-Fitr Holiday	Government Holiday
Nov. 29	Eid al Adha Holiday	Bank & Gov't Holiday
Nov. 30	Eid al Adha Holiday	Bank & Gov't Holiday

Holidays & Celebrations⁵

⁴ <http://www.qppstudio.net/publicholidays2009/kuwait.htm>

⁵ http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/141/public_holidays/Middle-East/Kuwait.html

Year 2009	Public Holidays
Tuesday, January 1	New Year's Day
Wednesday, January 7	Hejira New Year (Islamic New Year)
Wednesday , February 25	National Day
Thursday, February 26	Liberation Day
Monday, March 9	Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet)
Monday, July 20	Al-Esra Wa Al-Meraj (Ascension of the Prophet).
Monday, September 21	Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)
Saturday, November 28	Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)

Note: Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there are restrictions on smoking and drinking. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha may last anything from two to 10 days, depending on the region.

Traditions

Liberation and National Day:

National Day and Liberation Day are celebrated on February 25th and February 26th of each year and represent the two most important days in Kuwait's calendar. The National day is the day that Kuwait became independent from the United Kingdom. Liberation day represents the day Kuwait

was freed from Iraqi invasion.⁶ These two days are traditionally remembered by a full day of celebratory events, which include artist, concerts, plays, celebrities, poets, and children. Citizens of all backgrounds are encouraged to come to the event and it is day of celebration for everybody.

Ramadan: This is an important month long holiday of fasting from dawn to sunset. During this holiday there are many traditional celebrations and customs.

- **Daq Al Harees** - In the days before the month of Ramadan woman gather together singing and dancing while grinding wheat. While these women grind the wheat together they also sing and celebrate together.
- **Al- Qarqiaan** - This is a celebration that takes place on thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth night of Ramadan. During these three days children of Kuwait wander their neighborhoods singing and praying to Allah. Their prayers are meant to protect the children of each house that they visit. When this celebration is over the children are given candy and nuts by their mothers.⁷
- **Iftar** – this is the meal that represents the breaking of the fast each day during the month of Ramadan. This is usually done at sunset with all the family gathered and many times with the whole community. Traditionally, dates are the first thing that is eaten at the end of the fasting day.
- **Ghabgas** - The Kuwaiti term given to a dinner invitation for the celebration of the Iftar. Ghabgas can be a big formal family dinner where as many as 500 guests could gather form an Iftar meal. There are also smaller ghabgas with close friends and homemade food. There are also ghabgas that are being hosted by corporations like hotels who are throwing ghabgas for their workers during one of the Ramadan evenings.⁸
- **Pearl Diving Expedition:** This is the official celebration that takes place at the end of the summer when sailors return home after their long expeditions from pearl diving. This is a festival in which sailors celebrate the Kuwaiti tradition of pearl diving.⁹
- **Hala Music Carnival:** This is a carnival that takes place every February to celebrate the folklore music of Kuwait. During this festival a parade starts of the celebrations down

⁶ <http://www.kuwait.kw/eng/kuwaitinfo/>

⁷ www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgoenglish/portal/Pages/Visitors/AboutKuwait/CultureAndHeritage_CustomsAndTraditions.aspx

⁸ www.kuwatism.com/2006/10/10/the-ghabga

⁹ Garcia, B. (2006, August 6). Pearl diving festival comes to a close. *Knight Ridder*

Tribune Business News. Retrieved from <http://www.kuwaittimes.net/>.

Salem Al Mubarak Street. During this event different artist perform musical numbers and local artist present their traditional Kuwait art.¹⁰

Music

Sawt is a popular Kuwaiti music genre developed in the 19th century. This type of music is considered the classical music of Kuwait and the music often heard by the educated class. This style of music dates back to the 1970's and was made famous by the artist named Shadi ak Khaleed.

Folk music is very popular in Kuwait. The traditional folk music is called "Al Fan Al-Bahri" translated into the Art of Sea Song. This type of music takes its roots from the sea, a place that signified Kuwait's economic prosperity in the past. Sea songs were sung when sailors were working on the ocean. The two categories of sea songs are work songs and celebratory songs. The two types of work songs that are most popular are called Sangeen and Yamaal. The Sangeen is a type of song that is sung by the sailors when they are putting the ships out to sea. The Yamaal is sung at different parts of the sailing process including when the anchor is dropped or the sail is trimmed. The celebratory types of sea songs include a popular version called the Al-Uns. This title comes from the Arabic word meaning happiness. These types of songs take place when the sailors come back from sea and get together with their friends and family to celebrate their homecoming.

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SPORTS

Many of the sports that the Kuwait population participates in are water sports. These include diving, jet skiing, yachting, pearl diving, and swimming competitions. The Kuwait Sea Sports Club is the association that is in charge of these sports activities.¹²They organize yearly diving

¹⁰ Fattahova, N. (2009, February 1.)Kuwait kicks off Hala festivities. *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*. <http://www.kuwaittimes.net/>.

¹¹ Alzouman, S. (2009, February 20). Kuwait's musical heritage: The heartbeat of a nation. *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*. <http://www.kuwaittimes.net/>.

¹² Garcia, B. (2007, August 3). Fourth round of Jet Ski Championship concludes. *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*. <http://www.kuwaittimes.net/>.

competitions, jet sky competitions, and pearl diving expeditions.¹³ The popular indoor sports in Kuwait include ice-skating, bowling, darts, table tennis, and martial arts. Equestrian has also seen an increase in popularity. Participants in this sport have captured national titles and metals. Soccer is the most popular outdoor sport in Kuwait. Kuwait has a popular and successful national soccer team that has performed well not only in the Arab league but also in international soccer competitions.¹⁴

HOUSING

Dewaniya:

The *Dewaniya* is one of the most important aspects of Kuwaiti life. It is a gathering place in a house that is separated from the main house. The *dewaniya* are held in the evening hours and are a gathering place for Kuwaiti men to get together and talk about politics, culture, sports, and life. On average Kuwaiti men participate in two *dewaniya* per week. This type of gathering is very important to Kuwait culture since this is one of the few Arab countries that allows open gatherings where politics can be discussed.¹⁵

Public Housing:

In 1993 the Public Authority for Housing Welfare was established to help provide housing for the citizens of Kuwait. This ministry counts with an annual budget of 200 million KDW which helps to provide housing for the residents. It provides a place to live which can come in land, an apartment, or a house. It is usually about 400 square meters in size. Although, these are provided by the government they do have to be paid back in monthly payments and are given a repayment period of twenty years. Although the ministry continues to engage in building projects in Kuwait, there does not seem to be enough housing for the demand. Presently, the waiting period to a buy a home through the PAHW is twelve to fifteen years.¹⁶

¹³ Fattahova, N. (2006, August 19). Kuwait's sixth traditional diving race a big success. *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*. [http:// www.kuwaittimes.net/](http://www.kuwaittimes.net/).

¹⁴ <http://kuwaitembassy.or.jp/english/way/sports.html>

¹⁵ <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/spring06/eisa/culture.htm>

¹⁶ <http://www.zawya.com/cm/profile.cfm/cid1001905/Public%20Authority%20for%20Housing%20Welfare>

Culture

Food

In the Kuwaiti tradition an average individual eats three meals a day, which includes breakfast consisting of meat-fried liver of kidneys and a dairy product such as cheese or yogurt. Lunch and dinner consist of several meat dishes which can be combined and most meals end with vegetables and grains; ironically, meat is stapled as a dessert and is central part of their diet. These cultures would roast entire sheep and serve it with saffron rice.

Since Kuwait is predominantly an Islamic country, alcohol is illegal. During Ramadan, practitioners fast between sunset and sunrise and the consumption of food, drink and tobacco is strictly forbidden.

Kuwait borders the Gulf, and fish has been a mainstay of their diet for centuries. Families eat fish several times a week including shrimp, *hamour* (grouper), *hamra* (red snapper) and the local *zubaidi* (pomfret.) From their Bedouin tradition comes skewered meat and chicken is also frequently on their diet. Traditionally the meat served would be lamb (mutton) but trade has made other meats more accessible.

Pork is unavailable as it is forbidden in Islamic culture. Salads are popular and are usually made with romaine lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, radishes, and red onions, dressed with lemon juice and salt. Pickled turnips, tomatoes, and peppers are common side dishes as well. Spices are a huge ingredient in the Kuwaiti culture since the Gulf Arabs introduced it centuries ago. Some of the popular ones are cardamom, coriander, cumin, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, paprika and pepper. They are used to flavor chicken, fish, meat and rice. Other popular flavorings include rose water and tamarind syrup.

Cultural Characteristics

Ethnicity

Kuwaiti 45%, other Arab 35%, South Asian 9%, Iranian 4%, other 7%

Religion

The Kuwaiti nationals are Sunni Muslims, the minority being shia they range from 15 to 25 percent of the national population and they are a very diverse group. Many are descendants from immigrants from Al Sharqiyah (Eastern Province) in Saudi Arabia or from Bahrain and many others

come from Arabian Families from Iran. Others are of Iranian origins who speak Farsi as well as Arabic in their home. After the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88, this Shia community received a new identity from its fellow people. Thus began the tension between Sunnis and Shia. Among the wealthiest Kuwaitis are members of the ruling families and some of the distinct merchant class. The most important and wealthiest of the Bani Utub are members of the Al Sabah, the ruling family of Kuwait. The economic elite is largely Sunni. However, some Shia families and individual Shia are also wealthy.

Region

Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates¹⁷

Family Life

Family is the most important in the Kuwaiti society and Arab names contain a sort of genealogy: Ibrahim Al-Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Rashid, for example, is Ibrahim, the son of Ahmad, the son of Mansour, the son of Rashid. After the birth of a child, the parents are often referred to by derivatives of the child's name: Abu Khalid is the "father of Khalid", and Umm-Bader is the "mother of Bader".

The Kuwaiti families are generally very private and closed; it consists of a closely knitted extended family circle. It is not uncommon for cousins to marry actually it is very much a norm and each family is like a cohesive situation with each helping out with the different tasks and supporting one another, especially pooling for business ventures during hard times. The traditional family has 10 children and males carry more prestige than the females. Members of older generations are shown much respect and are acknowledged for their wisdom.

To the world it seems that it is a man's world but the mother rules the household. This is her domain and role, just as it is for a man to provide the adequate means. The mothers role is to nurture her children and the males are given pride and place and the male/mother bond is very strong and central, much as it is in some Mediterranean countries despite the relatively new-found freedom of education bestowed upon the young Kuwaiti woman, her brother/ husband/father still sees her as being pivotal in rearing and bringing babies into the world. But the mother is also more than this, for she is captain of the family in terms of the management of the home. She is,

¹⁷ <http://www.unep.ch/regionalseas/dumkap.html>

moreover, the judge and sometimes jury when it comes to social problems and their outcome

Leisure

Whether on holiday or just going for a walk, Kuwait has plenty of parks and public gardens to explore. In addition, the Touristic Enterprise Company runs many leisure centers such as Doha's Village, the Swimming Pools Complex, the Green Island and the Waterfront project.

Economy

Kuwait is a small, wealthy, moderately open economy with self-reported crude oil reserves of about 104 billion barrels - 9% of world reserves. Petroleum accounts for nearly half of GDP, 95% of export revenues, and 80% of government income. Kuwait has experienced major growth in its economy since 1913 the British government signed an agreement with Kuwait's Shaykh Mubarak the Great in which he promised to grant concessions only to companies approved by the British government, clarifying and reaffirming the agreement of 1899. The high oil prices in recent years have assisted in the assembly of Kuwait's budget and trade surpluses and foreign reserves, resulting in the optimistic fiscal situation which creates a less urgent need for economic reforms; however the drop in oil prices in late 2008 will reduce Kuwait's fiscal surplus in 2009. The global financial crisis may slow the pace of investment and development projects, but Kuwait has vowed to use its considerable financial resources to stabilize the economy if necessary.

Despite its vast oil reserves, industrial development has been somewhat of an obstacle due to the weakness in most other resources than oil. Many of the key elements to build up the economy such as cement needed to be imported. The limited supply of fresh water is another constraint. The small size of the domestic market restricts production for local consumption to small-scale operations. The open economy, which was maintained before and after the discovery of oil, provided little protection from foreign competition. The small Kuwaiti labor force, possessing limited skills, is another constraint. After the discovery of oil, labor costs escalated, and in a few years wages in Kuwait were higher than those in almost any other area of the Middle East, further hindering industrial development. Also, the commercial tradition in the country predisposes most entrepreneurs to invest in trade rather than manufacturing. As a result of these obstacles, industry, excluding oil-related industry, expanded very slowly. Kuwait experienced power outages during the summer months in 2006 and 2007 because demand exceeded power generating capacity. Power outages are likely to worsen, given its high population growth rates, unless the government can

increase generating capacity. In May 2007 Kuwait changed its currency peg from the US dollar to a basket of currencies in order to curb inflation and to reduce its vulnerability to external shocks. ¹⁸

GDP (purchasing power parity):



\$149.5 billion (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [58](#)

\$137.8 billion (2007 est.)

\$131.6 billion (2006 est.)

note: data are in 2008 US dollars

GDP (official exchange rate):



\$158.1 billion (2008 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:



8.5% (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [21](#)

4.7% (2007 est.)

6.3% (2006 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP):



\$57,500 (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [6](#)

\$55,000 (2007 est.)

\$54,400 (2006 est.)

note: data are in 2008 US dollars

¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ku.html>

GDP - composition by sector:



Agriculture: 0.3%

Industry: 52.2%

Services: 47.5% (2008 est.)

Labor force:



2.088 million

country comparison to the world: [119](#)

Note: non-Kuwaitis represent about 60% of the labor force (2008 est.)

Labor force - by occupation:



agriculture: NA%

industry: NA%

services: NA%

Unemployment rate:



2.2% (2004 est.)

country comparison to the world: [23](#)

Population below poverty line:



NA%

Household income or consumption by percentage share:



lowest 10%: NA%

highest 10%: NA%

Investment (gross fixed):



18.3% of GDP (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [127](#)

Budget:



Revenues: \$105.2 billion

Expenditures: \$58.08 billion (2008 est.)

Public debt:



7.6% of GDP (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [116](#)

29.6% of GDP (2004 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices):



10.6% (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [156](#)

5.5% (2007 est.)

Central bank discount rate:



3.75% (31 December 2008)

country comparison to the world: [70](#)

6.25% (31 December 2007)

Commercial bank prime lending rate:



7.61% (31 December 2008)

country comparison to the world: [100](#)

8.54% (31 December 2007)

Oil - production:



2.741 million bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [9](#)

Oil - consumption:



325,000 bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [39](#)

Oil - exports:



2.349 million bbl/day (2007 est.)

country comparison to the world: [7](#)

Oil - imports:



0 bbl/day (2007 est.)

country comparison to the world: [206](#)

Oil - proved reserves:



104 billion bbl (1 January 2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: [5](#)

Natural gas - production:



12.7 billion cu m (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [37](#)

Natural gas - consumption:



12.7 billion cu m (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [43](#)

Natural gas - exports:



0 cu m (2008)

country comparison to the world: [79](#)

Natural gas - imports:



0 cu m (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [155](#)

Natural gas - proved reserves:



1.794 trillion cu m (1 January 2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: [19](#)

[Current account balance:](#)



\$64.78 billion (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [7](#)

\$47.48 billion (2007 est.)

[Exports:](#)



\$86.94 billion (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [40](#)

\$63.68 billion (2007 est.)

[Exports - commodities:](#)



oil and refined products, fertilizers

[Exports - partners:](#)



Japan 18.4%, South Korea 14.6%, India 11.5%, US 8.9%, Singapore 7.9%, China 6.1% (2008)

[Imports:](#)



\$22.94 billion (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [70](#)

\$20.63 billion (2007 est.)

[Imports - commodities:](#)



food, construction materials, vehicles and parts, clothing

[Imports - partners:](#)



US 11.9%, Japan 9.2%, Germany 8.1%, China 7.6%, Saudi Arabia 7%, Italy 4.8%, UK 4.2% (2008)

[Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:](#)



\$17.23 billion (31 December 2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [56](#)

\$16.78 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Debt - external:



\$36.89 billion (31 December 2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [58](#)

\$33.62 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:



\$1.22 billion (31 December 2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [95](#)

\$942 million (31 December 2007 est.)

Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:



\$25.68 billion (31 December 2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: [37](#)

\$16.93 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Exchange rates:



Kuwaiti dinars (KD) per US dollar - 0.2679 (2008 est.), 0.2844 (2007), 0.29 (2006), 0.292 (2005), 0.2947 (2004)

Industrial development has been somewhat of an obstacle due to the weakness in most other resources than oil. Many of the key elements to build up the economy such as cement need to be imported for further growth. The limited supply of fresh water is another constraint causing agriculture to see a minimal development. Kuwait's desert climate sustains little vegetation; however, Kuwait manages to export some vegetables due to developments in hydroponics.

The small size of the domestic market restricts production for local consumption to small-scale operations. Foreign competition continues to be a threat for Kuwait due to the small open economy. The Kuwaiti labor force, undersized, possesses limited skills which is another constraint

in possible development. Due to the commercial tradition in the country entrepreneurs prefer to invest in trade rather than manufacturing further disabling industries, excluding oil-related industry.

Fishing provides a minor but important economic contribution. Much of the fishing for the local market was historically from small boats, including many native dhows. Large-scale commercial fishing is mostly confined to the United Fisheries of Kuwait, which operates a fleet of vessels as far a field as the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. United Fisheries is a large, international firm that processes and exports part of its catch, particularly frozen shrimp.

Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE)

In August 2000 the Kuwaiti Cabinet approved regulations necessary to implement the bill allowing foreigners to own stocks and trade on the bourse. The legislation allows foreign investors and expatriates living in Kuwait to own up to 100 per cent of the stock of Kuwaiti companies listed on the KSE, except in banks where the ownership will be limited to 49 per cent. The new regulations provide complete freedom for foreigners to buy, sell and own stocks like Kuwaitis. ¹⁹

Kuwait Automated Trading System

KSE operates now on the most modern computerized system. The Kuwait Automated Trading System (KATS) is a computerized trading system based on software specially developed and customized for the Kuwait Stock Exchange.

One of its many features is the capability of linkage with traders outside the Exchange, covering all of Kuwait's governorates and possibility of linkage with markets outside Kuwait in the future. The system offers security and fairness and equality between traders. It guarantees complete confidentiality for traders while completing transactions, thus increasing trader confidence and transaction volume.

Some of the features of KATS are:

- Stock quotations table
- Individual stock indices
- Daily quotations and index
- Monthly quotations and index
- Company background information

¹⁹ www.kuwaitse.com or www.kse.com.kw

- Company financial data

In addition to easy placement of orders and access to information, KATS allows brokers to send and receive messages while trading, enabling the Exchange to keep brokers abreast of the latest information and permitting brokers to communicate with each other.

KSE Index

The Kuwait Stock Exchange adopted formula for price index calculation based on the internationally accepted standard for index computation. It automatically adjusts for dividends and distribution reflecting accurate results. Daily newspapers publish market details.

Telephone Directory²⁰

MAIN BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS	Tel	Tel	Fax
Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry	2243 3854	2243 3864	2240 4110
Kuwait Industries Union	2266 3453	2266 3454	2266 3452
Kuwait Society of Engineers	2244 8975	2244 8977	2242 8148
Kuwait Trade Union Federation	2563 6389	2561 6053	2562 7159
Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies	2257 1597	2254 3022	2252 0621
PRODUCERS' COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES	Tel	Tel	Fax
Abdali Agricultural Cooperative Society	2484 4927	2484 3157	2484 8182
Al Sadou Craft Society	2243 2395		2243 7532
Livestock Cooperative Society	2484 7987	2484 2298	2484 9561
Poultry Raisers Cooperative Society	2484 3045		2484 9282
Union of Agricultural Cooperative Societies	2484 8627	2484 7008	2484 7138
Wafra Agricultural Cooperative Society	2484 7351		2484 6200

²⁰ <http://countrystudies.us/persian-gulf-states/20.htm>

BUSINESS UNIONS & ASSOCIATIONS	Tel	Tel	Fax
Aluminum Producers & Traders Association	2398 5210	2398 1306	2398 4925
Association of Kuwait Maritime Agencies & Co	2245 9891	2245 9892	2246 0982
Cleaning Companies Association	2561 8043		2561 8053
Kuwait Association of Cement Brick Producers	2533 5877		2533 5877
Kuwait Association of Commercial & Investment Property Landlords	2574 4466	2574 4455	2574 7848
Kuwait Association of New & Second-hand Car Dealers	2266 6666		2263 7777
Kuwait Association of the Owners of Money Exchanges	2244 2040	2244 2041	2243 0881
Kuwait Brokers Union	2243 0148	2243 0149	2242 9720
Kuwait Fishers Association	2242 7639	2245 1061	2245 3416
Kuwait Hotel Owners Association	2242 1260	2242 1261	2242 6606
Kuwait Travel & Tourism Agents Association	2245 8570	2246 2350	2243 7319
Kuwait Union for Foodstuffs	2257 5346	2257 5347	2257 5346
Kuwait Union of Merchants & Importers of Fruits & Vegetables	2483 1215		2255 4477
Kuwait Union of the Owners of Private Schools & Cultural Institutes	2242 3226		2242 3228
Union of Agents for Electronic & Electrical Appliances	2483 5205	2484 3707	2484 2140
Union of Asphalt Producers	573 9141	2573 9142	2575 3099
Union of Automobile Agents	2533 1700	2533 1701	532 6369
Union of Fresh Dairy Product Producers	2467 3360		2467 5914
Union of Kuwaiti Craftsmen	2467 4777		2467 4433

Union of Kuwait Overland Transport Associations	2481 6004	2481 6144	2484 5524
Union of Pharmaceutical Importers & Pharmacy Owners	2242 1417		2242 1417
Union of Precast Producers	2467 0231		2467 3545
Union of Private Medical Service Providers	2531 2555		2531 4717
TRADE UNIONS AND WORKERS' SYNDICATES	Tel	Tel	Fax
Federation of Trade Unions in the Government Sector	2562 5129	2563 6295	2562 5311
K.N.P.C Labor Syndicate	2398 9270	2398 4647	2398 0066
Labor Syndicate of the Ministry of Printing & Information	2562 2068		2562 2068
Labor Syndicate of the Municipality & the General Department of Fire	2561 5880		2562 5344
Ministry of Communication Workers Union	2563 2174		2565 8115
Ministry of Electricity & Water Labor Syndicate	2562 3407	2562 7119	2562 7119
Oil & Petrochemical Industry Workers Confederation	2398 4983	2398 5248	2398 5260
Syndicate of the Ministry of Education Workers	2564 2212	2564 4068	2564 4068
Union of Bank Employees	2573 4742	2573 4743	2575 6417
Workers Trade Union Kuwait Oil Co	2398 0715	2398 6677	2398 0715
Workers Union of Kuwait Airways & Subsidiaries	2484 4438	2484 0366	2484 4495
Workers Union in the Ministry of Finance & Customs	2562 4498	2561 6055	562 4498
Workers Union in Petrochemical Industries Company	2398 5302		2398 6149

Workers Union in the Ministry of Health	2564 4399		2562 8964
Workers Union in the Ministry of Social Affairs & Labor	2565 8171	2562 6563	2562 6563

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Media System – Independent Media

Kuwait boasts some of the most open and pluralistic media environments in the Arab world. Kuwait media are often very critical in their reports on politics and the government. Journalists enjoy greater freedoms than some of their regional counterparts, but still exercise self-censorship in matters related to the Emir and religion. Also, the Ministry of Information censors publications deemed to be morally or politically inappropriate.

William A. Rugh in his *Arab Mass Media* (2004) characterizes Kuwait media as a “diverse press.” Its distinguishing characteristic is that “the newspapers are clearly different from each other in content and apparent political tendency as well as in style.” Furthermore, they tend to be privately owned and reflect a variety of viewpoints.

Print press

Kuwait has 15 daily newspapers and 2 English daily newspapers, and a larger number of weeklies. The number of dailies and periodicals could increase due to the lifting of a 30-year ban on issuing licenses for daily newspapers in the 2006 press law. Licenses for newspapers are issued by the Ministry of Information, and publishing houses are required to have a minimum of nearly one million US dollar to apply for a license.

Audiovisual media

Kuwait Television is the national broadcaster. It operates four domestic channels and two satellite channels. It is part of the Ministry of Information. In 2003 state monopoly on broadcasting was lifted and a number of private broadcasters have emerged since then. Satellite dishes are widely used and pan-Arab TV stations are popular. State broadcaster Radio Kuwait operates a number of channels in both Arabic and English. Following the lifting of the state broadcast monopoly in 2003, the first private radio station emerged in 2005, Marina FM.

Online media

Since the introduction of Internet in the 1990s the number of internet users has grown rapidly to more than 600,000. Internet services are provided by a number of private companies. The state forces Internet service providers to install and operate censorship systems to block pornographic, anti-religion, anti-tradition, or anti-security websites. Internet providers are regulated by the Ministry of Communication. Internet Cafés are strictly controlled and users have to provide personal information in order to be allowed to use the Internet. The Kuwaiti government claims that these restrictions are meant to protect the public by maintaining both public order and morality. Most of the written press and audiovisual media have Internet websites. Kuwait furthermore boasts a very active and influential Internet community; especially blogging is very popular.

Media System - Government Media

The Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) was founded in 1979 by governmental Decree. Board members are nominated by the Ministry of Information and appointed by the Cabinet.

Kuwait Journalists Association was established in 1964. Its aim is to strengthen relations between Kuwaiti and Arab journalists, portray Kuwait honestly via journalism, and defend members' rights and promote "good journalism." In 2007 the association held elections for a seven-member board. It was the first time newcomers challenged the incumbent board members. The Association is an associate member of the International Federation of Journalists.

The Kuwaiti media is regulated by the 2006 Press Law. The law ended the government moratorium on licenses for the media. Furthermore, it prevents cancellation of a license, suspension of a newspaper or detention of a journalist without a court order. However, the law retains prison sentences ranging from one year to life imprisonment for offences such as blasphemy pertaining to "GOD, the Prophets, the wives of the Prophet, or the basis of the Islamic faith," calls for toppling the regime, by force or "illegitimate means," or insulting the Emir of Kuwait. In addition fines may be applied ranging from \$17,000 – \$70,000 US Dollars. The law also allows suspension of newspapers during investigations for a period of a maximum of two weeks, on the condition that there is a court order. A positive point is that journalists cannot be jailed while under investigation for an alleged offence, and only a judge can order a journalist's imprisonment.²¹

²¹ <http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/media-landscape/state-media-5>

PRESS LAWS AND CENSORSHIP

As a primary regulator of the media, the 1991 Kuwaiti constitution guaranteed freedom of press, but only within the limits of the law. Although freedom of the press is a concept associated with Kuwait, and in spite of the fact that the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) is considered to be independent, certain agency structures and national laws limit free exercise. For instance, KUNA as a part of the Ministry of Information has historically controlled Radio Kuwait and the Kuwait Television stations.

In 1956 the first press law was passed. Then the 1961 Press and Publishing Law provided for such sanctions as fines and imprisonment for publishing materials critical of the government, rulers, other Arab states, allies of Kuwait or religious figures.

Another press law passed in 1976 provided for suspending the licenses of media sources who broke press laws, but later these restrictions were softened and the media began to monitor itself to some degree. However, beginning in 1986, the Ministry of Information required all publications to submit copy to the ministry in advance for approval and forbade criticism of the ruler and his family, other Arab leaders, and Islam, as well as the acceptance of foreign funding.

CENSORSHIP

Kuwaiti press laws have been enforced in a number of cases. For instance, the *World Press Freedom Review* reported an incident in which a publication which might be viewed as lending support to Iraq was banned from Kuwait; an incident in which a university professor was sentenced to prison for allegedly defaming Islam and others were fined for allegedly writing immoral poetry (2000); incidents in which a television station was banned for insulting the Emir, an offense against the Kuwaiti Constitution (1999); and an incident in which the editor-in-chief of a leading daily newspaper was sentenced to prison for allegedly insulting the Divine Being (1998).

State-Press Relations²²

Private media enjoys a great deal of freedom in Kuwait, yet is subject to governmental sanctions for violating news and publication laws. The press is economically dependent on state financial subsidies

The government administers telephone, television, radio, postal, and telegraph services. By 1994 damage to the telecommunications infrastructure from the Gulf War had been repaired and operations returned to normal. In 1997, 412,000 telephones were operated from a fully automatic exchange; a cellular telephone system also operates throughout Kuwait and had about 210,000 subscribers in 1997.

Kuwait Television is government-controlled and has offered color broadcasts since 1974; it broadcasts over three channels. Radio Kuwait produces programs in English, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. In 1998, there were 6 AM and 11 FM radio stations and 13 television stations. In 2000, there were 624 radios and 486 television sets for every 1,000 people. In 2001, there were 165,000 Internet subscribers served by three service providers.

As of 2009, Kuwait had 15 daily newspapers. Major Arabic dailies include *Al-Anbaa* (The News), *Al-Rai al-'Amm* (Public Opinion), *Al Jameheer* (the Audience), *Al-Qabas* (Firebrand), *Al-Seyassa* (Policy) and *Al-Watan* (The Homeland). English-language dailies include the *Arab Times* and *Kuwait Times*. The popular monthly magazine *Al-Arabi*, similar to the *Reader's Digest*, is widely read in Kuwait.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, and with a few exceptions, citizens are said to freely criticize the government in all media. The government ended pre-publication censorship in 1992. The government does not censor foreign journalists and allows them open access to the country. ²³

²² <http://www.mondotimes.com/1/world/kw/237/all/12197>

<http://www.arabji.com/Kuwait/media.htm>

²³ <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Kuwait-MEDIA.html>

MEDIA OWNERS²⁴

Al Anbaa

Language: Arabic

Established :

Published daily

A widely distributed pro-government newspaper. *Al Anbaa* delivers an uncritical coverage of local news and an extensive supplement on business and sport. It has some well-respected columnists such as **Salah Al Sayer**.

Website: <http://www.alanba.com.kw>

Al Rai al Aam

Language: Arabic

Established: 1969

Published daily

The editorial line of the independent, liberal *Al Rai Al Aam* often backs up the government. Besides a good coverage of local news, it delivers extensive coverage of the Kuwaiti financial market and hosts respected columnists such as Dr **Sajed Al-Abdali**.

Website: <http://www.alraialaam.com>

Al Seyassah

Language: Arabic

Established: 1965

Published daily

An independent, strongly liberal newspaper, with close ties to both the ruling family and Saudi Arabia. Its editor-in-chief **Ahmad Jarallah**, who received a letter bomb in 2004, on a regular basis writes painfully straightforward front-page editorials backing the West, bashing the Islamists and attacking Iran. *Al Seyassah* is distributed in many Arab countries, such as

²⁴ <http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/amed/kuwait/resources/kuwait-media.html>

Lebanon and Egypt, where Kuwaitis spend their holidays.

Website: <http://www.alseyassah.com>

Al Watan

Language: Arabic

Established: 1974

Published daily

A conservative newspaper with close ties to the ruling family. Besides the extensive coverage of the activities of the monarchy and the government, *Al Watan* opens its pages to some influential columnists such as Dr **Isam Al-Fulaij**, a leading Islamist.

Website: <http://www.alwatan.com.kw>

MEDIA BREAKDOWN

Mass media²⁵

Kuwait has 10 TV channels (4 controlled by the Ministry of Information), 2 modern English FM stations, mostly targeting the Westerners residing in Kuwait (one playing latest Western pop music and hits, while the other one playing Jazz, Blues and other light music), a few Arabic radio stations, 5 daily newspapers published in Arabic, and 3 daily newspapers published in English (Arab Times & Kuwait Times)

Al-Rai TV Kuwaiti television station broadcasting news and entertainment programs in Arabic.

Domain: alrai.tv

Global Direct Television Kuwait - Kuwaiti television station, subsidiary of United Networks, distributor of showtime entertainment programs. Domain: gd-tv.com

Al-Resalah Television Station, Kuwait - Islamic satellite TV channel website. Profile, programs, contact details and more. Domain: alresalah.net

²⁵ <http://encyclopedia.stateuniversity.com/pages/13042/Kuwait.html>

Al Anwar TV, Kuwait Website of Al Anwar Satellite television station in Kuwait. Profile, objectives, programs and more. Domain: alanwartv.com

Al-Watan Satellite TV, Kuwait Satellite television station in Kuwait, delivering news and entertainment content to its Kuwaiti viewers. Domain: watan.tv

Al-Afasy Channel, Kuwait Website of Al Afasy channel presenting Islamic issues, video clips and programs in Kuwait and other Arab countries. Domain: alafasy.com

Smile Television, Kuwait Part of Aiwa Gulf Group broadcasting entertainment programs for youth such as concerts, music videos and more. Domain: smiletv.tv

Advertising Agencies

Al Jabriya Advertising Group

Knights Capital

Al Hudhud Advertising & Marketing

Majestic Plus Marketing & Communications

Bates PanGulf

Microsolutions

Blu - Grey

P&A Advertising Agency

Citra Advertising Agency

Paragon Marketing Communications

Coaxial Advertising

Promoseven

Graffiti Marketing Communications

Publicis Graphics

Horizon-FCB

Pulse DDB Kuwait

Impact & Echo

Radius Leo Burnett

Intermarkets

TBWA/RAAD/AFYOUNI

International Centre for Advertising

Team/Young & Rubicam

JWT Kuwait

The Kavli

Kuwait PR history

Kuwait did not declare its independence until the year of 1961. Before that, Kuwaiti public relations agencies were primarily “getting by” in the simple ways of doing things; the practitioners were more business style managers and company directors rather than communicators. Later in the 1970’s, although largely influenced by the political aspect of the country, the public relations profession was recognized as an important feature of the government. Practitioners started to develop initiatives to better the practice and gain knowledge.

In 1983, the first practitioners’ group was formed in Kuwait. Currently, they meet 6 times a year. In 1984, they joined the International Public Relations Association, which resulted in the country really starting to utilize PR as a communication tool, rather than a management instrument. In the 1990’s, Kuwait started to connect with international practitioners, giving them the ability to launch the much criticized “Free Kuwait” campaign with the help of the international PR firm Hill & Knowlton. In 2006, the Kuwait Public Relations Association was formed and is still the only one of its kind in the country at present.

Current Issues and Trends

Currently, the Kuwaiti PR agencies are focused on the environment, society and public issues, corporate social responsibilities, economic and financial crisis. The government regulates the profession very strictly. For an example, the constitution of Kuwait guarantees the freedom of speech in the way of writing and speaking, yet it prohibits many aspects of the expression and the personal opinions of the citizens. In addition, the constitution also allows freedom in the publication and printing industry, but it prohibits the offenses of the religion, state, country and the heads of the government. Perhaps as a result of the strict laws or governmental controls, Kuwait is one for the most successful self-censored countries in the middle-east. However, this was not possible until the year of 1992, when a new National Assembly was elected and the system was changed to a more democratic one.

In the Hill and Knowlton “Free Kuwait” campaign, although different opinions existed and largely criticized the event, it was a pinnacle in the country’s new take on the PR profession. Currently, the country is flourishing with countless new PR firms to serve the government and business industry. With knowledge on the trade as well the country’s regulations, new issues and trends are raised and set. For example, Dow Chemical appointed a new public affairs manager for Kuwait and Egypt in August, 2008. This new role was intended to be responsible for developing and implementing an

integrated public affairs and communications strategy for Kuwait and Egypt, in line with Dow's global corporate strategy. Al-Majed was the point public affairs counsel and support to regional business leaders. TRACCS Kuwait, the Trans-Arabian Creative Communications in Kuwait, was first launched in 2004 and re-launched in late 2008 lead by the experienced journalist and PR practitioner Rima Termos whose team handles communications for TRACCS regional business and an increasing range of Kuwait-based clients, providing strategic communications services as well as media training, crisis and issues management, CSR support and internal communications advisory to the Kuwait market.

Evidently, Kuwait is enhancing its PR profession for the world. With the growth of the trade, new issues consistently appear. Kuwaiti communication system usages are almost all average compared to the rest of the world. For instance, internet hosts placed 148th out of 232 countries and internet usage is placed at 88th out of 216 countries. In addition, the numbers of traditional media including television channels and radio stations were only 13 and 17 in 1998. In short, this one of the "richest" countries in the world, placing 6th in GDP per capita, but its growth is rather slow.

As a member of the IPRA, Gulf Chapter, Kuwait follows the code of conduct and strives to be "developed as a member for PR skills and expertise, broaden experience in the international PR arena and to establish stronger ties among PR specialists throughout the region." Social networks in Kuwait, like many other aspects of the country are closely watched by the government, and again, they are guaranteed by the constitution by the constitution, however, they are strictly regulated by the law to eliminate the offenses to the government, country, religion and the heads of the government. As a result, many users of various popular social network websites have to find their own ways to reach the true freedom of expressing their minds.

Education

Education in Kuwait seems to be a very high priority. There are three basic levels of education, and schooling starts at age six. Women are granted the same rights to education as men, and the Ministry of Education has worked to further the education of women through various programs such as a 1989 initiative to establish daytime literacy clinics for women. On the advanced degree level, although there are numerous universities in Kuwait, there are only three universities that offer Public Relations and Communications courses. Note that these are only courses associated with a Mass Communications degree, which is the only communications related degree offered in the country at this time.

Kuwait University

The first university which offers a Communications degree in the country is Kuwait University. This is one of the only two state-supported schools in the country, and they offer a Bachelors of Arts degree in the field of mass communication. They provide a number of courses within the program which provide students with the fundamental and theoretical knowledge needed to understand the nature of mass communication, its impact on the individual and society, and the applied research methods used in different media activities. The program also provides students with the professional skills to undertake media work, as well as providing them with the practical experience that will allow them to use media technology effectively.

Their website is <http://www.kuniv.edu.kw>

American University of Kuwait

The American University of Kuwait, offers a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Media. This is an independent, private, equal opportunity, and co-educational liberal arts institution of higher education. The educational, cultural, and administrative structure, methods and standards of AUK are based on the American model of higher learning. All instruction is conducted in English. In their program, the student's Communication and Media Learning Outcomes are to:

- Demonstrate critical awareness and understanding of the impact of communications as a social process with its attendant influences on politics, culture and economic development.
- Demonstrate broad knowledge of key theories and practices in the field of communications.
- Demonstrate competence in appropriate technology to the creation and dissemination of media messages.
- Be prepared to embark on professional careers as skilled and responsible media practitioners operating within legal and ethical boundaries.
- Be prepared to create original media expressions that effectively communicate useful messages to diverse audiences.
- Be prepared to use the communication process for the greater good of their communities and nations

Their website is: <http://www.auk.edu.kw>

Gulf University of Science and Technology

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication and is the first private university established in Kuwait. They currently have a dual-enrollment agreement with the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Although GUST is accredited by the Kuwait Ministry of Higher Education, it is not considered an accredited university by international standards. Students seeking to utilize their degree abroad, for graduate continuation or employment, are strongly encouraged to pursue their degree at an internationally accredited university.

Their public relations courses are stringent, based on department objectives, which are to:

- Enlighten students about the importance and influence of mass communication in the politics, economies, and cultures of modern societies;
- Provide students with recent theories and functions guiding mass communication as a scientific discipline;
- Present students to the knowledge of different perspectives leading the current thinking about the process and effects of mass communication;
- Equip students with necessary practical skills help them design projects and create various media messages;
- Help students recognize the importance of free speech in modern societies and the application of ethical standards and professionalism in different work aspects;
- Enable students to create communication messages according a specified set of goals executed using research and science;
- Encourage students to deal with various technological equipments that help them professionally execute various tasks;
- Equip students with various presentation skills such as writing and speaking so that they present their ideas with clarity.

Mass Communication students select one emphasis from the following:

- Journalism with special emphasis on electronic journalism, news writing, and page layout.
- Radio and television with special emphasis on directing, anchoring, electronic news gathering, studio workshops, and editing.
- Advertising and public relations with special emphasis on copy writing for advertisements and public relations, strategies of advertisements and public relations, and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC).
- 4. Visual communication with special emphasis on graphic message design, animation, multimedia, and web design.

Their website is: <http://www.gust.edu.kw>

Current state of Public Relations in Education

Education appears to be very important in advancing the country. With continuous initiatives being put in place to advance the practice of public relations within the country, courses are available in Universities as well as through PR training and development courses and workshops as well as conferences.

During the last few years, there has been an explosion in the number of satellite television stations and newspapers and the use of the Internet in Kuwait and around the world. In addition, many companies have been using public relations and advertising to encourage people to buy and use their products and services. These changes underscore the need to develop the field of mass communication as a flourishing discipline that provides valuable work opportunities such as:

- Journalists, reporters, newspaper and magazine editors
- Radio and television directors, producers, anchors, technicians, and camerapersons
- Public relations and advertising agents
- Graphic designers, animation, multimedia, and web design specialists.

According to the 2009 IPRA International PR Report Project, the hot issues in PR for this year are: Financial Crisis, Communication in general internal and external, Energy and Power control and economy. In following these trends, courses are being developed to specifically address the situations occurring within Kuwait to prepare students for communicating effectively in and outside of the country.

Current State of the Industry

Public relations in Kuwait has grown significantly in the past twenty years. Previously, there were only 2 PR agencies in the region of the Middle East and this has changed drastically. According to Jack Pearce, Kuwait is one of the countries in the Middle East which is showing the most significant change and improvement in the industry over the years.

The Middle East Public Relations Association was created in order to raise the standard of PR and increase professionalism in the industry. Kuwait followed suit and formed the Kuwait Public Relations Association (KPRA). The KPRA has as its mission to “Work to deepen the concept of modern public relations in the private sector and government in accordance with scientific methodology and global standards in line with the requirements of the times and contribute to

highlight the institutional role of community service in an optimal way.” The KPRA held its first conference in April 2008 entitled “The Role of Public Relations and the Media in Supporting Kuwait as a Financial and Economic Center”.

The current state of public relations in Kuwait does not seem to be far behind the profession of PR in the United States. Even though the Middle East has a reputation of having women play a less prominent role in important activities, this is not the case in public relations. The vice president of the board of directors for the International Public Relations Association (IRPRA) is Mrs. Etedal Hamad Al-Ayyar. She is also a representative for the state of Kuwait.

Though the PR industry in Kuwait has come a long way, there is still more to be done in this area if it is to be up to the international standards. For example, even though there are several private practices, the government agenda features too prominently in the practice of public relations in the country.

Type of Public Relations

According to Scott M. Cutlip (1985), public relations is “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between and organization and the publics upon which its success or failure depends” (p. 4). The three main types of public relations practices are:

1. In-house – It is often referred to as corporate public relations. The public relations for a company is done by members of the company in the communications department.
2. Agency – One company does the public relations work for several different companies.
3. Freelancing – This is also called a consultancy. A person or a group of persons will give advice to an organization about various public relations elements.

In Kuwait, both private and public sector organizations work with public relations. The Kuwait embassy in the United States is currently seeking public relations professionals to work with them in promoting the country to American citizens. There are also a number of public relations agencies that do work for business organizations in Kuwait.

In the public sector, the role of public relations is to promote the country and serve the interest of the government. In the KPRA conference held in 2008, “Information Minister Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah read an address to the attendees stressing the importance of Public Relations (PR) in promoting Kuwait's various economic activities” (KPRA, 2008). In the private sector

however, PR relations plays a similar role as it does in business organizations in the Western countries. It is used to manage the relationships between businesses and the publics they serve.

Overall, public relations in Kuwait at this current time seems to be primarily concerned with building the country's image and addressing its economic and social concerns. There seems to be little emphasis on the private sector and public relations in this area.

Salary Professional Information

Kuwait minimum wage

- 217 **Kuwaiti dinars** per month for public sector citizen employees
- 97 dinars for public sector non-citizen employees
- At least 40 dinars per month for domestic workers
- no legal minimum wage in the private sector

Gross annual wage: (**Intl. dollars**) \$8,400

% of GDP per Capita: 21

Position: Public Relations Manager

Location: Al Fintas, Kuwait

Experience Required: Entry Level

Salary: 315 to 350 Kuwait Dollars Monthly Salary (Equivalent to approx 1000 US to 1200 US)

Benefits:

- Free accommodation
- Free transportation
- Free duty meal
- Life and Medical Insurance as per company policy and Kuwait Labor Law
- Round up air-tickets upon commencement of work and after the end of contract service.
- Annual Leave: 14 days, excluding public off days.
- Both Sex Males/Females /Married/single are all welcome.

PR Training

Public Relations training was formerly not a common practice in Kuwait. As many organizations became aware of the importance of Public Relations they ultimately began to seek out practitioners and consultants. Consequently, in 1984 Kuwait became a member of The International Public Relations Association, which was founded in 1955 and currently holds 130 members. The KPRA is a nongovernmental organization supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. Bader Al-Mideris, Chairman of KPRA, said: "Since its founding, the KPRA is connected to all public sector authorities from ministries, and establishments, in addition to the nongovernmental organizations. KPRA is a new addition to Kuwaiti civilization, and it doesn't have any branches inside or outside Kuwait."

The KPRA holds different symposia, courses, and conferences in cooperation with the different consulting offices in the Public Relations field in order to achieve trainings. The society is growing and gaining presence but still needs more awareness and recognition. One of the key messages KPRA sends out is that Public Relations is important and present in every ministry and authority in Kuwait and worldwide. It's also an important and basic subject included in the curriculum of most universities.

Roles of Practitioners

According to the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, which is a government entity that oversees the countries media practices, "Kuwait's official media, supervised by the Ministry of Information, follows an open and flexible policy, both domestically and abroad. It is based on mutual cooperation and respect for and non-interference in the affairs of other countries. The policy is planned collectively with emphasis on intellectual, social, political and economic development". In addition to that, "apart from the four state-owned channels, Cable and Satellite transmission is available throughout the country". Furthermore, "[t]he press in Kuwait enjoys a high degree of freedom and is supported extensively by the Ministry of Information. Kuwait takes pride in its free and vibrant press, which it regards as a democratic form of freedom of expression."

Within the Ministry of Information, the position entitled "The Public Relations and Moral Guidance Department Manager of the Ministry of Interior" is currently held by Colonel Adel Al-Hashash. The existence of this position leads one to believe that although the country supports a free press and a fairly democratic means of communication, the role of the government within the media and the practice of public relations is a big factor affecting the role of the public relations practitioner in this country. However if you look at the websites of the public relations firms within the country you will find a lot of similar credentials required of the public relations practitioner including educational

background, which can be supported by the College of Arts Mass Communication degree within Kuwait University as well as the private institutions. It can therefore be inferred that like elsewhere, the PR practitioner is expected to have prior experience, practice professionalism, be creative, communicate effectively in both English and Arabic, and to be able to work individually and on teams.

Personality

The type of personality best suited for working in the public relations and communications profession in Kuwait is someone who is ambitious and mature, knows how to manage several tasks at once, has a strong character, and has a knowledge of the countries cultural, religious and legal norms. The individual should also be a forward thinker who likes to stay abreast of what is new in the industry. According to Kuwaiti's Multaqa Media Group, the right candidate for a job with them is, "imaginative, aggressive, curious and creative." At Way Communications, they tout that their employees are a "results oriented, competent, dedicated and experienced team of professionals who have a finger on the pulse of the latest market trends". Furthermore, because the public relations business in Kuwait is continually growing, many practitioners must be self starters who are able to acquire new clients and be able to manage themselves while also having the ability to work in groups.

Managerial Work

Fleishman-Hillard is expanding its UAE office to include other MENA countries including Kuwait and is looking for a PR Account Manager. According to the job posting, some of the managerial tasks and responsibilities expected of the person filling the position are:

- Strong internal and external communications skills
- Previous PR agency or in house experience
- Strong presentation and writing skills in English and preferably in Arabic
- Solid account management skills with a proven finesse in managing clients and developing relationships
- Strong understanding of regional media
- Ability to work in a team with proven success working across geographies/cultures/languages
- Ability to manage highly confidential client information
- A clear analytical thinker particularly under pressure

- Ability to provide strategic counsel to clients
- Expert financial management and planning experience
- Can build trust among key client stakeholders
- Event organization experience

According to this and other job search postings, the responsibilities of an account manager in Kuwait are fairly similar to that of a practitioner in the United States. Therefore, it seems that the actual tasks of the PR practitioner although different by cultural norms are technically the same in practice.

Organizational Tasks and Human Resources

The organizational tasks and human resources aspect of the PR in Kuwait are fairly similar to what we would see in the U.S. as well. The larger PR companies tend to support team management, while some of the smaller ones require their practitioners to be more independent. All of them have recruitment services and seem to be on the lookout for new talent and offer contact information for applying. As an example, Action Global Communications is “always on the look-out for public relations professionals who can contribute to our team. Whether you’re an experienced public relations consultant, or just embarking on your career, Action Global Communications offers a multitude of opportunities in the world’s most promising and interesting locations”. Most of the firms offer a wide variety of services in addition to media relations, crisis management, investor relations, and business to business communications often offered by public relations practitioners. The Kuwaiti firms also offer corporate social responsibility initiatives, event management, and other research and consulting services.

Technical Role of PR

Differences between the technical roles of the public relations practitioner in Kuwait from that of the PR professional in the United States are difficult to distinguish. In Kuwait the PR firms offer a wider variety of services and in both government and private sectors seem to focus more on corporate public relations, business to business affairs, events, and crisis management rather than on the consumer. Therefore practitioners may have to refocus from consumer driven ideas to more government related and business to business related ones. Either way, it will be just as important for the practitioner to be able to manage the daily tasks of managing events, media relations, writing press releases, managing clients, knowledge in and experience with the Internet and other major computer programs, knowledge in e-commerce, mass communication, social media, creative

graphic design, innovative copy writing, and editing. Specific details on managing relationships with the differing media outlets were not found. However, it can be assumed that they will have to fall within Kuwaiti standard of a free press as long as it remains within the limitations of Kuwaiti law.

Organizational Profiles

PR Organizations & Associations

Ministry of the Interior

- Minister of Information - His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah
- The Public Relations and Moral Guidance Department Manager of the Ministry of Interior - Colonel Adel Al-Hashash
- Assistant Director, The Public Relations and Moral Guidance Administration, Ministry of Interior - Lieutenant Colonel Emad Bader Al-Molla “Follows an open and flexible policy, both domestically and abroad. It is based on mutual cooperation and respect for and non-interference in the affairs of other countries. The policy is planned collectively with emphasis on intellectual, social, political and economic development”

Kuwait University (Public)

- Established in October 1966
- University President - Prof. Abdullah Suliman Al-Fuhaid
- Dean of the College of Arts - Dr.Maimona Khalifa Al-Sabah
- Professor in Mass Communication, Kuwait University, College of Arts, specialized in public relations and crisis management - Dr. Heba Khalifa Al Musalam
- Mission “to keep , develop , and disseminate human knowledge , in addition to developing national human resources in order to create leaders who are aware of national heritage and future needs in collaboration with other academic institutions of similar mission , through: Strengthening national, Arabic, and Islamic values and principles, disseminating knowledge, developing and investing human resources, achieving excellence and distinction in education, scientific research, and community services, and utilizing modern technology
- www.kuniv.edu/ku/index.htm

International Public Relations Association (IRPA) - Gulf Chapter includes: Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, & Saudi Arabia, Kuwait

- Established in 2003

- National Chair for Kuwait - Mrs. Etedal H. Al-Ayyar
- “The chapter's vision is to be recognized throughout the Gulf Region for advancing PR excellence. IPRA-GC's objectives are to develop its members PR skills and expertise, broaden their experience in the international PR arena and to establish stronger ties among PR specialists throughout the region”
- www.ipra-gc.com

Middle East Public Relations Association

- Established in 2001 in Dubai, but has Kuwaiti affiliations
- “The Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) is a not-for-profit professional association based in Dubai that represents the interests of the public relations profession in the Middle East”
- Holds MEPRA Best Practice Awards
- www.mepira.org

Consultancy Directories

PR and Marketing Agencies

- **Azak Group**
Kuwait Free Trade Zone
Block B46/Office no. A2
Shuwaikh Port
Tel: 24613994
Fax: 24613996
- **AGT Kuwait**
P.O. Box 23503 Safat 13096, Kuwait
Tel: (+965) 2245 2134/5
Fax: (+965) 2245 2160
E-Mail: sales@agtkuwait.com
- **Future Communications Company**
P.O. Box: 1324 Safat 13014, Kuwait.
7th Floor, Al-Awadi Tower 3,
Ahmad Al Jaber Street, Sharq, Kuwait
Tel: +965 22432555

Fax: +965 22431926

- **Hill and Knowlton**

Gulf-Hill & Knowlton WLL

Al Shamiya Tower, 5th Floor

Al Sour Street, Salhiya

Safat, 13007

Kuwait

Tel: +965 2 2331 770

- **M.H. Alshaya Co.**

M.H. Alshaya Co. W.L.L.

P.O. Box 181 Safat, 13002

Kuwait

Tel: +965 182-12-12

- **Rawaj Real Estate Marketing Co.**

P.O. Box 38945

Dahyat Abdulla Al Salem,

72254 Kuwait

Tel: +965 22240644

- **Star Express General Trading W.L.L.**

P.O.Box 6511

Hawally 32040

Kuwait

Tel: 965-687-4000/264-24432

Fax: 246-2431

E-mail: abdulrahman@N0SPAM.starexpressco.com

Contact: *Abdulrhman Amin, General Manager*

- **American United Group**

P.O Box 5193, Hawally 32082

Tel: +965 22638838

Fax: +965 22667140

E-mail: info@auglogistics.com

Contact: *H. Almezal, Chairman/CEO*

- **Handlen Trading Company**

Al Majar Tower - Al Sahliya, Area 11, Building 12, Floor No. 09, Safat 13103

Phone: 965-2249-7226/5

Fax: 965-2249-7216

E-mail: s.singh@handlen.com

Contact: *Surinder Singh, Senior Trading Manager*

- **Top Real Estate Group**

Top Real Estate Group

P.O.Box 6258 Salmyia 22075

Kuwait

Tel: +965-2575 7871

Fax: +965-2575 7874

PR Agencies covering Kuwait (but with no offices in Kuwait)

- **Action Global Communications**

6 Kondilaki Street, 1090 Lefkosia

P.O. Box 24676, 1302 Lefkosia

Cyprus

Tel: +357 22 818884

Fax: +357 22 873633

E-mail: action@actionprgroup.com

- **Burson-Marsteller**

ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller

212 Spectrum Building,

Oud Metha Road, Dubai

P O Box 28063

Dubai

United Arab Emirates

Tel: (971) 4 3344550

Fax: (971) 4 3344556

- **Effect PR and Multimedia**

Kisikli Cad. No:37/B

34662 Altunizade

Istanbul, Turkey

Tel: 90-216-474-00-04

Fax: 90-216-474-00-01

- **Fleishman Hillard**

Fleishman-Hillard Abu Dhabi

TwoFour54 Media Zone

Building C11 - 1st Floor

Office No. 11

P.O. Box 77771

Abu Dhabi

United Arab Emirates

Tel: +971-2-401-2617

- **Headline Public Relations**

P.O. Box 841075

Zip Code 11184

Jordan

Tel: +96265528174

- **Lansons Communications**

24a St John Street

London

EC1M 4AY

Tel: +44 (0)20 7490 8828

E-mail: pr@lansons.com

- **M3D MediaCom**

Building 3, Ground Floor, Green Community, Dubai Investment Park

P.O. BOX: 212880, Dubai UAE

Tel: + 971 4 801-9252

Fax: + 971 4 801-9101

- **McGovern Public Relations**
20 St. Olaves Business Centre, Kinsealy , Malahide , Co. Dublin
E-mail: info@mcgovernpr.com
Tel: 01-8666102/3/4
- **Purple Cake Factory**
E-mail: sarah@purplecakefactory.com
Tel: +34 607 564 726
Contact: *Jake Riley*
- **Silver Thread Communications**
NThe Studio
76 Melody Road
London
SW18 2QF
Tel: 0208 8758444
E-mail: info@silverthreadpr.com
- **Sky Communications International**
The Diary House
Roxby Place
London SW6 1RU
Tel: 020 7385 6999
Fax: 020 7385 6888
E-mail: info@skycommunications.co.uk
- **Slice PR**
60 Great Portland Street
London
W1W 7RT
Tel: 020 3128 6600/6500
Fax: 020 3128 6501
E-mail: enquiries@slice.co.uk
Contact: *Nadia Gabbie, Managing Director*

- **The Brighter Group**

Kennedy House

115 Hammersmith Road

London W14 0QH

Tel: +44 (0) 207 603 2168

Fax: +44 (0) 207 603 2424

- **Tim Stanley PR**

2 Grange Court Road

Bristol, BS9 4DP

England, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 117 9625658

Mobile: +44 (0) 7779 129305

Fax: +44 (0) 8700 512047

E-mail: tim@timstanleypr.com.uk

- **Wriglesworth Consultancy**

1 Pemberton Row

London

EC4A 3BG

Tel: (020) 7427 1400

Fax: (020) 7427 1410

The Future of Public Relations

Role of Media

Kuwait's invasion in 1990 by Iraq impacted the country significantly. All aspects of the Kuwaiti lifestyle, including physical, cultural and political aspects, were affected. There was also a temporary shutdown of the country's media outlets. Following the invasion, Kuwait received economic assistance from its western allies enabling the country's rebuilding efforts of media facilities that were destroyed in the invasion. According to the Kuwait Constitution of 1991, freedom of press is guaranteed so long as it is within the limits of the law. Private media organizations are subject to sanctions by the government when in violation of news and publication laws, and it is especially true of press outlets dependant on state financial subsidies (Press Reference, 2009).

Kuwait publicly proclaims to have a free press and considers its prominence on the regional and international levels to be rising. For instance, on November 16, 2009, the Board Chairman and

Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Duaij Al-Sabah said, “The atmosphere of democracy and press freedom in the state of Kuwait has qualified it to win the first position at this level.” The chairman was referring to the success achieved by Kuwait’s mass media (Kuna Chief Commands..., 2009).” However, the media in Kuwait is heavily influenced by KUNA which is part of the country’s Ministry of Information. The goals of KUNA include providing objective news services by gathering news and distributing it to individuals and media outlets (Kuwait News Agency, 2009).

News Media

Most newspapers in Kuwait are privately owned and are free to express opinions. However, these organizations are also limited in the sense that it is not permissible to speak out against the government or Islam. Two major Arabic newspapers include Al-Rai Ala-Am, with a circulation of 87,000, and Al-Seyassah, with a circulation of 70,000. Some major Kuwaiti newspapers in English include the Kuwait Times, which has a circulation of 28,000, the Arab Times with a circulation of 42,000 and Kuwait Today. The Washington Post is also distributed in Kuwait as well (Press Reference, 2009).

Internet

As of March of 2008, there were a reported 900,000 Internet users in Kuwait representing 34.7% of the general population. This figure rose dramatically from just 150,000 Internet users, or just under 6% of the population in 2000 (Internet World Stats, 2009). This increase is significant as it illustrates increased comfort with and possibly increased access to the Internet. It also allows for the ability and possibility for a greater segment of the population to have access to a global community.

Social Media and Technology

Social media usage in Kuwait is on the rise. Facebook, a common social networking tool, is at the top of the social networking list in the country. It is a new forum for online discussion of political, social and philosophical issues as well as a way to reconnect with people. Its significance lies in the organization’s ability to be user-friendly and allow for a variety of users to interact regardless of age, race, ethnic, cultural or geographic boundaries. It has created an outlet and meeting space for the diversified population that is Kuwait (Etheridge, 2007).

Text messaging on mobile phones has dramatically increased in Kuwait in recent years. There is an expectation by experts that the “total value” of mobile phone messaging will exceed \$88 billion by 2012. With the increased texting practices of the Kuwaiti people, politicians have adopted this method of communication as a way to reach out to their constituents (Bulbanat, 2009).

Television and Radio

Television is a major medium used in Kuwait. As indicated in a study by the Arab Advisors Group, while 46.9% of Kuwaiti households watch terrestrial TV, 94.2% of households have satellite receivers. In another study by the same group, 84.5% of respondents said that they listen to the radio to a certain extent while 79.3% indicated that they listen to the radio on a daily basis (94.2% of Households..., 2007).

Media Listing

Ministry of Information: <http://www.moinfo.gov.kw> or <http://www.kuwait-info.com> in English

National Newspapers:

Al Qabas

Al Rai Al Aam

Al Seyassah

Al Watan

Local Newspapers

Al Dar

Al Ektesadia Al Jadida

Al Taleea

An Nahar

Arab Times

Arrouiah

Kuwait Times

Television Stations

Al-Rai TV first private TV, via satellite

Global Direct Television

Al-Resalah Television Station private, religious

Al Anwar TV

Al-Watan Satellite TV private

Al-Afasy Channel

Smile Television

Radio

Radio Kuwait - state-run, programming in English and Arabic

Marina FM - first private radio station, music-based

Magazines

Al-Mousaher

Murat al-Umma

Al Yaqza

Al-Mujtamaa

Al-Arabia

Al Forgan

Anhaar and Mishkat Al Rai

Al-Nahda

Al-Moukhtalef

OusratyAnnasHayataniaAl-Majales

Al-Balagh

Kuwait Magazine

Future Trends of Public Relations in Kuwait

The public relations landscape is rapidly changing. The International Public Relations Association – Gulf Chapter (IPRA – GC) explained that the change is occurring because of technology advancements, shifting geopolitical systems, media upheaval and the increasing velocity of global business. Today, directly being able to contact any almost any geographic landscape has forced companies to develop and a system that will eventually steer the direction of global public relations into new dimensions. Prestigious communications events discuss the relevance of what once were just theories. Public relations practitioners need to maintain their focus and position themselves strategically to prepare themselves and their agencies for adjustments and new risks in the global community (Kuwait Conference on..., 2008).

Communications has reached new heights. New tools, technologies and other emerging forms of media have created a new group of influencers. Future Communications Company Global K.S.C.C, based in Kuwait City, Kuwait, has been an inspiration for the Middle East and the world with its ever-expanding communications device services. The company has advanced mobile communications hardware, software and digital content delivery. It is involved in many aspects of the communications industry as well as the construction, installation, infrastructure and maintenance of networks, towers and technologies for broadband, wireless and wireline communications. The company operates in many countries throughout the Gulf region.

Established in 1996, Future Communications Company has grown at an impressive rate making real what might have once been thought of as communications impossibilities. With innovators like Future Communications Company, communications has and continues to rise to new levels.

Communications practitioners can now reach out and develop relationships crossing boundaries and borders that may have once been believed to be impossible to attain. They can interact with a variety of different audiences through a myriad of vehicles including via the emerging social media networks that are gaining increasing importance and prominence in the practice of public relations as a way to reach out to influencers (Future Communications Company, 2009).

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) acts as a conduit and translator for media from the Middle East region. The group serves to bring together western countries with the Middle East by providing social, political, religious and ideological commentary on Middle Eastern issues and trends as well as appropriate translations of media using Turkish, Arabic or Persian languages. The organization was founded in 1998 to provide information for the debate over United States policy positions and decisions in the Middle East. MEMRI is a nonpartisan, non-profit group with a headquarters in Washington, DC and branch offices in major cities across the world and the organization can be contacted at MEMRI P.O. Box 27837 Washington, DC 20038-7837 Phone: (202) 955-9070 Fax: (202) 955-9077 (MEMRI: The Middle..., 2009).

The future of public relations is no longer limited to geographical areas. The commitment to cross borders and lower all barriers is very real and evident. The idea of globalization was yesterday, and the goal of tomorrow is the need of businesses to understand publics and control messaging in order to operate successfully. The practice of public relations is paramount to attaining this goal, and seminars conducted by the IPRA – GC are offered throughout the year to ensure continued education and advancement (Kuwait Conference on..., 2008).

Click the link below for further details and upcoming events with the IPRA – GC:

http://www.ipra-gc.com/index.php?option=com_eventlist&view=details&id=8

- Jan 6, 2010 – March 4, 2010 [The International Public Relations World Congress](#)
- Feb 4, 2010 – April 2, 2010 [IPRA International Conference 2010](#)

Changes in the Governance of Corporations

Native Kuwaiti citizens are increasingly becoming a minority in the country. Less than half of the residents of Kuwait, at 45%, are native to the country (U.S. Department of State, 2009). There is a rising fear regarding this new placement among the minority of the population, and when contentious relationships with neighboring countries such as Iraq are taken into account, new and extremist policies and practices have been instituted in the country in an effort to assert nationalism and the rights of Kuwaiti nationals (Countries and Their..., 2009).

Kuwaitis are primarily concerned with honor, respect, and their reputation, prompting the prime minister of Kuwait to forge a new era for growth despite these hindering concerns. Kuwait holds itself accountable for setting the tone in many Middle Eastern business affairs. Forming extreme groups to tighten the nation's allegiance has allowed Kuwait to step up and lead the way in media advancement. As a representative to the United Nations General Assembly on September 26, 2009, Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said, "Let there be no doubt that the government of Kuwait shall continue exerting its efforts to advance economic and social conditions, and seek to fulfill all of the Millennium Development Goals even before the targeted date, which will provide a better life for its citizens." He also affirmed the importance of an anticipated project involving financial matters concerning the creation and use of a unified monetary currency in the Gulf region.

This stance puts Kuwait at the forefront of the Arab states. Even though the world is currently in an economic downward spiral and corporate governance has captured the front pages of the world's media, Kuwait continues to stay optimistic. In addition, Kuwait has also taken a stance against illegal drugs and their trade through a concerted national effort and with extensive regional collaboration. The Kuwaiti prime minister also affirmed that his country will continue to fulfill its commitments to aiding in the development and support of infrastructure projects in developing and lesser developed countries (Kuwait Urges Israel..., 2009).

The prime minister noted that Kuwait will also continue its contributions for project development through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. This group has provided assistance in an amount that exceeds \$14.5 billion to more than 100 countries. Kuwait is committed to initiatives designed to raise standards of living, decrease poverty rates in for individuals without basic necessities and to fuel economic growth via organizations such as the "Decent Living Fund" operating with a \$100 million capital or the \$300 million allotted to fight poverty in Africa through the Islamic Development Bank (Kuwait Vows to..., 2009).

With questions coming from influential shareholders and regulators, some significant changes that may be underway include the following issues as presented by Ray Lewis of Deloitte LLP during a Webcast on corporate governance:

- Board independence, classified boards, board committees, board leadership, board diversity, meetings and elections.
- Greater workloads and how directors are responding to them.
- An early review of the 2009 proxy season and the latest governance trends (The Latest Trends..., 2009).

The Role of Women: Gender Roles

The women of Kuwait have made substantial breakthroughs over the past decade, despite the fact that “both Kuwaiti custom and law enforce a division of labor by gender (Countries and Their..., 2009).” Women are pushing toward Western values and moving away from the traditional mindsets including the idea that it is against Islam for both sexes to intermingle on college campuses (Al-Khaled, 2008).

Even though women are liberating themselves through continuing education and university degrees, men still dominate the workforce. Few women are in management or own their own businesses. Kuwaiti women still do much of their work in their own homes. The women who are involved in the labor force though are striving toward greater accountability and trustworthiness in the workplace.

Western values and advancements are steadily mixing into the traditional Kuwaiti culture. For example, this is already apparent in feminine apparel. While many women wear traditional veils and traditional black, many others, especially from the younger generation are following trends more prevalent in Western culture. Via Kuwait’s exposure to communications from the Western world, the small country has begun to loosen up its more traditional restrictions. Women today openly campaign for the relaxation of social restrictions on females, more women’s rights and an increase in job opportunities (Countries and Their..., 2009).

Development of the Role of Women

The Kuwaiti democratic constitution in 1962 denied women the right to vote prompting the advocacy for women’s suffrage for nearly half a century. It was not until May 16, 2005 that women were finally able to participate in their country’s political system.

The first female cabinet member, Dr. Maasouma Al-Mubarak, was elected in June 2005 as the Minister of Planning. She was followed by the second woman, Nouriya Al-Subeeh, to become elected to a cabinet position as the Minister of Education in 2007. The 2006 elections were a monumental moment in the history of Kuwait. Although no women candidates were successful that year, women’s involvement in the campaign was fully supported by the majority of Kuwaiti citizens. Although Kuwait can be considered more advanced than many of the countries in Gulf area for many areas, it has lagged behind those same countries in the advancement of women’s rights.

The promotion of women’s rights does not end with winning the right to vote, but includes taking an active role in deciding the country’s future through the election of women into parliamentary office.

On May 17, 2009, four women were voted into parliamentary seats: Dr. Maasouma Al-Mubarak, Dr. Rola Dashti, Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi and Dr. Salwa Al-Jassar, all university graduates.

Kuwaiti women make up 70% of university students and 40% of the Kuwaiti workforce. They are present in all professional fields including education, medicine, business, journalism, banking and the government sectors.

Achievements of the Kuwaiti women are evident to the world. Sheikha Dr. Rasha Al-Sabah, member of the ruling family, has occupied the position of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education since 1994. In 1993, another Arab woman, Professor Fayza Al-Khorafi, was the first to be appointed as the Rector of an Arab University. In 2003, Dr. Modhi Al-Hamoud, was selected as Rector to lead and manage the Arab Open University, prior to the further advancement of her career as Minister of Housing and Development Affairs in 2008. Professor Fayza Al-Khorafi is currently the Minister of Education and Higher Studies for 2009. Within the media sector, Kuwait named its first female editor-in-chief, Bibi Al-Marzouq, of a thriving daily Kuwaiti newspaper named "Al-Anbaa (The Role of..., n.d.)."

This "civilized accomplishment," the Prime Minister said, "comes after Kuwaiti women achieved success in the fields of private enterprise, public, as well as private government work, including holding ministerial positions in the Kuwaiti Cabinet." He also said, "We express our pride and appreciation for the significant achievements of Kuwaiti women, and will continue to support their role as active partners in the political, economic and social arenas (Kuwait Urges Israel, 2009)."

Integration with Marketing and Advertising

Integration between advertising, marketing and public relations appears to work seamlessly in Kuwait. The practice of "integrated marketing communications," elusive to agencies in the United States, is customary for public relations and advertising agencies in Kuwait. In Kuwait, marketing, advertising and public relations are seen as one silo with media being the conduit to connect and communicate the intended messages of the product, service or institution. Unlike the conventional approach in the United States, advertising and public relations are not seen as separate efforts or elements competing for budgets or resources. Instead, marketing and advertising are described as the "main functions of PR." They serve as vehicles to provide information, facts, "alarm messages" or spread the clients' goodwill.

Dr. Ahmed Al Sheriff, Tutor of Media and Public Relations at Kuwait University, explained the role of public relations as "an administrative position that seeks management of communications between the foundation and its public to build positive relations based on mutual understanding,

trust and continuity of this relation through scientific procedures of PR.” As such, the goals of marketing, advertising and public relations are intertwined (Public Relations, the..., n.d.).

Looking at the online marketing kits of some Kuwaiti communications agencies, namely Headline Public Relations, Rawaj and The Azak Group among others, integration of marketing and public relations functions are noticeably present. These companies offer event planning, competitive research, strategic marketing mix and public affairs and even exhibition management as a holistic approach to a potential client’s plan.

Public relations, a separate industry seems to have taken more concrete shape after the year 2000 with the opening of Dubai Media City, a free zone dedicated to media. According to Sunil John, CEO of ASDA’A Burson-Marsteller in Dubai, new independent public relations agencies are being established as part of the response by media agencies to foreign collaborations and multinational investments in the region (International Public Relations, 2009).

A perception of the importance of marketing campaigns and public relations as an essential cost of doing business is beginning to increase in Kuwait. Public relations has begun to acquire a perception as a tool having the “outstanding ability” to communicate the required message in a cost-effective manner (Middle East Spends..., 2009).

Measurement Tools

Some of the measurement tools mentioned by public relations companies and academic articles include:

1. Output Measurement: For this purpose considered the number of articles published or impressions achieved. Other measurements also mentioned include the number of hits to websites, data and reach and frequency or electronic media.
2. Strategic measurement: Finding which message has been communicated most effectively by which medium and journalists or source.
3. Outcome measurement: For this purpose considered the impact on consumer (target audience) attitudes or relationships. Other measurements include the number of inquiries generated by coverage.
4. Surveys – Pre and post campaign direct research (Headline Public Relations..., 2008).

Although it is not clear how widespread the use of measurement tools as indicators of campaign effectiveness, two recent conferences on public relations measurement took place in the region. One was sponsored by News Group International and another one by the Middle East Public

Relations Association (MERPA). Both conferences focused on ways to evaluate public affairs and government PR campaigns introducing the latest concepts and methodologies for measurement (News Group International..., 2009; Arya & Hamadeh, 2009).

As Dr. Ahmed Al-Sheriff from the University of Kuwait also emphasized in a recent interview evaluation is the “main factor of successful planning and making right decisions (Public Relations the..., n.d.).”

The Influence of More Students Graduating With Certified Degrees

Given the growth of the public relations industry in Kuwait, there is a documented need for well trained graduates in the region. Many sources agree on the lack of properly trained or experienced professionals and the need for dedicated college programs tailored for public relations study. Most universities in the region offer a bachelor’s degree in Mass Communications however public relations is only offered as a major. Given the lack of formal training opportunities, many of the professionals currently working in the industry have been trained in marketing and advertising, not necessarily specifically in public relations.

As more students graduate with certified degrees in public relations, the industry as a whole will improve. There is a need to “provide training for public relations staff and seek young talent with excellent communication and writing skills to develop public relations services in the region to the highest international standards (Middle East Spends..., 2009).” The lack of proper training of public relations professionals will negatively impact the growth and internalization of the public relations industry in Kuwait (Public Relations, the..., n.d.).

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The Global Alliance is always interested in cooperating with local institutions and associations to provide profiles of the social, economic and media context of member countries, along with details on the local public relations industry, its main activities and tips on successful local practice.

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