



The Television Legacy of the State of Kuwait: An Interview Narratives of Pioneers lived Experience

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Abstract:

This qualitative study of in-depth interviews is sought to record a credible witness on the history of television in Kuwait. From its establishment in late 50s, Kuwait television faced many challenges in different stages. The early initiation shortage of professional broadcasting staff and gear were the major obstacles the government had faced. These serious problems forced the government in the 70s to invest on human resources through education abroad to fulfill the specialization needed to meet television-broadcasting standards. The fruitful result of this policy appeared from 1980 to 1995 marking with the specialization in drama series and programs that levied Kuwait image among the Arab States. However, when this policy started to fade, the stage of 1996 until nowadays showed the decline of Kuwait identity starting with the emergence of more satellite specialized channels.

Keywords: Kuwait Television, Grounded Theory, Arabian Gulf, Media challenges

Introduction

Television plays a major role in people's lives around the world. From inception, this medium has successfully grabbed vast audiences due to its unique way of providing information, news, education, and entertainment via sound and moving imagery to every household home (Lee et al., 2022). During WWII, governments used press, radio, film, and television to promote propaganda and persuade people to believe in certain agendas (Jowett & O'donnell, 2018). For example, the Nazis used TV and film to set their agenda against their enemies and change public perceptions about war (Sutter, 2008).

According to Ami Ayalon (1995) Arab and Muslim communities used to practice Communication many centuries ago in the forms of gatherings, bazaars and congregations during the Islamic dynasty, but the utilization of full mass communication means was exploited in the Arab world by the mid 20th century. This late utilization was due to the colonization era that limited the freedom of Arabs. In the late 1950s, few Arab states had television stations that used the new medium for the goals of the authoritarian regimes at that time. Iraq was the first Arab country to inaugurate a TV station in 1956 served for entertainment and spread of Al-Baath party ideologies (Boyd, 1999). The first private TV station in the Arab states was launched in Lebanon then in 1960 Egypt started television broadcasting station, but regulated by the government (Boyd, 1999).

The Arab world adapted the black and white technology in the early 1960s (Hafez, 2006). Most of the Arab States used the new medium for propaganda purposes and less of entertainment. For example, during the Abdul Nasser rule in Egypt, radio and TV promoting Arab Nationalism through its programming (Kraidy, 2002). In the Arabian Gulf, Kuwait Television was the first Arab country to broadcast in 1957 via a private small station (Dashti et al., 2022; Sakr, 1999). The advancements of technology enhanced TV expansion globally via the advent of satellites, cable and computers which enhance not only the capability of television but also the quality of sound and picture to better serve the audience. Countries around the world strived to establish a reputable station because it is a sign of a well-developed country and a reflection of its culture. The Gulf War in 1991 introduced satellite TV to the Arab region, specifically in the Gulf States (Hafez, 2006; Kiffer, 2022). CNN's broadcasting of the war inspired countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia to broadcast via satellite to gain a larger audience.

Today, people have global access to hundreds of television stations. The proliferation of satellite TV channels both in the private and public sectors make it very hard for a station to compete regionally and globally. This paper will explore the history and initiation of a TV station in the Middle Eastern country of Kuwait to examine the impact of Kuwait Television on the rest of the Arab world plus the Gulf States countries. No scholarly work found examining the history of Kuwait television from the perspective of television staff creators.

The emergence of different communication media such as press, radio, TV and the Internet facilitated a big leap for human communication (Wheeler, 2000; Wolff & Shen, 2022). One of the major characteristics of television is its propinquity to people as well as its power to stir the audience's perception and emotions. Many Western scholars have examined different aspects of television such as violence and used theories like cultivation, framing, and agenda setting to decipher the power of television (McQuail & Windahl, 2015; Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

Unfortunately, in Kuwait, researchers have neglected the importance of oral history in documenting the history of Kuwait Television. Few researchers have focused on the Kuwaiti perception of TV programming and their viewing habits (Al-Failakawi, 2005; Al-Menayes, 1996; Mesbah, 2005; Mohammad, 1999; Saleh, 2003). This study is significant because no literature review or previous work has documented the history and the development of Kuwait Television, which is important since Kuwait was the pioneer of broadcast TV in the Arabian Gulf region. This work connects the available data of Kuwait television from its infancy to the present and serves as a valuable reference for future work on television in Kuwait. The researcher conducted in-depth

interviews with prominent staff, directors, and administrators at Kuwait Television to gain insights about the station's history.

Study Background

Kuwait's existence on world maps dates back to 1709 (Abdulmeati, 2004). In 1899, Kuwait signed a protection and international representation agreement with Britain to secure the country from potential threats from the south and north (Mohammad, 1999). This made the country a British colony. During this period, Kuwait was mainly a commercial port for business travel, which made the country economically important in the Gulf area. In 1938, oil was discovered, and it helped Kuwait move forward into modernity. The ruling Al-Sabah family, especially during the ruling of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, used the oil revenues to build Kuwait's infrastructure, boosting the country's quality of life. Life was improved in Kuwait when it gained independence from Britain in 1961 (Assiri, 1990).

Kuwait is a small Arab state located in the Arabian Gulf region. The country's total distance from north to south is 124 miles and 106 miles from east to west (O'Shea & Spilling, 2010). Kuwait is a semi-democratic country with Arabic as its official language. Since the primary religion in Kuwait is Islam, the civil law is based on Islamic tenets, while criminal law is not. Kuwait has nine islands scattered in the Arabian Gulf. Two of the islands, Bubiyan and Faylaka, are rich with oil reserves. Kuwait has a harsh desert climate and the majority of its inhabitants live in the cities. Kuwait's land is categorized as desert with an abundance of oil reserves (Zahlan, 2016). Kuwait has a population of 4.5 million in which one and a half million of these are Kuwaitis (PACI, 2022).

The country's capital, Kuwait City, embraces its history and future. It has many Western amenities like museums, malls, restaurants, and state-of-the-art beach resorts along with historical buildings such as Dar Al-Sadow and old Souks that reveal the country's history. Many people reside around a coastal belt which is about six miles. The population lives in certain residential zones depending on their tribal identity, race, and religion (O'Shea & Spilling, 2010).

Education in Kuwait dates back to 1920 when children used to go to Mullas (a religious person teaching Quran), but the government took control of the education system in 1936 and established two schools. This number increased in 1958 to 19 schools in which 30,000 students are enrolled. Today, the education system's enrollment is over 500,000. As education is free to all in the country, Kuwait has the highest human development tier of educated people in the Arab world with literacy rates above 93%, (Al-Muhtaseb, 2020).

The economic prosperity from oil revenues ushered progress into many aspects of Kuwaiti life, including Kuwait Television. Kuwait's open media and press privatization encouraged the establishment of diverse sectarian, liberal, and conservative newspapers alongside private TV stations. Kuwait currently has 15 daily newspapers two of them targeting English speakers. There are also 70 magazines published in the country. However, there are several online news sites who should obtain online licenses from the Ministry of Information. There are also nine government-owned radio channels and two private radio stations. There are nine government TV channels and more than 10 private TV channels with various programs such as news, sports, tourism, music, religion, and entertainment (Alsalem, 2021; Khayrallah, 2017).

Scholars' Work on Kuwait

Assiri (1990) examined the foreign policy history of Kuwait and its role in the international community since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1961. The author analyzed how policy making in Kuwait was shaped by internal and external events such as the forming of a national parliament, the Iranian revolution, the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s, and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990. Assiri explained how the impact of religion, culture, and ethnic groups on Kuwaiti identity created Kuwait's high foreign policy profile. On the other hand, Joyce (2014) studied Kuwait's history since 1894, along with the major events that took place in the surrounding areas. The author presented how Kuwait was formed and the long history of neighboring

governments attempting to take over the country. Joyce (2014) described the wardrobe of Kuwaiti men and women as well as the country's climate, way of living, and topography. The author stated that, in the early 1900s, the Kuwaiti economy depended on pearl diving, building ships, and the trading of spices. The author stated that Kuwait's importance to the West was an illustration of its power during the British Empire. This British strength was later replaced by American power due to the country's oil abundance.

Abdulmoati (2004) traced Kuwait's history to 1709. The author presented some European travelers' accounts on Kuwait to support the idea that it was, at that time, an independent country. According to Abdulmoati (2004), Kuwait was a major market for sea travelers and caravans affirming that the Al-Sabah family's rule in Kuwait has been a mutual agreement between the ruler and citizens, which has bonded Kuwaitis during poverty and prosperity. Cordesman (2018) focused briefly on the history of Kuwait, tracing its existence through the early 1700s. The author focused on the importance of Kuwait to the United States. Cordesman (2018) stated that Kuwait is a major key player in future oil production and will supply the commodity to the world as it holds 9.7% of all global reserves. The author highlighted two challenges that face Kuwait: the constant threats of Saudi Arabia and Iraq and the discovery of oil wealth, which has made the country more enemies in the area. Cordesman (2018) thoroughly analyzed various aspects of Kuwait such as its economy, oil production, its military and naval forces, national security, and the strength of its government in facing future challenges. The author provided some important strategies to boost the economy, security, and labor force in Kuwait. Cordesman (2018) held that Kuwait will not be able to defend itself without the help of United States, which is why a ten-year defense treaty was signed after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. The author also pointed out that Kuwait allows more freedom of speech and expression than other Middle Eastern countries.

Television Studies in Kuwait

Al-Menayes (1996) conducted a survey of 359 people in Kuwait to measure their TV watching habits. The author found that 73% of the participants watched TV daily and 95% of them consumed 2.5 hours of TV daily. He stated that only 13% of the respondents tuned into Kuwait Television while 68% watched other satellite channels such as the Middle East Broadcasting Center. Alhasan (1996) examined the role of media in Kuwait in women's suffrage and pointed out that education and media are the main factors to enfranchising women in Kuwait. The researcher recommended that the Kuwaiti government implement more public awareness campaigns to advance women's rights in Kuwait through the government own television. Saleh (2003) examined Arabic and English newscasts of Kuwait TV for two months in 1998. The author found that Kuwait television newscasts suffered a lack of audience viewership due to the old and unappealing format of the news that needs to be updated to follow the rest of the big news networks. Saleh (2003) suggested ideas to improve and attract more viewers by changing the newscast format, presentation, and style.

Mohammad (1999) conducted interviews with Kuwait Television managers and surveyed 400 Kuwaitis to understand their television viewing habits. The author also presented the programming strategy of Kuwait Television and its four TV stations. He found no previous data for measuring the audience of Kuwait Television. The only rating system in the country was newspaper articles. Dashti and Dashti (2001) conducted a survey study on 40 female students from mass communication department at Kuwait University to see their perception regarding working Kuwait Television following the graduation. The study found that 72% of the participants believed that women would achieve high positions in media in the future. The majority of the of the respondents agreed in order to attain high media positions women need to give up their time, perceptions, money and marriage to accomplish that goal. Mesbah (2005) conducted an experimental study on 120 college students to compare the effect of print media versus electronic media. News stories were presented to four groups. The author concluded that the written news had a much greater effect on the participants than did televised news.

Al-Failakawi (2005) examined the viewing behaviors of Kuwait Television viewers before, during, and after watching television. The author discovered that Kuwaiti viewers were passive viewers, and watching television was considered a social activity. Wheeler (2000) examined the growth of new media technology and its impact on Kuwaiti culture. Wheeler looked at people's use of satellite TV and the Internet and movie habits to measure the effect of globalization on national identity. The author found that the penetration of several foreign media in Kuwait impacted the Kuwaiti lifestyle as people tended to watch international TV channels rather than the national station. Wheeler (2000) added that globalization and new technologies helped Kuwaitis to expose their identity to the world.

Such previous research has mainly focused on audience research aspects such as viewing habits and Kuwait Television's appeal to the audience. Scholars wanted to get the perceptions of people on television viewing (Al-Failakawi, 2005; Al-Menayes, 1996; Mohammad, 1999); while other researchers (Mesbah, 2005; Saleh, 2003; Wheeler, 2000) examined the local and foreign programming effect, memory recall, and its appeal to the participants. Unfortunately, most of the work neglected to history of Kuwait television station.

Kuwait Television

According to Boyd (1999) the first local broadcast in Kuwait was in 1957 by a local Kuwaiti merchant with a small broadcasting station of 10 kilowatts. The station broadcasted only imported cartoons and movies. The late Amir of Kuwait Sheik Abdullah Alsaleem Al-Sabah issued a decree to transfer control of the station to the state under the umbrella of the Ministry of Information on November 15, 1961. Following the state's gaining control; the Almutlaa transmission station was established to transmit the broadcast to the whole state of Kuwait. At the time, the station broadcast for four hours every day. On March 15, 1974, Kuwait Television began to broadcast in color. The Ministry of Information complex was established in February 17, 1979, equipped with the most advanced broadcasting and production technology at the time to improve the variety of programs produced. These new shows included documentaries, drama, Arabic local series, cultural programming, and cartoons. The establishment of the TV complex allowed the station to broadcast 16 hours per day.

KTV2 was launched in December of 1978. Kuwait Television Station 2, the English-speaking channel, began broadcasting four hours a day and aimed to provide non-Arabic speakers with information, news, entertainment, and exposure to Kuwaiti culture. KTV3, the sports channel, debuted in 1991. It initially provided the audience with live and recorded local and international sporting events with an average daily broadcast time of 10 hours. KTV4, the late-night channel, started in 1993. KTV4 offers Arabic programming, and the operation hours are midnight to 7 AM daily. Kuwait Satellite Channel is the same as KTV1, but it broadcasts via the Arabsat satellite network to a global audience. It began with only four hours of daily programming then merged with KTV1 to increase its broadcasting hours. Now, all KTV stations broadcast via Nilsat, Arabsat and Galaxy networks and operate 24/7. Lately, there has been a slight change with the addition of three more stations Athra Channel which is specialized in religious programming and runs 24 hours. Al-Arabi Channel is the latest station added to KTV package which specialized in documentary programming along with Kuwait Drama channel.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a research method that is used in qualitative research to systematically arrive at a theory rather than focusing on a particular hypothesis (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is accredited to two sociologists, Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). This methodology allows for the theory to emerge from the data collected. Instead of approaching the study with a preconceived perspective, the researcher allows the data collected to begin to unfold and a theory or theories to emerge. Grounded theory is an emergent theoretical perspective involving a formation of theory after an analysis of the data collected

(Charmaz, 2014). The researcher used grounded theory to consider the outsider status that a researcher may hold. It enables the people that are participating in the research to have their own voice and perspective and to use an inductive perspective in approaching the research. In accordance with grounded theory there are several steps to be followed: (1) simultaneous collection and analysis of data (2) creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data and not by pre-existing conceptualizations (theoretical sensitivity) (3) discovery of basic social processes in the data (4) inductive construction of abstract categories (5) theoretical sampling to refine categories (6) writing analytical memos as the stage between coding and writing (7) the integration of categories into a theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded Theory acknowledges that researchers are a part of the research process and do not need to try being objective but acknowledge through notes and other documentation their thoughts and opinions throughout the process. The final findings were a compilation of the researchers' notes, perspectives and the interviews data collected.

Research Questions

The study asks three research questions:

RQ1: What were the major challenges encountered Kuwait Television's launch?

RQ2: What were the major accomplishments of Kuwait Television reflected the country's identity?

RQ3: How Kuwait Television perceives the future challenges such as privatization and new technology?

Methodology

This study used in-depth interviews to examine the history and the accomplishments of Kuwait Television during the past 50 years. Information from the interviews is used to document and provide more behind-the-scenes accounts of how KTV developed locally, regionally, and globally. The interviews occurred in different locations in Kuwait City. The subjects of the study were pioneers who worked in Kuwait television station.

Participants

Population demographics of this study were active and retired staff, employees, and administrators of Kuwait Television. Kuwait TV is under the umbrella of the Ministry of Information and currently employs more than 10,000 men and women. The participant varies in ages from 30-80 years old. The researcher focus looked for pioneers in the televising who contributed at least 10 years of their lives to any of the KTV television stations in Kuwait. 13 people agreed to participate in a qualitative semi-structured interview study all of them were Kuwaiti citizens. Six of the participants were involved from the inception of KTV while the rest joined at different times such as the late 70s, 80s and 90s. It appears to be no size in qualitative studies. Some researchers' reports describe single person studies. 13 respondents would supply varied and detailed accounts needed to meet the purpose of this study. The participants were: Rida Al Feeli¹, an assistant chief manager of Annhar newspaper in Kuwait. Started as a radio anchor and was recruited to KTV in 1961 to present programs besides supervising programs. Al Feeli graduated with a B.A from Columbia University in 1973 a year later earned master's degree from USC in mass communication. He held many different positions in Kuwait television station that highest rank was the assistant undersecretary of television affairs. Ahmad Albagshi² a pioneer TV director joined the establishment in late 1960 worked in different positions. Hashim Alshakhs³ dropped high school in 1962 and joined TV as a camera man. His hobby was painting and cinematography, so TV was the closest his passion. Al Ashakhs Worked in the studio for several years then moved to the cinema department and pursued his three years cinematic degree from BBC. He produced many documentaries in black and white and few in color. Fakri Ouda⁴ a graduate from institute of performing arts in Kuwait in 1928 worked in several plays and drama series such as *Darb Alzalag*. Ouda held many different positions in KTV from program coordination to manager of Kuwait TV channel four. Majed AlShatti⁵ started working in 1969 as an anchor for news in both radio and TV. Retired in 2012 and became a certified trainer and coach for the art of television anchoring. Ali Alrayes⁶ joined Kuwait television in 1972 with a high school diploma then pursued a

telecommunication degree and a minor in cinema from University of Oregon. Alrayes held many positions in KTV the highest was the under secretary of Television Affairs in 2012.

Hassan Boftain⁷ joined in 1979 after graduation from high school. Boftain worked as video operator and retired with the title of chief of video department at KTV. Ahmad Hassan⁸ entered television in 1995 as PR then worked in different jobs until reaching production supervisor at KTV2. Kazim Khaja⁹ joined KTV2 in 1992 as an assistance director and reached a production director position in the English Channel. Khaja worked in many live and recorded programs. Ahmad Ashkanani¹⁰ worked for 20 years in KTV2 as executive producer, Marzoog AlAzmi¹¹ 21 years of work experience at KTV2 as video operator and 10 years as supervisor for social media department. Shaker Al Ali¹² spent 20 years in ministry of information between radio and TV station. Finally, Hussain Shishtary¹³ joined the studio engineering department at KTV in 2001 supervising live shows for several well-known programs such as *Good Moring Kuwait* and *Kids Television* that runs daily.

Procedures and Measurement

All participants were engaged in an in-depth interview between 40-75 minutes in length. The researcher asked a series of questions about working for the stations and various demographics. Each participant was provided with an informed consent statement, noting that participation in the study is voluntary and there are no penalties or consequences for refusing to complete the interview. Moreover, a written and a verbal consent were taken from each participant of the study prior to the end of the interview.

Pretest

Preceding the administration of the in-depth interview, the researcher have pretested the instrument with an oral history professor and one PhD student in journalism and mass communication at southern university. A set of several questions were developed and examined for efficiency in answering the research questions. Eventually, 15 items were identified and added to the interview question list. Some of the interviews were in Arabic, so the researcher translated the questions into English via a certified translation company for authenticity and to make sure no meaning will be lost within translation.

Instrument Design

The first phase of the study was mainly searching period for Kuwait TV pioneers. Several phone calls were made to Kuwait television managers to help identify some of these people. Eventually, 20 characters were identified, but only 15 were available for the study because of maturation and sickness. The semi structured in depth interviews, which took from 40 to 75 minutes were audio taped and transcribed. Some start up questions were asked to initiate the conversation with the subjects, followed by questions, such as “what are the obstacles that you encountered during the early stages of Kuwait television?” also added questions, such as “what was the major accomplishment of KTV?” in addition, to questions such as” how do you see the future of Kuwait television”. The researcher purpose was to learn the history of Kuwait television.

Data analysis methods

All the in-depth interviews were transcribed and read by the researcher for coding. The grounded theory was used in approaching data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The in-depth interviews were audiotaped and transcribed then inserted into a qualitative software analysis ATLAS.ti. Three category headings were generated from the data. These categories were the early challenges for Kuwait television establishment, the major accomplishment of KTV and the perception of the future challenges to maintain superiority. Overall, respondents in this study attributed valuable information.

Findings

The respondent’s findings were decoded into three categories according to the study research questions. These categories were the early challenges for Kuwait television establishment, the major accomplishment of KTV and the perception of the future challenges to maintain superiority.

Early challenges

All respondents agreed that the reason behind the establishment of Kuwait television was to create a voice of the state of Kuwait to counter the Iraqi regime claims at that time and to present the sovereignty of the state therefore, the need to a television station was necessary since the country was developing rapidly. Al Feeli stated:

The history of broadcasting in Kuwait was initiated by Mr. Murad Behbahani in 1957. He was the dealer for RCA merchandise mostly selling RCA radios. RCA Mother Company gave him a small TV broadcasting station that can reach a radius of 30 kilometers. It was a tele-cinema broadcasting black and white cartoons. The station had one camera in the studio used to film his kids playing and singing for about an hour to two hours. The late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah purchases the station from the merchant and 1st government broadcast began on 15th of November 1961.

RQ1 asked what were the major challenges encountered Kuwait Television's launch? All the respondents agreed that there were few challenges during the establishment of Kuwait television. Some of these challenges were the shortage of staff, no hands-on experience on the broadcasting technology, no specialization and primitive studio sets such as tents, Al Shakhs stated:

We were about 20 staff members only. Equipment was available, but no experience in working those machines. Most of the people had middle school or high school degrees. Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad the minister of guidance and news at that time brought an engineer Andera Castelot from Netherlands and an Egyptian engineer abdu-salam khaleel and a technician from India to help in the broadcast. Camera men, Camera control unit and the rest of the crew were Kuwaitis. Our broadcast was live we didn't have a machine recorder at that time some amazing work was not recorded unfortunately. We broadcast for 3 hours only, later we started to add more hours by putting more programming such as news.

Most of the respondents pointed out that the work in early stages was more of a collaborative multitask teamwork, as well as the programming was thoroughly examined to make sure that meets up with the Kuwaiti culture needs and values. Al Feeli added:

The broadcast was very limited, we started right after sunset then played cartoons, a movie and we closed by 9:00 p.m. later, we started to gather footage of Local news in Kuwait that shows the Amir and the rest of the government officials, but since we only used film in our production the developing of the reels were sent outside Kuwait either to Iran or Lebanon which it took two days later to broadcast. In the 60s, we started to implement political shows. Such as Know Your Enemy hosted by myself. Another one was called the Convoy of Literature hosted by a Palestinian anchor. Then we added local drama series and imported Egyptian/ American films.

The reason behind Kuwait television early launch challenges that most respondent agreed upon were that television was a new trend for Kuwait culture imposed itself in certain way and people adapted it. Al Ouda stated:

Only elite's people in old Kuwait used to have TV sets because it was a new technology and not affordable price wise. An estimated 50 TV sets where available at that time. We had the resources to acquire technology but with no experience available on ground, so we had to get some broadcasting experience from some Arab countries such as Egypt. This was not a challenge, but it was an advantage that opened the door to initiate programs to help the Kuwaiti staff to get the TV experience needed for that period.

Kuwait TV major accomplishment

RQ2 addressed the major accomplishments of Kuwait Television, All the respondents agreed that the administration had a clear vision to present Kuwait in the best and brightest image possible. Al Baqshi stated:

In 1963, the Minister of Information Shiekh Jaber Al-Ali Al Sabah started to invest in educating the television staff to build a solid broadcast foundation. For example, he sent Mohammad Al-Sanosi, Rida Al-Feeli and many other colleagues to training programs in Independent TV in UK then to the U.S to pursue their mass communication degrees in addition to Attending festivals and showrooms for media and broadcast worldwide.

Other respondents suggested that the tremendous support of Kuwait television administration through the abroad education sponsorship and the commitment to afford the latest technology boosted the image of the state television in the Middle East. Al Shakhs stated:

In 1963 Kuwait TV bought a mobile truck which started a revolution. Celebrities started to flood to Kuwait just to be recorded and seen by people. We were the only station with OB truck till early 1970; No one could afford three million dollars broadcasting truck at that time. Kuwait television Started to embrace the famous celebrities from all different aspects such as Eastern singers like Om Kalthoum, Abdulhaleem Hafez and even American Stars like Mohammad Ali Clay. In very short period, Kuwait television became a beacon for all Arab states. For example, Kuwait TV had a branch in Dubai, UAE Before any TV station in United Arab Emirates.

The rapid development of Kuwait Television had a big impact on the emergence of many different institutions such as Kuwait Kids Theatre, The National Theatre, the Arabic theatre, and the Kuwaiti Drama Series helped to shape a great image of Kuwait around the Arab States countries. Al Ouda adds:

Luckily, I used to work in the marketing department, and I used to travel everywhere from Saudi to Qatar, Bahrain then move to Dubai and end up in Sudan. We used to have a very collaborative effort in production to present Kuwait with the best image within the Middle East.

According to most of the respondents the 70s was the major milestone for Kuwait television or as it called the Golden Age with its production such as *Darb AlZalag*, *Sinbad the Sailor* and many other drama series which impacted the Gulf region and introduced the Kuwaiti dialect to other Arab countries. Albagshi stated:

TV was producing its own work in one big studio for everything. Game shows like With the Students, programs like Mama Anisa and the Kids and drama series such as *Darb Al Zalag* which no other work can match them even nowadays production. Because in the old days we put very big effort in the script writing, shooting, song composition, passion for the work and we considered the TV medium as mainly for education and informative tool that translates the society's needs.

Kuwait television Future challenges

RQ3 answers the future challenges for Kuwait television. Regarding this question there were some variances in answers from the respondents. But all respondents believe that Kuwait television lost its identity due to two decades of random employment, cronyism(nepotism) and government regulations that eradicates staff's creativity. Kuwait TV superiority in the Arab region took a halt and it would need serious decision implementation. Al Feeli stated:

Since we started the TV, we left out a big thing a training center in KTV in order to prepare the staff. The role of training is important to keep up the television station survives. These talents from the old generation kept KTV surviving because the decision makers at the time had a clear vision and invested

on their staff in the most prestigious broadcasting university around the world. The way to revive the place is to be an independent organization away from the government umbrella for both TV and radio. We started to have repetition of programming and we need to re consider the whole system in terms of the Ministry of Information in every aspect. The vision of Kuwait television unfortunately is still vague. To be pioneer in the region there are tools, right roads and up to date right tools.

Other respondents pointed out that Kuwait TV started to shift away from the society needs and became only a tool for bad drama series that reflects a bad image on Kuwait culture overall. Al Rayis stated:

If KTV didn't compete in the right way the same as the rest of the Gulf tv stations and respect work ethics, the audience will put the station on the shelf. Nowadays, we have hundreds of stations, we need to present the knowledge, the values, and the identity to present values that helps the citizen to love his country and be proud of his culture. For example, Kuwait drama series is not like before now lots of violence, exaggerations and bad images that goes against our traditions, while old times it was aimed at certain problem and solution for the society.

All respondents agreed that Kuwait television challenges are different especially with the availability of hundreds of TV stations with a click way from the audience finger tips. The respondents offered many recommendations to help strengthen Kuwait television image. One respondent stated:

Nowadays, we have all the resources, but we need researchers to translate the society's need into programs. We need creativity in terms of programs. So, research is the backbone to advance our TV. We lack this vital component. We used to be pioneers in Kuwait because no competition around us. Now the competition is fierce, and viewers can always find an alternative. We need to redesign the structure KTV organization very carefully in order to be successful.

On the other hand, the respondents pointed out that Kuwait TV needs to solve the internal problems to boost the image, embrace the talents that left the station and implement professionalism values to the station. One respondent stated:

The challenge in Ministry of Information is the finance department which doesn't understand TV work and don't support the production of KTV. We are under government regulations many people started to interfere in TV production and the vision. The government random employment without the right TV experience affects the TV widely. Specialization is important in our environment. TV is the window to the Kuwaiti society, we are facing a big challenge these days which is the depression of the staff, no creativity with the rules that we must abide. So how come we can present a good image for the people. We need to have a long-term vision that translate the present and the future for our country to boost no to slow down development. The future for TV is to be an organization not controlled by the government.

In terms of the privatization challenge to Kuwait television, most of the respondents agreed that the trend of private channels in Kuwait will have minimal impact during the short run, but for the long run these stations will vanish because most of them don't have a marketing strategy that helps to generate the funds needed while KTV is government funded. One respondent stated:

Privatization is not going to work in Kuwait, the new emerged stations will eventually bankrupt. All of them had a good start with the help of our staff, who migrated from KTV, but in the long run I see those channels as a cheap media, and they will be exposed soon.

Discussion & Conclusion

The finding of the study presents the three categories that shaped the overall Kuwait television. These categories were the early challenges for Kuwait television establishment, the major accomplishment of KTV and the perception of the future challenges to maintain superiority. The respondent's view toward the obstacles in the early initiation of Kuwait television presented a justified rationale since Kuwait was in the developing stages in the early 60's. This supports Assiri's statement that Kuwaiti life quality improved after gaining independence (1990). The lack of staff and experience helped Kuwait to outsource these skills abroad as well as introduce the country to more fruitful broadcasting relations. For example, one respondent stated:

The lack of experience was not a challenge and an advantage because we initiated training programs to help the Kuwait staff to get the TV experience needed for that period in the Arab countries like Egypt and the west such as the United Kingdom.

The second category of findings shows that Kuwait television investment in the education of its staff created a very talented group that elevated the image of the state television in the Middle East and gave the opportunity to initiate other institutions to support the work of television like theatres and cinema production. A good example from one respondent stating:

When Kuwait television started to embrace the famous celebrities from different places, big artistic names started to educate and build the foundation of artistic institutions in Kuwait such as Hamdi Fareed, Mohamad sharabi in drama directing and Zaki Toleemat the father of Kuwait theatre.

The last category revealed how the participants perceive Kuwait TV future among the new development in technology and the enormous TV stations competition in the Arab world. All respondents revealed the disappointment of Kuwait television retreat and identity lost starting from the 1990 because of the random political employment, the cronyism (nepotism), the loss of professionalism and government restrictions, which do not encourage creativity. All respondents agreed that some serious decision making need to take place in order to keep the train of Kuwait television advancement among the big competition. Some of them blamed the government control while others saw that audience research is missing from Kuwait television, which can help to gain its superiority again if the programming meets the audience needs and desires. One respondent stated:

We need a committee from all government sectors with young intellect mentality to help come up with plan to bring awareness to the people and present programs that satisfy Kuwait culture needs in order to embed the good citizenship for our generations and sustain the past stable image for Kuwait television which was the compass of society in the early days.

Respondents in this study identified several obstacles during the beginning of Kuwait television such as lack of experience, multitasking and shortage of staff. While identified the major accomplishment of the station during the early 70s with the drama series production. The respondents revealed a big concern about the future of television and offered several suggestions to regain Kuwait television past glory.

The researcher finding analysis of the respondent's insight concluded that Kuwait television went through different stages since establishment. The early initiation in the 1960s marked with staff recruitment and broadcasting equipment needed for the station. The 1970 has marked with the investment of human resources in abroad education to fulfill the specialization needed to meet television-broadcasting standards. The stage of 1980 to 1995 was marked with the specialization in drama series and programs that imposed Kuwait image among the Arab states. The stage of 1996 until 2022 showed the decline of Kuwait identity starting with the emergence of more satellite channels and bad programming content. These stages can sum the whole history of Kuwait television.

Limitations and future studies

There were many limitations to this study the sampling was very hard to get because most of them participant were retired or deceased. The lack of literature review on media in the Arab world limited the study significance. Future studies can examine each stage of Kuwait television history and analyze the role of specialization in broadcasting in Kuwait or the effect of political random employment in the Kuwait television.

المستخلص:

الإرث التلفزيوني لدولة الكويت: تجربة معيشية لروايات الرواد حسين عباس مراد

تهدف هذه الدراسة النوعية للمقابلات المتعمقة إلى تسجيل شاهد موثوق به على تاريخ التلفزيون في الكويت. واجه تلفزيون الكويت منذ تأسيسه أواخر الخمسينيات العديد من التحديات في مراحل مختلفة. كان النقص المبكر في طاقم البث المحترف ومعداته بمثابة العقبات الرئيسية التي واجهتها الحكومة. أجبرت هذه المشاكل الخطيرة الحكومة في السبعينيات على الاستثمار في الموارد البشرية من خلال التعليم في الخارج للوفاء بالتخصص المطلوب للوفاء بمعايير البث التلفزيوني. وظهرت النتيجة المثمرة لهذه السياسة من 1980 إلى 1995 مع التخصص في المسلسلات والبرامج الدرامية التي عززت صورة الكويت بين الدول العربية. ومع ذلك ، عندما بدأت هذه السياسة في التلاشي ، أظهرت مرحلة عام 1996 حتى يومنا هذا تراجع الهوية الكويتية بدءاً بظهور المزيد من القنوات الفضائية المتخصصة.

يلعب التلفزيون دوراً رئيسياً في حياة الناس حول العالم. منذ البداية ، نجحت هذه الوسيلة في جذب جماهير واسعة نظراً لطريقتها الفريدة في توفير المعلومات والأخبار والتعليم والترفيه عبر الصوت والصور المتحركة إلى كل منزل (Lee et al. ، 2022). خلال الحرب العالمية الثانية ، استخدمت الحكومات الصحافة والإذاعة والأفلام والتلفزيون للترويج للدعاية وإقناع الناس بالإيمان بأجندات معينة (O'donnell & Jowett ، 2018). على سبيل المثال ، استخدم النازيون التلفاز والأفلام لوضع أجندتهم ضد أعدائهم وتغيير التصورات العامة عن الحرب (سوتر ، 2008).

Interviews

- 1 Rida Al Feeli 2013
- 2 Ahmad Albagshi 2021
- 3 Hashim Alshakhs 2018
- 4 Fakri Ouda 2018
- 5 Majed AlShatti 2019
- 6 Ali Alrayes 2020
- 7 Hassan Boftain 2021
- 8 Ahmad Hassan 2022
- 9 Kazim Khaja 2022
- 10 Ahmad Ashkanani 2019
- 11 Marzoog AlAzmi 2021
- 12 Shaker Al Ali 2022
- 13 Hussain Shishtary 2022

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