Negotiating the Representations of Arabs in Hollywood Films: Perspectives and Interpretations of Young Kuwaitis

By

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ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged that films have the capability to act as a tool to perpetuate stereotypes, promote a certain ideology, and influence audiences. Hollywood films have been accused of endorsing stereotypes and promoting prejudicial attitudes towards Arabs for more than a century. This study explores the nature of Arab representations in Hollywood films. Early depictions of Arabs to more modern portrayals are examined through social, historical and political contexts. More importantly, this study sets out to investigate how young Arabs from the State of Kuwait negotiate and interpret the way Hollywood represents Arabs in its productions.

In order to understand how Kuwaiti audiences interpret Arab representations it was crucial to investigate how films are integrated into Kuwaiti society. The study takes an exploratory approach, which employs the use of interviews, focus group discussions and surveys to provide a comprehensive insight into the issue at hand. Three key groups were identified for the purpose of this study. The first group, 'the importers and regulators', are in charge of importing and censoring films for public viewing in Kuwait. The second group, 'the production group', includes Kuwaiti filmmakers, directors, producers, and other professionals in the local film industry. The third and most crucial group for the sake of this study is 'the Kuwaiti audience'. They have been narrowed down to include both male and female Kuwaiti university students between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four.

Research showed that Kuwaiti audiences were clearly fond of Hollywood films. According to the survey results, 95% of all participants chose Hollywood films as their favourite productions, even though 72% believed that the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films were generally inaccurate. Moreover, the vast majority of participants (82%) believed that the image of Arabs in Hollywood films was generally negative. The pool of available literature lacks an authentic Arab perspective on the issue of film representation. The findings of this study attempt to address this gap in the literature.

Keywords: Hollywood, America, Kuwait, Middle East, Westerner, Arabs, Islam, Orientalism, image, representations, stereotypes, discourse, cinema, film and censorship.

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This thesis is dedicated to my beloved country, Kuwait.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The issue of the representation of Arabs in Western media is a topic that has been covered by numerous Arab and Western scholars. This thesis explores the nature of Arab representations in Hollywood films in particular. Very early images of Arabs in Hollywood films to more modern day portrayals of Arabs are examined. The changes in Arab characters and their depictions in films are analyzed and examined within a historical, political, economic, and cultural context. Many scholars have tackled the issue of Arab representations in Hollywood films (Said, 1978; Michalak, 1988; Auge, 2002; Ramji, 2005; Semmerling, 2006; Shaheen, 2008; Riegler, 2010). However, there is a lack of research, especially in terms of how young audiences from Arab nations interpret Hollywood's portrayals of Arabs. There is barely any documented data on how these films are perceived, and how Arab audiences decode the representations embedded within them. Moreover, very little is known on how these films affect the personal lives of these young adults.

Studies that attempt to give an insight into the Arab perspective *vis-à-vis* Arab representations in films (Said, 1978; Shryock, 2001; Shaheen, 2008; Wilkins, 2009) often do so from an Arab-American standpoint. Researchers often reach out to Arab-Americans to document their accounts. However, they have failed to reach out to Arabs who actually live in the Middle

East. Although Arab-Americans are often portrayed in films, most films frequently present audiences with depictions of the Middle East and its people. Therefore to only voice out the opinions of Arab-Americans does not do justice to those Arabs who are not American. This is where this study offers an important and interesting insight into the issue of representation, and the deconstruction of Hollywood's Arab from a 'native-Arab' perspective. For the purpose of this study, I use the term 'native-Arab' to strictly define Arabs with Arab nationalities living in their homelands; this excludes Arabs with foreign citizenships. Although it is important to look into the way 'foreign-born Arabs' perceive their image in films, it must be emphasized that the perspective of 'native-Arabs' is often overlooked.

Unlike in other studies that address the issue of representation on behalf of 'native-Arabs', for this study the initiative was taken to travel to Kuwait to come into contact with young educated Kuwaitis who are capable of negotiating their image and the representations they see in Hollywood films. The contribution I wish to give is an in-depth outlook upon the 'Arabs' being depicted in Hollywood films. This was achieved by giving young Arabs the opportunity to express their views about their images in such films. As will be discussed later, many studies and opinion polls have been conducted to examine the way Americans feel towards Arabs. However, this study seeks to reveal a detailed prospect on the way Arabs feel towards the West, and towards America in particular as a result of the manner in which Americans have portrayed Arabs in their films.

While is it important to explore the nature of Arab representations in Hollywood films, the main purpose of this thesis is to explore audience responses on the issue of Arab depictions. This is necessary to expand the negotiation concerning the topic of representations. In contrast to other studies that focus on the actual representations, this study sets out to investigate how young Arabs feel regarding the way Hollywood represents Arabs, and the kind of emotions

and feelings that are evoked upon watching these films, with the purpose of exposing the impact that these films may have on these young Arabs. A full-scale study that investigates how Arab audiences from numerous Arab countries interpret their image in Hollywood films would deeply enrich this often neglected area. Nevertheless, due to the nature of a PhD study which requires researchers to be very focused, this study investigates specifically how Arabs from the State of Kuwait negotiate the image of Arabs in Hollywood films. It offers young Kuwaiti audiences a platform to reflect and deconstruct the Arab characters in Hollywood films. By using the appropriate methodology, which is discussed briefly below and in more detail in the Methodology chapter, data was collected on the film-viewing habits of young Kuwaitis, and their interpretations regarding Arab representations.

The study takes an exploratory approach that uses a mixed-methods research design, which employs the use of interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys to provide a comprehensive insight into the issue at hand. Three key groups were identified for the purpose of this study. The first group was named 'the importers and regulators' – those who are in charge of importing and censoring films for public viewing in Kuwait. This group consists of the Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC),[1] and Kuwait's Ministry of Information (MOI - Censoring Department). The second group – 'the production group' – includes Kuwaiti filmmakers, directors, producers, and other professionals in the local film industry. The third and most crucial group for the sake of this study is 'the Kuwaiti audience'. They have been narrowed down to include both male and female university students between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four from the State of Kuwait. Interviews were used to gather information from the first two groups, whereas surveys and focus group discussions have been utilized to obtain data from the third group.

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[1] The Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) was renamed in 2006, and is now known as Cinescape.

It is well known that Hollywood is the world's leading cinema industry, producing some of the most popular films worldwide. Hollywood films reach nearly every country in the world. According to the Motion Picture Association of America, 70 percent of global box office revenue comes from outside the United States and Canada (MPAA, 2013). This vast reach enables Hollywood films to not only influence American audiences, but audiences around the world as well. Hollywood has given audiences worldwide the opportunity to experience things and places they would have not been able to experience otherwise. People that watch films for entertainment are in fact learning at the same time about the societies, religions and people portrayed in these films. It can be argued that much of what people know about the world derives from films that act as a main source of information for many of its viewers (Auge, 2002).

Melani McAlister (2005) emphasized that Orientalism played an important role in the way America represented the Orient through various means of popular culture during the early stages of the film industry. Literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth century concerning the East, and Arabs and Muslims in particular, was used in early depictions of Arabs in Hollywood productions. When the cinema industry first began producing films in the late 1880s, filmmakers looked for inspiration from existing depictions found in literature, paintings and other visual imagery that were inspired by early scholars known as Orientalists (McAlister, 2005; Ramji, 2005; Andrews, 2014).

Inspired by representations of the unusual and untamed East, filmmakers articulated Orientalist influences in their films. According to Bernstein and Studlar (1997: 3):

> Western narrative and ethnographic cinemas of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries inherited the narrative and visual traditions, as well as the cultural assumptions, on which Orientalism was based, and filmmakers discovered how popular Orientalism could be.

Some of the earliest films that featured Arabs were embellished with the Orientalist view of an exotic far away land where Bedouin bandits, barbarians, and lustful Sheikhs roamed in the deserts. During the 1920s, the Orient became the typical backdrop for many romance and adventure films. The desert setting served as an important component to the mise-en-scène, which became a reductive signifier of the Orient. Desert landscapes in films often served to provide audiences an erotic dimension. Ella Shohat (1997: 32) emphasized that "[t]he exposed, barren land and the blazing sands, furthermore, metaphorize the exposed, unrepressed 'hot' passion and uncensored emotions of the Orient". Some of the films produced during that time include *The Sheik* (1921), *A Café in Cairo* (1924) and *The Son of the Sheik* (1926). Such films often portrayed Arabs as savages and uncivilized barbarians living in an uncultured place. These early portrayals began a tradition of creating films that represented Arabs in such a manner.

In the book *Cruel and Unusual: Negative Images of Arabs in American Popular Culture*, Laurance Michalak (1988) classified films about the Middle East in the 1920s into two groups. The first group includes exotic adventure films that portray Arabs in a barren desert setting. The Arabs in these films are presented as being sexual and violent. The central plot of these films would often entail an Arab character abducting a Western woman, who is then rescued by a Western man. The second group of films produced during that time was to some extent comical; these films often presented Arabs as buffoons who were either friendly or aggressive, but nevertheless stupid. It is evident that the Arab characters in both groups were projected as being inferior to their Western counterparts.

Throughout the twentieth century the stereotypical images of Arabs as bandits, Bedouins, and desert sheikhs in many Hollywood films have not changed much. However, after World War II, film took another direction in the representation of Arabs. The romantic and exotic themes,

often used when portraying the Middle East, changed to a more politicized one. The political events that took place in the region during that period influenced the way in which Arabs were portrayed in Hollywood films. Edward Said (2003) claimed that the economic and political strategies of Western countries were interconnected in the way that the East was represented, and that these strategies played a vital role in Orientalist studies. The depictions of Arabs change and fluctuate depending on the changes that occur in world politics (Arti, 2007; Shaheen, 2009). According to Thomas Riegler (2010: 35), "cinema generally affirms the political and cultural *status quo* from which it originates: movies reproduce, charge, and disseminate interpretations, ideologies, and world views in contemporary society by constructing and filling an imaginary space, where the hegemonic constants of the public discourse come to life".

Mediated images are known to disseminate ideas, notions, and beliefs. The image of Arabs as a potential threat to the Western world has been emphasized and perpetuated due to historical events and conflicts between the West and the Middle East. Some of the events that have influenced the propagation of these images include the discovery of oil in the late 1930s, the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, the oil embargo of 1973, the Iraqi-Iranian war in 1980, the invasion of Kuwait and the first Gulf war in 1990, moving on to the September 11th attack on America in 2001, and the second Gulf war in 2003. Throughout the twentieth century Arabs have continuously been represented stereotypically. However, the representations of Arabs have not remained static; they seem to have evolved into an even more negative image.

In his essay entitled 'Stereotyping', Richard Dyer (1977) points out that it is understandable why human beings tend to make sense of the world by categorizing people, objects, and events into types. Our impression of people is constructed by the information we gather about

them, which then helps us assign them to different groups. For instance, a woman breast-feeding a baby would be assigned the role of a 'mother'. Someone in a wheel chair is 'disabled'. A man with a bomb is a 'terrorist'. In short, a type is "any simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or 'development' is kept to a minimum" (Dyer, 1977: 28).

Stuart Hall expands Dyer's (1977) definition of type, and explains that stereotypes "get hold of the few 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized' characteristics about a person, *reduce* everything about the person to those traits, *exaggerate* and *simplify* them, and *fix* them without change or development to eternity" (Hall, 1997: 258). According to Hall, there are three main characteristics of stereotypes. Stereotyping *"reduces, essentializes, naturalizes, and fixes 'difference'"*, it *"deploys a strategy of 'splitting'"*, and finally, it *"tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power"* (*ibid*) (Italics in original.). More about stereotypes, and the various Arab stereotypes that are apparent in Hollywood productions will be discussed later in this thesis.

According to Said (2003), stereotypes of people from the East, including Arabs and Muslims, have been created centuries ago and have evolved further from fantasies, myths and rumours. He asserts that the media plays a key role in perpetuating myths about the Orient and affirms that "[o]ne aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been the reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds" (Said, 2003: 26). Hollywood films are considered a prime example that illustrates the way images infused with stereotypical connotations and representations are used to shape the way people view the world and the people living in it (El-Farra, 1996).

Repetition is one of the main reasons why stereotypes are deeply ingrained in peoples' psyches. Films act as a message vehicle where repetition can be enacted. Many studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of repetition. Lull (1995: 22) has asserted that repetitive ideological themes have the capability to "send ideas deep into audience members' individual and collective consciousness". Those working within the film industry know and understand the effectiveness of constant repetition. In the new edition of the book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, Jack Shaheen (2009: 19) researched every feature ever produced from 1986 to 2001 that depicts Arabs, and found that "Hollywood has projected Arabs as villains in more than 1,000 feature films". He too fully acknowledged, the ability of repetition to shape perceptions, and emphasized how effective repetition can be by referring to a well-known Arab proverb "*Al tikrar biallem il hmar*" [by repetition even the donkey learns]. Hollywood has used repetition as a conditioning tool for years, by constantly repeating images of Arabs as villains in their films. It is feared that "damaging portraits have become so prevalent that viewers of film and TV shows demonstrating these stereotypes may come to perceive reel Arabs as real ones" (*ibid*: 1).

Even animated cartoons aimed at children are not free of Orientalist stereotypes. One of Disney's most popular classic animation films *Aladdin* (1992) continued the tradition of depicting Arabs in a stereotypical manner. Many of the Arab characters in the film such as the street merchants, the guards, and the main villain Jafar, all had exaggerated stereotypical Middle Eastern features, unshaven beards, dark sinister eyes, heavy accents, cracked teeth, and big crooked noses. However, the three main characters – Princess Jasmine, the Sultan, and the protagonist Aladdin – did not share the same traits as the other characters in the film. They spoke perfect English with American accents, and Aladdin, unlike the other Arab characters, had a small nose, kind eyes, and did not carry any sort of sword or dagger. He is

distinctly American in character, and the fact that he is referred to as 'Al' further strengthens his American persona.

Hollywood has been accused of presenting a distorted image of a number of countries, cultures and peoples. Arabs are not the only group to be unfairly portrayed and stereotyped in films, especially American productions. The film making industry has marginalized and stereotyped almost every ethnic and minority group in the world. Blacks, Native Americans, Italian Americans, Russians, Irish, Jews, people from the Balkans, and many more have all been subjected to negative stereotypes and erroneous representations at some point. However, it is argued that the image of Arabs in films has been distorted the most, with the worst stereotypes (Ahmed, 2002; Shaheen, 2008). John Cones (2012: 26) asserted that:

> Hollywood movies involving Arab characters clearly demonstrates that the U.S. film community consistently portrays Arabs in a stereotypical manner or negative manner and that little or no effort has been made by Hollywood filmmakers to balance their portrayals of Arabs with positive portrayals in the same movies or a similar number of positive portrayals in other movies.

In general, it seems that Hollywood has yet to reflect on the image of Arabs in their films, and the pattern of recycling old degrading representations is still apparent today. Christian Blauvelt (2008) has emphasized that:

> Arabs, and Muslims in general, have been culturally coded as "others," a dislocated social position which many politicians and media producers have used to position Arabs as phantom enemies, as scapegoats for latent U.S. xenophobic tendencies. In this regard, Hollywood filmmakers have often used Arabs in narratives in very much the same way as Nazi propagandists portrayed Jews in the 1930s and 40s.

It appears as though Hollywood has made Muslim Arabs the primary 'Other' by representing them as being opposed to Western values. Soon after the Cold War the fear of communism

was being replaced by the fear of Arabs and Muslims (Karim, 2000; Marrison, 2004; Seib, 2004). Islam was pointed out as a threat to the West and to its beliefs. In an article published in *The Washington Post*, David Ignatius (1992) described how the United States was on the lookout for a new international enemy. He stated that:

> Islam seems in many ways to fit the bill, enemy-wise: It's big; it's scary; it's anti-Western; it feeds on poverty and discontent; it spreads across vast swaths of the globe that can be colored green on the television maps in the same way that communist countries used to be colored red.

'Seeing Green; The Red Menace is Gone. But Here's Islam', was the title of another article published in *The New York Times* by Elaine Sciolino in 1996, to describe how the threat of communism was being replaced by Islam. Sciolino wrote: "the end of the Cold War sparked a kind of intellectual contest to identify the biggest and most credible new enemy...one threat has resonated in the public mind: Islamic holy war".

Like the communists before, Arabs and Muslims have been viewed as a threat and a dangerous menace to the West. The fear of Arabs, just like the fear of communism, is not established through personal experience or contact. It has been argued that people are taught to fear and hate certain groups, people, and ideas. Shaheen (2003b) emphasizes that "for most of the past century, Hollywood has been conditioning audiences worldwide to internalize the defamatory message that Arabs and, by extension, all Muslims, are unrelenting enemies of Western values".

Furthermore, Hollywood has the tendency to portray Arabs and Muslims as a homogenized group of people. The Middle East is a multi-layered region; however the differences that exist within it are almost always ignored completely. Even today, the tradition of homogenizing large groups of people stemming from old Orientalist practices persists. Perhaps one of the

most considerable feats that Orientalists were able to accomplish was the creation of the Orient itself, and the way in which they were able to bulk together and reference a vast region with a variety of cultures, traditions, religions and people in a single category known as 'the Orient'.

In the book *Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment,* Michael Parenti (1992: 4), states that, "many of us have never met an Arab, but few of us lack some picture in our minds of what an Arab is supposed to be like. This image will be more a stereotype than a reality, and if drawn largely from the mass media, it is likely to be a rather defamatory stereotype". According to Said (2003: 108), "contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization". When the image of the Arabs in film comes to mind, pictures of men riding camels, wealthy oil sheikhs, terrorist bombers, erotic belly dancers, shapeless women in black, and beggar children who steal, are only some of the images that audiences have been conditioned to imagine. The fact is many Arabs do not know how to ride camels, and have never slept in a tent in their life. The everyday lives of Arabs living ordinary lifestyles, studying and working to make a living is not something that Hollywood apparently considers worth presenting. Instead, it appears as though Hollywood is more eager to represent the small minority of terrorists rather than representing the vast majority of Arabs that live, work and play like everyone else. "The seemingly indelible Arab-as-villain image wrongly conveys the message that the vast majority of the 265 million peace-loving Arabs are 'bad guys'" (Shaheen, 2001: 28). There are very little, if any, stories that present successful career-oriented Arab men and women, or Arab sports professionals, or even stories about the everyday lives of young Arab teenagers who are very much like their Western counterparts.

The film industry, as with other industries, is driven by profit. Its main goal is to maximize profits, and to achieve that it must attract audiences. "To make money for its owners, the [film] industry must reach the largest possible markets; that is, it must give the people what they want" (Partenti, 2010: VII). Therefore when it comes to the representations of Arabs in films, the film industry simply produces what sells. Apparently "Bash-the-Arab movies make money. Thus, some producers exploit the stereotype for profit" (Shaheen, 2003: 190). Sharing Shaheen's view, Sina Ali Muscati (2002: 137) emphasized that "representations of Arabs/Muslims as angry, violent, dangerous, and fanatical are therefore easier to sell than a reasoned, researched account of the same people". A perfect example of this case would be Akbar Ahmad's feature film entitled *Jinnah* (1998), which revolves around the story of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, who was "a moderate Muslim leader who believed in human rights, women's rights, minority rights and upholding the constitution" (Ahmed, 2002: 74). The film received many awards in international film festivals, and was highly praised when presented to various Hollywood studios. Nevertheless, it was rejected by distribution companies, and has yet to be distributed. According to Ahmed, "they were told that popcorn-guzzling Midwest audiences, which determine the success or failure of a film, were not quite ready for a Muslim character in the role of a hero" (*ibid*).

In an article addressing the issue of racism on the silver screen, critics claim that "Hollywood films still perpetuate racial stereotypes" (NPR, 2001). In the article, Ariel Dorfman pointed out that "it's hard to write scripts that accurately reflect all the subtleties of real life. And it's perhaps even harder to sell them … which may be why such movies are rarely made in Hollywood" (*ibid*). Moreover, Jack Valenti (2002: 71), the former president and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America described the distribution of film in America as "a commercial venture. Those who own theatres want the seats filled, so they book movies people want to see. They are not in the business of subsidizing foreign cultural imports so

Americans can be better informed". Therefore it seems that as long as people keep coming back for more, the less likely are the representations of Arabs to change.

To assume that films are made for the sole purpose of entertainment would be naïve. "[F]ilms as with other cultural forms, have the potential to reinforce, to challenge, to overturn, to crystallize religious perspectives, ideological assumptions, and fundamental values. Films bolster and challenge our society's norms, guiding narratives, and accepted truths" (Martin and Ostwalt, 1995: VII). After the 11th of September incident in 2001, the demand for films that featured terrorist attacks on America increased drastically. Films with a bias against Arabs and Muslims such as *True Lies* (1994) and *The Siege* (1998) were ranked within the top five most popular films (Ramji, 2005). It is during times of conflict that people are curious to know more about those involved in a particular conflict. Therefore, it is understandable why people became interested in Arab and Muslim-related films after the 9/11 attack on America. However, by learning about Arabs and Muslims through films they are in fact absorbing distorted representations. According to Wilkins (2009: 7):

> Mediated texts need to be understood within the professional, organizational, political and economic contexts in which people create these cultural products. The production of mediated texts operates within this broader framework in which Orientalist ideologies persist in political as well as cultural agencies, structured through the economic imperatives of the media industry.

It can be argued that American governmental and military institutions – with the help of the media – set the scene of global political conflicts and situations through an Orientalist lens, and that any action taken by the U.S. foreign policy is justified through the images perpetuated in the media. As reported by Matthew Alford (2010: 3), "the film industry routinely promotes the notion that the United States is a benevolent force in world affairs, and that unleashing its military strength overseas has positive results for humanity". Miller (2007:

4) dubs the relationship that Washington has with Hollywood as 'Washwood'.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS IN THIS THESIS

The first three chapters of the thesis – including this introduction chapter – serve as a foundation on which a discussion of the rich primary data collected through the relevant methodology will be built. These initial three chapters will familiarize readers with specific concepts and notions, which serve to provide an overview of the relevant issues associated with Arab representations in Hollywood productions. The following three chapters – four, five, and six – yield an original contribution to the issue of Arab portrayals in film. These chapters delve deeper into the topic by providing firsthand accounts regarding Arab representations from the perspective of young Kuwaitis. Below is a brief explanation for what each chapter will entail.

Since there is very little that has been written on cinema in Kuwait, and almost no documented literature in English, it is important to map out the terrain of cinema in Kuwait. In order to understand how Kuwaiti audiences interpret Arab representations it is crucial to first investigate how they come into contact with Hollywood films. An original contribution I wish to make lies within the primary research conducted in the form of interviews with various key players involved in the importation and clearance process of films in Kuwait: Cinescape, and the Ministry of Information's Censorship Department. Thus the chapter following this introduction is dedicated to familiarizing the reader with the nature and tradition of cinema and film in Kuwait. The chapter explores the history of cinema in Kuwait, and how films began to be integrated into Kuwaiti society and its culture. The aim of the

chapter is to set the scene of the cinema and film industry in Kuwait in order to have a clear understanding of how films reach the Kuwaiti public.

After the background chapter describing the cinema scene in Kuwait, I shall critique the existing literature, and draw lines of comparison between existing literature and my own work by clearly showing how previous work relates to my study. By critiquing existing work, I will convey the core data and ideas that have been established, identify and challenge areas of controversy in the literature, and emphasize their strengths and weaknesses. I will also highlight opportunities for further research, and point out gaps in the current research. All the key concepts that will be used throughout the thesis are defined in the Literature Review chapter. The motivation and the importance of my thesis will also be made apparent. The framework provided in this chapter will help to link new findings to previous ones in the Discussion chapter of the thesis.

Chapter four marks the beginning of the original contribution I make with this study. It is in this chapter that the primary work done for this research will be introduced. The fourth chapter addresses the methodology employed in the study. The specific research approach and design used for the purpose of conducting the research will be discussed in detail. A rationale for all the data collection tools used in the study is also provided. All the participants that took part in this study are accurately described. Rationale in regard to why they were chosen, and the various criteria for their selection, in addition to how, where and when they were approached is addressed. Since an original survey was constructed for the sole purpose of this study, a pilot test of the survey had to be implemented. Details of the pilot study and how its results influenced any structural changes made in the final survey are also reported. A detailed account of how data was collected and what methods were utilized to gather the required information are recorded. The methods used to collect the data are justified, and explanations

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for not using other research methods are given. In addition, a careful description of the analysis process used to draw conclusions based on the data collected is also discussed.

The quantitative aspect of the study that includes data and results collected from the online survey will be discussed in detail in chapter five. The object of the method is explained and its salient results are stated and presented. The Results chapter establishes the survey's participant demographics, and addresses issues linked to the survey participants' film viewing habits, opinions on censorship in Kuwait, and their opinions regarding key aspects of the representation of Arabs in Hollywood films. The chapter also provides an introduction to the key themes extracted from the qualitative aspect of the study. These themes are assessed, evaluated and interpreted at length in chapter six.

The focus of chapter six is to discuss the results collected from all three methods of data collection used in this study: surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews. The results obtained from all three methods are categorized into six main sections: film-viewing habits, censorship in Kuwait, Arab representations in film, discussing the representations, an appeal for more accurate representations, and participant personal experiences. The notion of cinema as a spectacle is also addressed in this chapter. Why are Kuwaitis drawn to Hollywood films? What makes Hollywood films appealing to them? Why do they continue to watch Hollywood films even if they are unhappy with the representations they see in films? The answer to these questions, and the reactions of participants to Arab representations in the films they watch are examined. Furthermore, the ways in which whether of not participants link films to their own personal encounters is also assessed. I will investigate how even people that may take issue with the content they see are still drawn into the spectacle of what takes place. Moreover, just as I am interested in how they are drawn into the spectacle, I am also interested in how they attempt to draw themselves out of it. For instance, the participants' suggestions of boycotting,

banning, and the production of their own films can all be seen as a means of escaping the spectacle. The main findings obtained from the study are evaluated and interpreted at length.

The objective of this study and the gap it fills in the literature is summarized in the Conclusion chapter. The contribution this study makes to existing knowledge will also be highlighted. Furthermore, the implications of the findings and any limitations that may have constrained the study is addressed. Finally, an outline of suggested directions and recommendations for future studies is also presented.

CHAPTER TWO: CINEMA TERRAIN IN KUWAIT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to better understand the dynamic relation Hollywood films have with worldwide audiences, one must first understand the way in which films are processed from Hollywood studios to cinema screens across the globe. As mentioned in chapter one, the aim of this study is to investigate the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films from an Arab (Kuwaiti) perspective. However, before delving into the way young Arabs from the State of Kuwait decode and interpret Hollywood representations, it is crucial to first set in perspective the cinema terrain in Kuwait. There is hardly any documented data on the history of cinema in the State of Kuwait, and the very few that do exist are written in Arabic. Therefore, to acquire an insight into the history of cinema, and the processes in which films must go through in Kuwait, primary research in the form of interviews was necessary.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, three key groups were identified for the purpose of this study. This chapter will focus primarily on the data collected from the 'importers and regulators' group, which is in charge of importing and censoring films for public viewing in

Kuwait. Officials from the Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC),[2] and the Censorship Department in Kuwait's Ministry of Information were interviewed for the purpose of clarifying the procedures utilized when importing and exhibiting films. In addition, 'the production group', which includes a number of Kuwaiti directors and producers, was also interviewed with the purpose of examining the filmmaking industry in Kuwait from the perspective of Kuwaiti filmmakers. These interviews generated details about specific issues regarding cinema and censorship processes in Kuwait that could not be found in books or journals. The data presented in this chapter provides a rich source of information regarding the exhibition of film in the Middle East, and in Kuwait specifically.

2.2   THE KUWAIT NATIONAL CINEMA COMPANY

The Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) was established on the 5th of October 1954, with a capital of 7 million Rupees.[3] It was the first cinema in Kuwait to open its doors to the public. In fact, it was one of the first cinema companies to be established in the entire Gulf region.[4] Wealthy Kuwaiti businessmen that frequently travelled to India and Egypt on business were able to experience cinemas in their voyages. These businessmen observed how popular cinemas were abroad, and felt that Kuwait needed such an entertainment outlet. They

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[2] Program managers from Cinescape were interviewed with the purpose of learning more about the development of Kuwait's first cinema company. The interviews were also used to gather information regarding how Cinescape purchases and exhibits films, and the relationship the cinema has with Kuwait's Ministry of Information's Censorship Department. The interviews were conducted on 13 December 2011, in their offices in Cinescape's main headquarters in the 360 Mall. The interview questions outline can be seen in Appendix 10 on page 309.

[3] (Ratio: 1 Kuwaiti Dinar = 13 ⅓ Rupees) 7 million Rupees is equal to approximately 525,000 KD (£1,211,647) at the time.

[4] Abdulla Al Zayed and a number of associates established the first official cinema in Bahrain in 1937.

acknowledged the lack of leisure activities in Kuwait, and believed that cinemas would be an ideal source of entertainment for Kuwaitis.[5] Their business venture was discussed with Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the then ruler of Kuwait. They described their cinema experiences abroad and expressed their interest in bringing this experience to Kuwait.

These businessmen, who were keen on securing their investments, made an exclusive agreement with the ruler of Kuwait that would protect them from any competition. This agreement was made to ensure that the Kuwaiti businessmen would make up in profits for what they spent on the venture. Thus, in 1954, the government of Kuwait gave the Kuwait National Cinema Company a 50-year exclusivity agreement. No other cinema operations would be allowed to set up and compete with KNCC until the exclusivity contract expired.

The first theatre that opened in Kuwait was the Al-Sharqiah [The Eastern], and had a capacity of 1,000 seats. It was an open-air theatre, which was covered with tent fabric during the winter months. The opening of Kuwait's first cinema theatre was considered one of the biggest events that took place during the 1950s. People from all over Kuwait rushed to Al-Sharqiah to enjoy the cinematic experience. Two years later, Hawalli, Fahaheel, Ferdows and Al-Hamra theatres came into operation to cater to audiences' growing demand for films.

In 2004, the 50-year exclusivity agreement expired, and the KNCC was bought by Tamdeen Real Estate Group. The KNCC received a complete makeover under the new management. The company was rebranded, and was renamed Cinescape. According to personnel from the new management, they felt that it was necessary to update the company's image to provide

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[5] The 10 businessmen who established the KNCC were, Yousef Abdulaziz Al-Fulaij, Bader Al-Salem Al-Abdulwahab, Nisf Al-Yousef Al-Nisf, Hamoud Al-Zaid Al-Khaled, Yagoub Yousef Al-Hamad, Khaled Sulaiman Al-Adsani, Mohammad Abdulrahman Al-Bahar, Fahad Al-Marzouq, Yousef Ibrahim Al-Ghanim, and Khalifa Khalid Al-Ghunaim. The names of the individuals that established the cinema were retrieved from the cinema's first annual report (see Appendix 1 on page 273).

KNCC's old customers with a sense of change and improvement. This transitional process in which the KNCC developed throughout the years is exhibited in the form of a display in the Cinescape Cinema Complex located in the 360 Mall. The 360 Mall is situated in Al-Zahra, a rapidly growing residential area. It is one of Kuwait's largest shopping malls, which houses the biggest collection of international designer brands in Kuwait. It is both a retail and an entertainment development which consists of a Family Entertainment Centre, a Teenage Entertainment Centre, and the Cinescape Cinema Complex.

Moviegoers that arrive at Cinescape's 360 Mall venue are greeted by a display that takes them on a journey into the past. Early documents and photographs taken inside some of Kuwait's first theatres are showcased. Put on display are some of the first reels and projectors that were used. Seating, varying from wooden chairs from one of Cinescape's earliest theatres to today's VIP luxury couches, is also exhibited. The display shows how the cinema company has progressed and developed by showing a series of contrasting photographs that highlight the difference in today's cinema theatres in comparison to those in the past.[6]

2.2.1 CINESCAPE AS EXHIBITORS

Today, Cinescape has 13 venues spread throughout Kuwait, with 56 screens, 12 of which use Digital Cinema Technology and have 3D capabilities.[7] They also run four VIP screens, and one IMAX screen. The total capacity of all cinemas is approximately 10,000 seats across all

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[6] Please refer to Appendix 2 on page 274 to see pictures of the exhibit.

[7] Cinescape 360, Cinescape Ajial, Cinescape Al-Fanar, Cinescape Al-Kout, Cinescape Sharqiah, Cinescape Avenues, Cinescape Bairaq, Cinescape Granada, Cinescape Laila, Cinescape Marina, Cinescape Metro, Cinescape Muhallab, and Cinescape Plaza.

locations. Although Cinescape cinemas are currently only operational in Kuwait, there are plans to establish venues abroad in the near future.

When the 50-year exclusivity agreement finally came to an end in 2004, other regional cinema companies began showing an interest in operating in Kuwait. The United Arab Emirates-based Grand Cinemas was one of the first companies that proposed to set up in Kuwait. For the past 50 years Cinescape had no competitors. However, in October 2012, Grand Cinemas opened its doors to the Kuwaiti public, and Cinescape was faced with a competitor for the very first time. The competition mainly focuses on services rather than the product, due to the fact that all films shown in cinemas in Kuwait go through the same censorship process, which ultimately means that all cinema companies will screen the same version of the censored product. Therefore the competition between the two cinemas can only be based on the quality of their services.

The services the two cinemas typically compete in include ticket prices, offers, types of food sold at the concession stand, and the comfort of the cinema. In addition, the two cinema companies compete in the acquisition of independent films. Grand Cinemas, for instance, were successful in acquiring *Skyfall* (2012). Therefore, anyone who wanted to watch the twenty-third sequel of the James Bond series in cinemas had no option but to watch it at Grand Cinemas. This was a great accomplishment for Grand Cinemas, as they were able to beat Cinescape in the acquisition of this highly successful film.[8] However, one must note that when this study first began in May 2010, Cinescape was the only operational cinema company in Kuwait. Therefore, when I refer to cinema in Kuwait throughout this thesis, I am referring to Cinescape unless stated otherwise.

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[8] According to the Box Office Mojo (2013), *Skyfall* has generated $1.1 billion worldwide, thus making it the second highest worldwide grossing film of 2012 after *Marvel's The Avengers*, and the ninth highest worldwide grossing film of all time.

Besides being an exhibitor, Cinescape are also involved in film distribution and film production. Most cinema companies in the Middle East are distributors that focus on buying films and selling them to exhibitors, or exhibitors that simply show films in their cinemas, or production companies that specialize in making films. Very rarely will one find a cinema company in the Middle East that is actively involved in all three areas. In fact, Cinescape and one other company based in the United Arab Emirates – Gulf Film – are the only two companies in the Middle East that are involved in all three areas.

2.2.2 CINESCAPE AS DISTRIBUTORS

Cinescape plays an important role in distributing films in the Middle East region. In 2005, Cinescape contracted a long-term partnership agreement with the Dubai based Front Row Filmed Entertainment firm. Since the alliance, over 600 Arabic, Bollywood, and independent productions have been distributed across the Middle East. Due to logistical reasons, all film distribution aspects of Cinescape are operated in Dubai. Any film bought by the company is distributed to the rest of the countries in Gulf through their Dubai-based offices.

Cinescape have no hand in the subtitling process, and most of the subtitling companies hired by Cinescape are located in Dubai. Films are brought back to Kuwait after being sent to Dubai to be subtitled by a professional subtitling company located there. However, the problem with this arrangement is that if and when an error occurs in a film's subtitles, it is often too late to edit the mistake because the film cannot be pulled out of the showing schedule to be sent back to Dubai for corrections. Moreover, once in place, the subtitles on the film cannot be altered or removed because they are laser-branded onto the reels.

Cinescape has collaborated with Virgin Megastore in the Middle East to distribute their purchased films in DVD format. Initially, when Cinescape buys the rights to a film they generally release it in their cinemas first. After a period of time the film is often sold to various television channels, and eventually the film is sold in DVD format. An agreement is made between Cinescape (who hold the rights to the film) and the various media channels that want to buy the film from them. The agreement contains a window of release that both parties agree on. This is documented to ensure that the DVD, for instance, is not released before the television channel releases the film. Sometimes, however, Cinescape may decide to purchase a film with the intention of selling it directly to television channels. This usually happens when employees in Cinescape's Programs Department come across a film that they know will do well on television, but not as well in cinemas, as the cost of the purchased film will not cover the cost of its advertising and marketing. In these cases, films are bought and are directly sold to television channels. After the window of release expires the film is then sold in Virgin Megastore in the form of DVDs. The film may also be sold to airline companies to be shown as part of their in-flight entertainment.

2.2.3 CINESCAPE AND FILM PRODUCTION

The third and final component to Cinescape's range of cinema specialties is production. In the world of film and cinema, experience and relations play a major role when it comes to finances. Cinescape personnel admit that they may not have sufficient experience in producing a film completely on their own. Therefore, they opt to invest in films that they believe will be successful. This often leads them to invest in film projects that include famous Egyptian actors such as Adel Imam, Ahmed Helmi, and Mohammed Sa'ad, or those that are directed by well-known directors. Most of the production that Cinescape is involved in is

based in Egypt. Cinescape owns a production company in Egypt called Al-Koot Film Production and Distribution. According to Cinescape officials, the first Egyptian film produced by Cinescape, entitled *X Large* (2011), received the highest admissions rate in Egypt per film since 2001. In short, Cinescape owns and operates various companies in different countries, each dealing in a specific area of expertise. The subtitling and distribution of films take place in Dubai, whereas most films produced by Cinescape's production company are based in Egypt, and finally Kuwait, where all the films obtained by Cinescape are exhibited.

2.3   TYPES OF FILMS CONTRACTED BY CINESCAPE

It was highlighted in an interview conducted with Cinescape program managers in charge of film acquisition that films shown in Cinescape are categorized into four types: Major Studio Productions, Independent Productions, Arabic Productions, and Bollywood Productions. The four groups have very different modes in which contracts between cinemas are set; this is due to the differences in each production's operating nature. Thus, cinemas buy films, and divide its profit with each group differently. The way in which Cinescape obtains and deals with films from each group is discussed in the following subsections.

2.3.1 MAJOR STUDIOS

The first type of films contracted by Cinescape is called 'Major Studio Productions'; this includes the Hollywood blockbuster type of movies produced in the United States of America. These major studios include some of the biggest production companies in the world such as

Paramount, Buena Vista, Disney, Sony, UIP, and Universal Studios. Films produced by major studios are released on the same day worldwide. As an exhibitor, Cinescape is provided with the film, trailers, advertisements, and everything that has to do with a certain film from a particular production company. In return, the exhibitor and the major studios share the revenue generated by ticket sales in a set percentage agreement. For instance, in the first week of showing, the profits are split equally. In the second week, the exhibitor takes 55 percent of the profit, while the producers take 45 percent. On the third week, and up until the film is removed, the exhibitor retains 60 percent of the profit while the producers receive 40 percent. Cinescape uses this percentage system contract with major studios and Indian (Bollywood) film productions.

Cinescape has an annual contract with major studios that is automatically renewed every year, unless one of the parties decides to prematurely end the contract for whatever reason. It is common practice for major studios to send mass announcements to worldwide exhibitors. These announcements include a lineup of films and their exact release dates beforehand. Exhibitors are obligated to show all the films sent out to them by the major studios unless the local Ministry of Information bans them. The reasons for banning films in Kuwait will be explored later in the censorship section of this chapter (section 2.5).

2.3.2 INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS

The second type of films contracted by Cinescape is called 'Independent Productions'. These films are often multi-lingual, and are not produced by major studios. Independent films are often bought and sold in a number of international film festivals such as the Cannes, Berlin, and Venice Film Festivals. Behind the scenes of the red carpets, stunning dresses, and

glamorous stars, business deals are often made. These film festivals provide an opportunity for filmmakers to showcase their productions to potential buyers. Cinema owners and management travel to various film festivals in order to see what films are available to be bought and shown in their cinemas aside from major studio productions.

The executive manager, general manager and other key Cinescape personnel travel to approximately five international film festivals annually for the purpose of purchasing films. What they buy heavily relies on the demand of their target market. The films are chosen based on their knowledge of the type of films that attract the largest audiences. Cinescape is aware of their customers' preferences by keeping an ongoing open transparent relationship with their customers.

One way Cinescape reaches out to its customers is by using social media such as Facebook and Twitter as a tool to communicate openly with their target market. The relationship Cinescape has with its customers will be discussed further in the 'target market' section of this chapter (section 2.4). Furthermore, Cinescape personnel are conscious of the censoring process that takes place in Kuwait and keeps this in mind when making film-purchasing decisions. Consequentially, they purchase films that they are certain will not be banned by the Ministry of Information, and will not be subjected to heavy censoring.

In an interview with Cinescape employees, it was made apparent that there are three aspects to consider when purchasing a film: star actors, the genre, and the director. According to a manager in Cinescape's Programs Department, the number one criterion is the film's cast. Sales records show that films featuring world-renowned actors produce the highest number of ticket sales in Kuwait. This indicates that there is a strong relationship between the number of tickets sold and a film's cast. For instance, the most popular film shown by Cinescape in 2011 was *Fast Five* (2011) featuring Vin Diesel and Paul Walker. The second most popular film

was *Johnny English Reborn* (2011) starring the English comedian Rowan Atkinson. Interestingly, in 2012 the most popular film shown by Cinescape was *Taken 2* (2012), featuring Liam Neeson.[9]

The same Cinescape Programs manager emphasized that "people here [in Kuwait] don't say 'I'm waiting for *Mission Impossible*'"; instead, they would refer to *Mission Impossible* as 'Tom Cruise's movie' (Cinescape Interviews, 2011). Therefore, well-known actors are more likely to attract audiences, thus generating more profit for cinemas. This is also true when acquiring Arabic and Bollywood productions. For instance, Shahrukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai, Hrithik Roshan, and Aamir Khan are only a few of a very long list of Indian actors that Kuwaiti audiences recognize, and thus Cinescape strives to acquire any film productions associated to them. It is a well-calculated decision, in which the number of admissions must cover the costs of the film's purchase in addition to creating a profit. As a result, Cinescape are more likely to purchase films that feature recognizable actors.

Special attention is also given to genre when making film purchases. Cinescape seeks genres that Kuwaiti audiences prefer. According to Cinescape officials, the most popular genres are action films, followed by horror films. During a discussion about some of the most popular genres in Kuwait, one employee working in Cinescape's Programs department affirmed that:

> Action films are always 'number one'. When we talk about action, we are talking about ridiculous action – we are talking about Sylvester Stallone action, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Steven Seagel. It's this kind of action that they [audiences in Kuwait] love.
>
> (Cinescape Interviews, 2011)

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[9] *Taken* (2008) and *Taken 2* (2012) are discussed in more detail in the following chapters due to the Arab and Muslim representations found in the films.

This statement regarding action films being particularly popular with Kuwaiti audiences fascinated me as a researcher, especially since most films that have projected Arabs in a negative light since the early 1970s tend to be action packed films. As reported by Wilkins (2009: 5), it is often within the narrative structure of an action-adventure film to include villains who are often portrayed "as foreign, ethnic and racial 'others', particularly Arab and Muslim". Shaheen (2003a) refers to such films as "bash-the-Arab movies".

Nevertheless, when Cinescape personnel travel to film festivals, added attention is given to action and horror films because, as indicated above, they are the two genres that attract the largest audiences to their cinemas. Data collected from the survey and from focus group discussions, which provide an insight into why such genres are popular with Kuwaiti audiences, will be explored in the Results and Discussion chapters later in the thesis.

Finally, the third aspect that Cinescape personnel take into account when making film purchases is a film's director. When cinemas buy a film that is successful in drawing large audiences, it is more likely that films created by the same director will be bought again in the future. According to the *auteur* theory, which initiated from an article written by François Truffaut (1954), and entitled *'Une Certaine Tendance du Cinéma Francais'* ['A certain tendency of French cinema'], directors are considered to be a film's main creative influence and drive. The term *auteur* was used by French New Wave theorists that put forward the idea that directors, who are responsible for every audio and visual aspect of a film, are regarded as a film's true authors, rather than the actual screenplay writers (*ibid*). It is evident that Cinescape personnel are aware of certain *auteurs* that are known and acknowledged for their consistent film themes and style when making purchases. For instance, Egyptian films directed by Nader Jalal and Khaled Youssef are likely to be bought because from experience, films directed by these directors generate high levels of ticket sales.

Another main difference between major studio films and independent films is that independent films have different release dates. This is due to independent films being sold to different territories worldwide, with each territory showing the film at a different date. When an independent movie is produced, it is sold to international distributors that buy the rights of the film. Distributors usually own the rights of a particular film from anywhere between five to twelve years, depending on the agreement. For example, Cinescape is the official distributor of the British-produced film *The Queen* (2006). The exclusive rights to the film in the Gulf region have been bought by Cinescape; therefore if any other exhibitor in the region wants to show this movie they are obligated to deal with Cinescape directly, and not the actual company that produced the film. Cinescape would provide the film to them in return for shared revenues, operating in the same way that major studios operate.

As mentioned above, because independent films are sold by territory, the film is not released on the same day in every country. The Middle Eastern territories would include North Africa, the Gulf countries, and some of the Levant countries, such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.[10] Cinema exhibitors claim that they receive many complaints from frustrated customers who accuse the cinema of being 'bad' or 'not up-to-date' for not showing films on the same day they are released in other countries. These customers are unaware of the operation of cinema companies and the processes in which different films are bought and shown.

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[10] The Levant is also known as Region of Syria [*Belad Al-Sham*] or the Eastern Mediterranean. The Levant consists of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Cyprus and parts of southern Turkey (Hatay). Iraq and the Sinai Peninsula are also sometimes included.

2.3.3 ARABIC PRODUCTIONS

The third type of films contracted by Cinescape is 'Arabic Productions'. Most of the Arabic productions come from Egypt since it has the oldest cinema industry in the Middle East. However, in recent years other Arab countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have also been active in producing films. On the whole, Arabic films are treated in the same manner as independent films. The only difference is that Arabic films are sold by smaller regions and not by territory. For instance, when a distributor buys an Arabic film, they own the rights to that film in the Gulf region only, which includes the following countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,[11] and the United Arab Emirates.

2.3.4 BOLLYWOOD PRODUCTIONS

The fourth and final type of films contracted by Cinescape is 'Bollywood Productions'. Indian Bollywood films are similar to 'Major Studio Films' in that they are released in Kuwait at the same time they are released in India. As with 'Major Studio Films', the profits of Indian productions are shared between the producers and the exhibitor. The revenue is shared on a percentage basis in the same manner as major studio films.

From the time the Kuwaiti businessmen first established KNCC (now known as Cinescape) in the early 1950s up until today, cinemas in Kuwait have had a long history of the importation of Indian films. Today, Cinescape is keen on showing Bollywood productions to cater to the

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[11] During the Islamic revival movement in the 1980s, the Saudi government closed all cinemas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). To this day, there is no operational cinema in KSA.

large Indian community in Kuwait. The 2011 census conducted by the Ministry of Planning in Kuwait showed that two-thirds of Kuwait's 3.1 million population consists of foreigners. According to this report, there are approximately one million Indians living in Kuwait, and they currently constitute the largest expatriate community in the country (Al-Jasser, 2012).

2.4   TARGET MARKET

One of the main reasons for the rebranding of KNCC to Cinescape was to update itself to look more appealing to the youth. Cinescape's target market varies depending on what film is showing. Personnel who work in Cinescape's Programs Department were interviewed in order to obtain information about the cinema's film audiences and target market. The interviewees identified how different films were aimed at different target groups, and how they used various means of advertising to reach their target market. Cinescape targets audiences of all age groups; however, their main target market is the youth. They believe that the limited entertainment opportunities available to young people present an opportunity: "everyone looks for entertainment, but if you really think about it, the youth community in Kuwait do not have a lot of things to do" (Cinescape Interviews, 2011). With this statement in mind, Cinescape offers a key source of entertainment for the youth in Kuwait. The fact that the youth make up the majority of Cinescape's customers proves that they are successful in attracting their target market. Nevertheless, the cinema company attempts to attract audiences of all ages by acquiring an assortment of films that appeal to a wide range of age groups.

Cinescape uses a variety of media forms to reach their target audiences. They often advertise in newspapers, magazines, buses, and billboards. As the social media has gained vast worldwide popularity, Cinescape has also set up a Facebook page and a Twitter account to

update their customers on cinema news, offers, new film releases, and to reply to customer queries. Films aimed at the youth are often advertised on Twitter and Facebook, because they believe this is one of the fastest and most efficient ways of reaching their intended audiences.

However, according to Cinescape officials they do not ignore the other age groups. When they feel that a certain film is directed towards an older age group, they ensure that they reach that group by using suitable means. For instance, advertisements in newspapers are employed to gain the attention of older groups, who are more likely to read them. A film that was heavily advertised in newspapers to attract older audiences was *The Help* (2011), a drama that revolves around an aspiring author who sets out to interview, and write from the point of view of African American maids working for white American families during the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

2.4.1 MARKETING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Kuwait is one of the leading Arab countries in terms of Twitter use. With over 235,000 active Twitter users, Kuwait has a 'penetration' (the percentage of the population that uses Twitter) of 8.13%, the highest rate in the entire Middle East region (Bruce, 2012; and Radsch, 2013). According to the Arab Social Media Report (2012), as of 1 March 2012, Kuwait placed second as the country with the highest number of active twitter users, while Saudi Arabia ranked first with a total of 393,000 users.[12] However, one must keep in mind that the population of countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) varies considerably. For

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[12] Only the six countries that are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – were selected from the report for the purpose of comparing results. Please refer to the Arab Social Media Report (2012) for Twitter usage in all other countries within the Middle East.

instance, Kuwait's population is approximately 3.1 million (Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau, 2013), whereas Saudi Arabia has a population of 28.3 million (UN Data, 2013). A detailed rundown of the number of active Twitter users in the GCC can be seen in Figure 1 below.
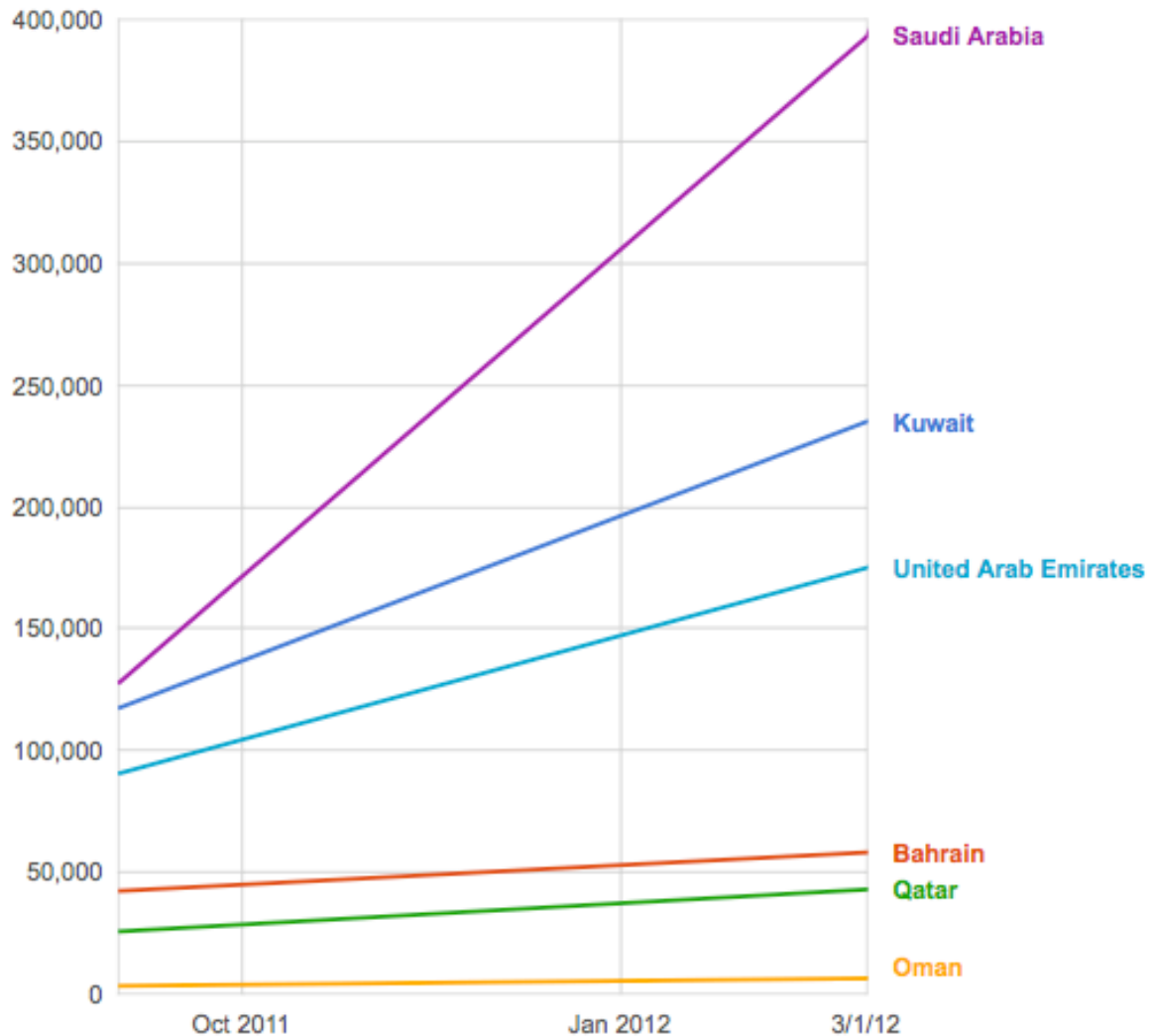
Figure 1: Number of active Twitter users as of 1 March 2012 (Arab Social Media Report, 2012)

As mentioned earlier, because countries in the GCC vary considerably in population size, it is crucial to examine Twitter usage in terms of population 'penetration' percentage, which refers to the percentage of the population that uses Twitter. A detailed rundown on the 'penetration' percentages of GCC countries can be seen in Figure 2 on the next page.
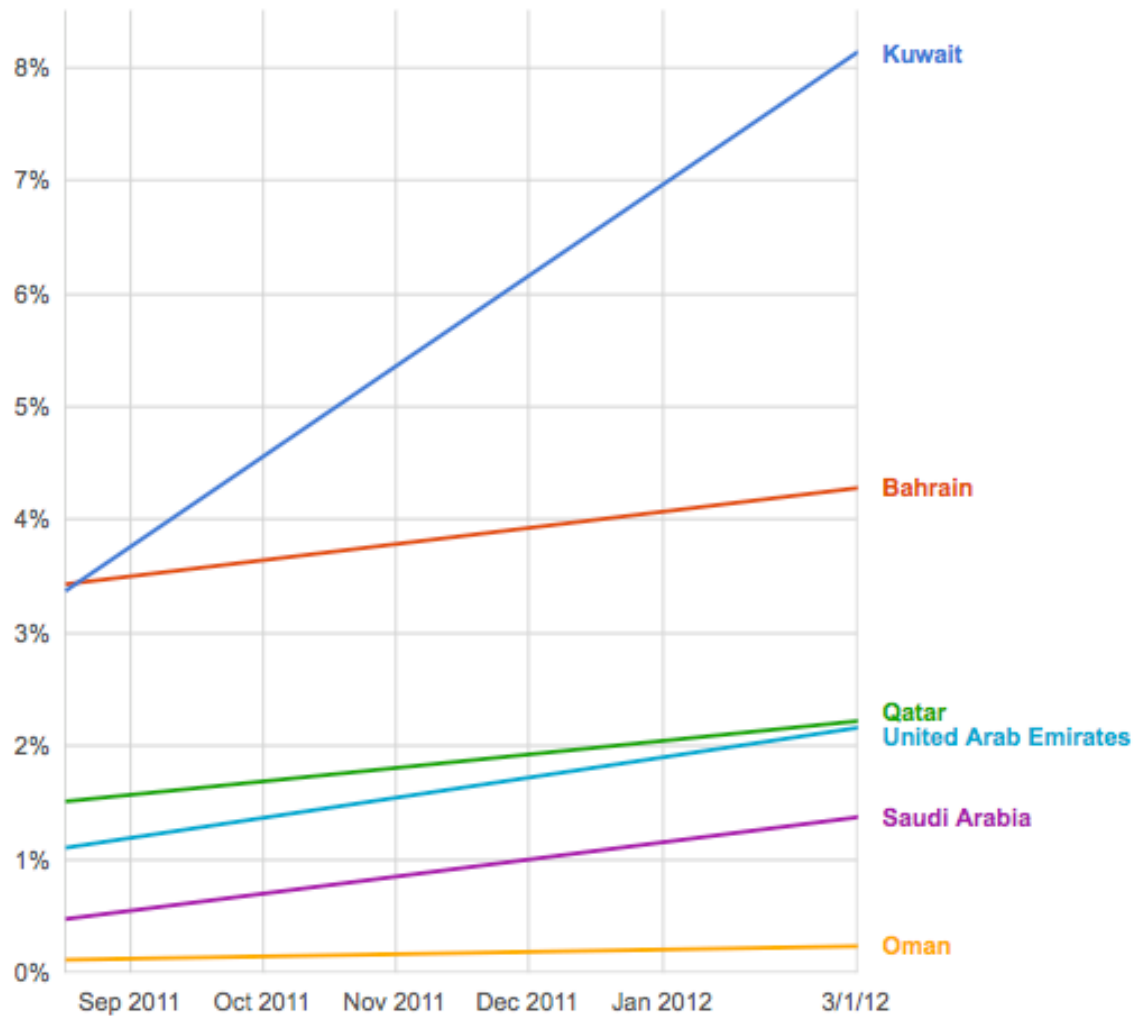
Figure 2: Twitter penetration as of 1 March 2012 (Arab Social Media Report, 2012)

As can be seen above, Kuwait has a percentage of 8.13%, and ranks first out of all the GCC countries in terms of 'Twitter Penetration'. Bahrain has the second highest penetration of 4.28%, followed by Qatar at 2.22%, the United Arab Emirates at 2.16%, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at 1.37%, and Oman at 0.23%.

According to the Arab Social Media Report (2012), of all the GCC countries, Kuwait had the highest number of tweets, 1.9 million as of 1 March 2012. Saudi Arabia came in second with a total of 1.6 million tweets. The United Arab Emirates came in third place with a total of

500,000 tweets. A detailed rundown on the number of Tweets per GCC country from 1 March 2011 to 1 March 2012 can be seen in Figure 3 below.[13]
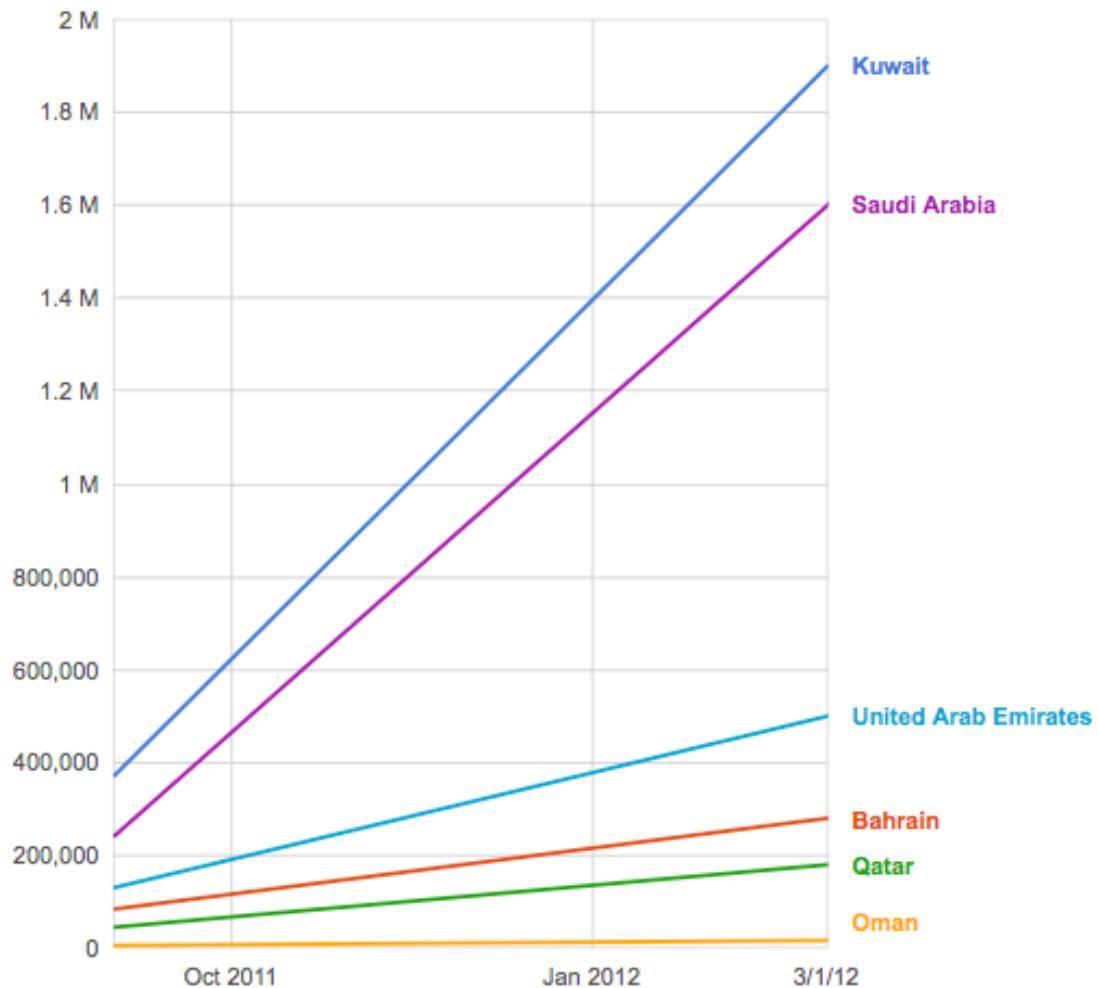
Figure 3: Number of Tweets per country as of 1 March 2012 (Arab Social Media Report, 2012)

Twitter is used not only for personal purposes to voice out opinions; it is also utilized by businesses as a platform to engage with their customers, and to advertise their products and services. Moreover, with the increasing use of social media, customers are less likely to call a

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[13] For more information on the activity of Twitter users within Arab countries please see Appendix 3 on page 285.

company to file a complaint. Instead "people are more likely to head to their smartphones or computers to tell the world how terrible a product or service is" (Sprung, 2013). Companies are aware of this fast-growing trend, and it is for this reason that most well-known organizations are becoming more active in the social media scene. In fact, according to a study conducted by social media analytics specialists 'Simply Measured', 99% of international brands have Twitter accounts, and 30% of them have separate accounts that directly deal with customer service related issues (Stadd, 2013).

Kuwaiti enterprises have also picked up on this trend, and have excelled in promoting their businesses through Twitter. Bruce (2012) reported that there are many examples of Kuwaiti based companies that use Twitter to reach out to their customers. Cinescape is one of many companies in Kuwait that uses Twitter to interact with their customers. Furthermore, social media have offered a new platform for companies to conduct their market research. For instance, in an attempt to find out the age of the majority of Cinescape's Twitter 'followers', the employees responsible for managing the Cinescape Twitter account asked their 'followers' indirectly how old they were by tweeting the following tweet: "Cinescape was born in 1954; when were you born?" According to Cinescape officials, more than 60% of the people that responded to that tweet were born in the 1990s (13-22 years old). This simple question posted on Twitter gave Cinescape officials an indicator as to who their target market are. By posting questions on their Twitter account with the purpose of better understanding their customers' preferences, Cinescape officials are provided with information that can help them make decisions regarding what films they should purchase. Also, by directly communicating with their target market, Cinescape is able to recognize what their customers prefer.

In addition, to make cinema viewing more accessible for their customers, Cinescape have created a Smartphone application that allows customers to book in advance the films they want to watch. The application also allows customers to reserve their preferred viewing seats in the theatre. The application was announced on Cinescape's official Twitter page and, according to cinema officials, within two days the Cinescape application was downloaded into more than 60,000 devices. This indicates that Cinescape's fan base 'followers' on Twitter is active. When Cinescape 'tweets', their customers respond. As a result, Cinescape frequently uses Twitter to effectively advertise the films showing on screens to attract their target audiences.

2.5   CENSORSHIP

Censorship is a major issue that cinema companies in Kuwait have to deal with. Anton K. Kozlovic's (2007: 213) description of how to respond to films that are considered inappropriate fits perfectly to the film-censoring situation in Kuwait. He argues that "the old institutional responses of cinematic prohibition and cinematic abstinence are outmoded, ineffectual and anti-educational, and thus firmly rejected in favour of cinematic moderation, coupled with the critical exercise of discernment". On this basis, any film that contains behaviours considered unacceptable if performed in public in an Islamic country such as Kuwait is censored. Films that contain erotic scenes, which include kissing and sexual intercourse are cut out. Furthermore, profanity, bloody scenes, and excessive violence are often censored too. However, if scenes deemed unsuitable by the Ministry of Information's (MOI) censorship committee occur frequently throughout the film, then the film would most likely be banned entirely.

In addition to banning films that contain too many scenes considered socially inappropriate in a traditional Muslim context, cinemas in Kuwait yield to Islamic conventions that frown upon the depiction of God and the prophets, whether those depictions are in the form of paintings or motion pictures. Christiane Gruber (2015) explains that "Islam has been described as a faith that is largely aniconic—i.e., that tends to avoid images". However, she emphasizes that the Koran does not forbid images of the Prophet, and that "a search for a ban on images of Muhammad in pre-modern Islamic textual sources will yield no clear and firm results whatsoever" (*ibid*). She further emphasizes that for centuries Muslims have produced divine and respectful depictions of the Prophet Muhammad. However, it is evident that depictions of the Prophet changed significantly in the 1500s, from which time his facial features were covered with a veil.

> While images of the Prophet have waned since 1800, there nevertheless exist a number of modern and contemporary representations that reveal a rather unsteady, and thus not cohesive or uniform, approach to the production of Muhammad-centered imagery. While "blessed icons" of the Prophet made in Iran during the 19th and 20th centuries show Muhammad in his full corporeal form and touched by God through the symbol of the golden halo, depictions in Sunni and especially Arab lands remain largely abstract and show a clear preference for textual representations describing his physical attributes.

(Gruber, 2015)

In more recent years, the issue of representing God and the prophets has been more sensitive, especially in Arab countries. In Kuwait, for instance, there are laws that forbid the portrayal of God and the prophets in any media form. Images of "the Prophet, or his family, may not be portrayed on screen, although 'symbolic' figures are allowed" (Wagner, 1970: 129). Consequently, any depiction of God and the prophets, which includes actors pretending to be God or a prophet, even in animations, is banned. This fear of graven images and idols is not

unique to Islam, but is shared by religions of 'the Book' (Kozlovic, 2003). It is for that reason that films such as *Hercules* (1997)*, The Passion of the Christ* (2004), and *Clash of the Titans* (2010) were all banned in Kuwait. The Golden Globe nominated film *Noah* (2014), which stars Oscar-winners Russell Crowe and Anthony Hopkins, is one of the more recent films banned in Kuwait due to its depictions of the prophet Noah. A representative of Paramount Pictures told Reuters that Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates refused to release the film in their countries because "it contradicts the teachings of Islam" (Browning, 2014). The studio representative also added that they expected other Arab states, including Kuwait, to ban the film, which was ultimately the case.

Another theme that is not tolerated by the Ministry of Information (MOI) in Kuwait is the depiction of Arab leaders in a negative light. Consequentially, any film that is perceived to misrepresent or harm the integrity of the State of Kuwait, its ruler, or any friendly neighbouring countries is also banned. This explains why the film *The Kingdom* (2007) directed by Peter Berg, which revolves around a team of FBI agents, who are sent to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to investigate a terrorist bombing that took place in an American oil company housing-compound in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, was also banned by the MOI. The film, starring Oscar-winners Jamie Foxx, Chris Cooper, and Jenifer Garner was inspired by the bombings that took place in the Khobar housing complex on 25 June 1996 in Saudi Arabia. During a discussion with a member of the censorship committee in Kuwait's MOI, an Al Arabiya news reporter was told that "the screening of the film has been banned in Kuwait for many reasons, chiefly because it is a false depiction of facts" (AFP: 2007).

In an interview with Peter Berg, the interviewer Paul Fischer (2007) asked: "There was an article in the *New York Times* said entertainment can trump politics ... What do you say to people who may think this a racist movie?" Berg responded by saying:

It was important to me that this film not leads with its politics. I don't believe that people go to films to be educated. That's certainly not the first and primary reason why people go to films, and if you're too heavy-handed with any message, whatever it is, you're probably going to put people off. I know, I don't go to films to be educated. There are other areas — if I want to be politically educated, there are other ways I would do that than go to a Hollywood film. So it was important to me that the film work as an exciting and dynamic procedural. At its core, this film is about FBI agents trying to investigate a series of homicides in a complicated environment. That's it.

(Fischer, 2007)

Cinescape's official website presents its customers with a list of films that are due for release in the near future. Cinema personnel update this list on a regular basis. Nevertheless, customers often find that films added to list of new releases are suddenly removed from the list on the week they are due to screen in cinemas. This is often due to the MOI banning the film from being shown to the public. It is not uncommon for the MOI in Kuwait to ban films. As a result, Cinescape has added a page on their website entitled 'Banned Movies by MOI', which lists all the films that have been banned by the MOI since 2010. The list is frequently updated.[14] It can be argued that Cinescape have created this page in order to evade customers' frustrations in regard to the banning of films by showing their customers that they have no role in the Ministry of Information's censorship decision-making processes.

In Kuwait, under the Audio-Visual law, decree number 61/2007, no film can be shown to the public without going through the censorship process. Once films are shipped to Kuwait, the cinema company is obligated to collect the films from customs and immediately send them to the MOI for censorship clearance. Once in the possession of the MOI, films are taken to the Censorship Department where it is the responsibility of members of a censorship committee to watch every film that enters Kuwait. Their main duty as a censorship committee is to

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[14] For more information on banned films in Kuwait, please refer to Appendix 4 on page 287.

identify and remove any scenes they believe contradict local norms, traditions, and religious teachings. They also have the authority to ban films. Details as to how and why the censorship committee makes their censorship decisions are discussed further in the following sections. Furthermore, the opinions of young Kuwaitis regarding the film banning and censoring processes that take place in Kuwait are explored in depth in the Results and Discussion chapters.

The censorship committee is typically made up of seven individuals. This odd number gives the seventh member the opportunity to split a decision if a disagreement arises on a certain film. Members of the committee are often employees already working in various departments within the Ministry of Information. The head of the Censorship Department often appoints a censorship committee head that selects the committees' members. Members of the censorship committee members are expected to change frequently. However, during an interview with the current head of the censorship committee, it was asserted that although committee members are supposed to change approximately every six months, this is not always the case. Some members have been part of the committee for six months while others have been re-enlisted to remain as part of the committee for more than six months, and even for years.

In another interview with an employee from the Ministry of Information's Censoring Department, I was told that all seven members rarely come together to watch and censor films. The employee claimed that they would often split the films equally between them. What this means is that a single person from the committee makes all the censoring decisions in regard to that film. The employee also declared that the only time all the committee members would come together to make a collective decision on a particular film is when one of the members is unsure about one of his/her designated films. If one of the members has doubts on a particular film, then all seven members must watch it in order for all of them to

agree on the action to be taken; this process is called 're-screening'. According to committee members re-screening does not occur frequently.

As mentioned earlier, once films are received by the Censorship Department for processing, they are either banned or cleared with censorship. An official paper from the Ministry of Information is sent back to the cinema company along with the necessary modifications that need to be made on the film. The official paper includes exactly what scenes the Censorship Department has requested to be removed. The reason for the removal of any scene is provided in the paper. Without this official clearance document, the cinema company is unable to show the film in their theatres.

When the topic of censorship in Kuwait was raised during an interview with Cinescape officials, they accused the MOI of not having clear guidelines to follow in regard to the banning and censoring of films. They claim that the censorship films undergo is done in accordance with the personal beliefs of individuals in the censoring committee at the time. Members of the censorship committee edit scenes according to what they feel and think is 'suitable' or 'unsuitable'. The danger here is that every individual has his or her own sense of what they acknowledge as being 'acceptable'. This sense of 'acceptable' behaviour portrayed in films all depends on an individual's background, upbringing, thoughts, and beliefs. An individual's conservativeness is also an important factor. For instance, a Western educated member of the censoring committee may view a scene of a man kissing a woman on the cheek as a gesture of friendship or a greeting. Whereas a more religiously conservative member of the censoring committee may view the scene as promoting immoral relationships between men and women who are not married.

The Kuwaiti Constitution states that Islam is the official religion of Kuwait. Islam and the Islamic *Sharia* (Islamic law) are the main sources of the Kuwaiti laws and legislation. The

consumption of alcohol is *haram* [prohibited] in Islam. Therefore, in accordance with Islamic law, Kuwait maintains a ban on all alcoholic sales. However, a black market for alcohol exists, even though penalties for trafficking are severe. The film *The Hangover* (2009) was banned in Kuwait. The censorship committee banned the film due to the connotation of the title itself that suggests the act of consuming alcohol, and the various scenes throughout the film that were directly linked to alcohol consumption. Nevertheless, the following year *The Hangover Part II* (2011) was released, and although various scenes were censored throughout the film, the censorship committee did not ban the sequel despite the fact that it still had the same title. This illustrates the inconsistency of the Censoring Department in Kuwait. This inconsistency depends heavily on that fact that the guidelines given to the censoring committee are vague, and that censoring and banning decisions vary depending on who sits on the committee at the time. It is unknown if the committee that banned the first *Hangover* (2009) film were composed of the same members that passed *The Hangover Part II* (2011).[15] *The Hangover* sequels are discussed further in the Discussion chapter as examples of inconsistent censoring practices.

2.5.1 FILM RATING SYSTEM

Every country in the Gulf has its own system of censoring films.[16] Each country has its own Ministry of Information, Censorship Department, and/or censorship committees that deal with

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[15] During an interview with the head of the censorship committee the question of whether or not the committee that banned the first *Hangover* (2009) film was the same committee that passed the film's sequel was raised. The head of the censorship committee could not verify if the committee that banned the first film was the same committee that passed the sequel 3 years later.

[16] Countries in the Gulf are also known as GCC countries, and they include: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

issues related to film censorship. Therefore, films are brought to any given country in their original form, and are then put through the censorship processes where they are either banned, censored, and/or receive an age rating for its audience. Most countries worldwide apply an age rating to films, whether they are shown in cinemas, television, or in the form of DVDs, VHS and the like.

In America, for instance, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has in place a film rating system, which serves to provide parents with information that helps them determine whether or not they want their children to see a particular film. According to the MPAA:

> Movies can open our children's eyes to new places, cultures and ideas, and parents have an important role in ensuring that experience is positive and enriching. They need the tools to decide what movies are suitable for their children to watch. From understanding how movie ratings work and have evolved with the times to helping parents find movies appropriate for their kids, we want to help make movie-going a positive experience in your family's life.

(MPAA, 2015)

The MPAA rating system was established in 1968 by the MPAA president at that time, Jack Valenti. Prior to this rating system, all films produced in America were subjected to the rigid Motion Picture Production Code, commonly known as the Hays Code. The Hays Code was named after Will H. Hays, the president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) from 1922 to 1945. It was a strict set of censorship principles, which identified what was considered 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' content in film productions.

According to the official MPAA (2015) website, the rating system "endures as a symbol of American freedom of expression". Instead of restricting filmmakers that demanded artistic freedom, the rating system serves to educate audiences about the content they would expect to

see in films. The rating system consists of five ratings: General Audiences 'G', Parental Guidance Suggested 'PG', Parents Strongly Cautioned 'PG-13', Restricted 'R', and No One 17 and Under Admitted 'NC-17'.[17] Some aspects that are taken into consideration when rating a film include: themes, language, violence, nudity, sex, and drug use. The rating's primary purpose is to guide parents. However, the final decision is left to parents who are responsible for allowing or forbidding their children to watch a particular film.

In the case of the United Kingdom, the British Board of Film Classification is also responsible for giving films age ratings. In 1912, the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) was established by the film industry as a sovereign body employed to categorize cinema films in Britain. Films in the United Kingdom are classified into six categories: Universal (suitable for all) 'U', Parental Guidance 'PG', Suitable for 12 Years and Over '12'/'12A', Suitable for 15 Years and Over '15', Suitable for Adults '18', and finally 'R18' which are films shown only to specially licensed cinemas or supplied only to licensed sex shops.[18]

Although the BBFC rate films in Britain, their powers are not absolute. Local councils can overrule any of the BBFC's decisions. They are able to release films rejected by the BBFC, and ban films that the BBFC have previously cleared. They can waive cuts made in films and even make new ones. In addition, they are capable of changing age rating categories for films exhibited under their own licensing jurisdiction. More than seventy years after the BBFC was established, the parliament passed the Video Recordings Act in 1984, which states that hired or sold video recordings in the UK must be classified by an authority designated by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Consequently, the BBFC was given the duty of categorizing films according to age suitability. With this newfound responsibility, the name

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[17] Please refer to Appendix 5 on page 291 for more details on the MPAA ratings.

[18] Please refer to Appendix 6 on page 292 for more details on the BBFC ratings.

of the BBFC was then changed to the British Board of Film Classification, which emphasized the BBFC's role in the categorization more than its part in the censorship of films.

There was no age rating system implemented in Kuwait for films exhibited in cinemas, or those hired or sold for home viewing at the time the first set of interviews with censorship and cinema officials were conducted in December 2011. It was not until February 2013 that Kuwaiti's MOI officially introduced an age rating system for all films sold and shown in Kuwait. The newly introduced age rating system, and some of the criticisms it has received are discussed further in the Discussion chapter. Censorship-related sections in this chapter explain the censoring situation in Kuwait before the launch of film ratings.

Prior to the introduction of the age rating system, all films processed by Kuwait's Censorship Department were censored, and made suitable for audiences of all ages to watch, by editing scenes deemed unacceptable by the censorship committee. This ultimately means that films are heavily censored or simply banned because too many scenes need to be removed. There are many flaws with the Censorship Department's concept of making all films 'family-friendly'. An example of a lapse in the way films were previously censored by members of the censoring committee is when violent scenes in horror films are removed in order to make the films less disturbing. Nevertheless, although the actual violent scenes are removed, the overall theme of horror films itself is still violent and is therefore unsuitable for viewing by younger audiences. Prior to the implementation of age ratings, many children would frequently attend films in cinemas that were unsuitable for their age. Cinemas could not prevent parents from allowing their children to view films inappropriate for their age, because there were no laws that gave cinemas the right to deny children access to certain films.

Employees at Cinescape's Programs Department were often frustrated by some of the Censorship Department's decisions in regard to both the banning and excessive cuts made to

films. They emphasized that most censorship problems occur as a result of the absence of a rating system, and the fact that the censorship committee attempts to correct the situation by making every film suitable for people of all ages through excessive censorship. Cinema personnel stressed that this approach was not an effective solution simply because films have different genres and are made with specific age groups in mind. Nevertheless, the censorship committee attempts to make all films child-friendly, and if they are unable to do so, then the film will often be banned.

According to Cinescape staff, horror films are one of the Kuwaiti audience's most popular genres. Cinescape ticket sales records indicate a high level of admissions for horror films. It was emphasized that any time the censorship committee 'passes' a horror film, the cinema ensures that there is extra popcorn and refreshments available because they are aware that such movies attract large audiences. However, in spite of the high demand for horror films, many horror films are banned in Kuwait due to the violent nature of the genre. The fact that many horror films never make it to cinema screens in Kuwait may be the reason why tickets to horror films sell out when cinemas do show them.

As mentioned above, most horror films are banned in Kuwait for being too violent. The cinema blockbuster *Saw* series were all banned in Kuwait.[19] Cinescape acknowledges that such films are violent, and that they are not suitable for younger audiences. However, they emphasize that banning horror films is not the solution, because when such films are banned in cinemas, Kuwaiti audiences satisfy their craving for horror films by watching them online or by buying pirated DVDs that are readily available throughout Kuwait.

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[19] *Saw,* (2004). Directed by James Wan; *Saw II,* (2005). Directed by Darrn Lynn Bousman; *Saw III,* (2006). Directed by Darrn Lynn Bousman; *Saw IV,* (2007). Directed by Darrn Lynn Bousman; *Saw V,* (2008). Directed by David Hackl; *Saw VI,* (2009). Directed by Kevin Greutert; *Saw 3D,* (2010). Directed by Kevin Greutert.

Data regarding the film viewing habits of the Kuwaiti participants that took part in this study, who are also within the cinema companies' target market, is explored in-depth in the Results and Discussions chapter. According to focus group discussions with Kuwaiti participants, it is widely acknowledged that heavily censored and banned films can easily be bought in the form of uncensored pirated DVDs. On average, these DVDs cost 500 *fils* (approximately £1). Most shops in Kuwait that sell pirated DVDs disguise themselves as legitimate film rental shops. These shops showcase original DVDs on their shelves to avoid being fined and prosecuted by the Kuwait Municipality for selling pirated DVDs. In these shops customers are often greeted by a shop assistant who asks them what exactly they are looking for, and then provides them with a catalogue with an endless list of films. The films they offer range from old black and white to recent blockbusters films. English, Arabic, French, Hindi, and other international films from Japan, China, Indonesia, are also available. Once customers have selected the films they wish to purchase, the assistant will then make a phone call to another employee that works outside the shop in order to provide them with the codes for the selected films. The employee working outside the shop is often located in an apartment nearby. This apartment is set up with all the copying apparatus needed to produce pirated DVDs. The reason for locating the tools used for copying films in another location and for operating outside the shop is to avoid running the risk of being shut down by the Kuwait Municipality when they execute routine random checkups. In general, it takes less than five minutes for the other employee to copy the films onto DVDs and to deliver them by hand to the customer waiting inside the shop.[20]

As stated previously, most horror films are banned because the censorship committee is unable to make them suitable for audiences of all ages. However, due to the widespread

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[20] A family-friend who owns and runs a DVD shop in Kuwait explained to the researcher specific details as to how shops that sell pirated DVDs operate.

availability of pirated films, people in Kuwait can still watch films that are banned by the MOI. During the time interviews were conducted with Cinescape personnel (pre-rating system), they strongly suggested that instead of banning films because they are unsuitable for younger audiences, the MOI needed to implement some sort of age rating system that regulated cinema audiences. They emphasized that a rating system would restrict children from watching films deemed unsuitable for their age, while allowing older audiences to enjoy horror films in the way they are meant to be experienced, in a cinema setting.

During the same interview, cinema officials claimed that in the past children under the age of three were not charged for entering cinemas. However, parents appeared to take advantage of this fact and began taking their toddlers to films that were inappropriate for their age. Since cinemas could not prevent parents from taking their children to watch films, Cinescape revoked the free child pass in an attempt to put parents off from bringing their young children to cinema theatres. Nevertheless, this has still not prevented some parents from paying the fee and taking their children to unsuitable films. Cinescape officials also pointed out that many customers would often complain to the management for allowing young children to enter films clearly unsuitable for their age. However, as mentioned earlier, before the rating system was introduced, cinemas had no control over who to allow and who to refuse into their theatres. Employees working for Cinescape highlighted that instead of complaining to the Ministry of Information, customers are quick to vent out their frustrations on cinemas. According to Cinescape's Programs manager, this is because "the communication between the people and us has become much easier. It's very easy to blame us now since we have a Twitter account, a Facebook page, an email address, and a call center" (Cinescape Interviews, 2011).

It was also emphasized that customers blame cinemas for many things that they as a cinema company have no control over. For instance, many customers leave a film disappointed from the excessive censorship imposed on certain films. They often complain to Cinescape's management demanding a refund. Cinema officials agree with some of the censorship decisions made by the censoring committee. They agree that scenes of a sexual nature, for instance, should be removed, because of the conservative Kuwaiti culture, and Islamic values deeply rooted in Kuwaiti society. Such acts are perceived as being sacred, and should not be publicly displayed. However, some of the censoring decisions made by the committee appear to be too conservative, even for Kuwaitis themselves. For instance, in Disney's animation *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), the climax of the film was censored, and the four-second scene where Tiana kisses the frog in order to break the spell and transform him back into a human was removed. The committee felt the need to censor the scene, even though it was a well-known story, the characters were animated, and the kiss had no lustful connotations.

In the first visit to the Ministry of Information's Censorship Department on 22 December 2011, I was given the opportunity to speak with an ex-censorship committee member. I asked the interviewee the reason why the Ministry has not implemented some sort of age rating system for films in Kuwait.[21] The reason I was given was: "I have heard of the idea of implementing a rating system more than 10 years ago. However, we have never seen any real actions being taken for this system to be utilized. It always reaches to the highest level [the minister] and stops" (MOI Interviews, 2011). When I asked why it stops, the interviewee gave a sarcastic laugh and stated: "They're too afraid to make a decision like that because it could give them a headache with *Majlis AlUmma* [the National Assembly]. They just pass on this burden to the next minister to decide what to do with it, and the next minister will pass it on to

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[21] The rating system had not yet been implemented during the time the first set of interviews with employees in the Censorship Department was conducted.

the next minister, and so on" (*ibid*). The significance of the Kuwaiti National Assembly and its members of parliament, and the role they play in the censorship of films are explored further in the following section.

2.5.2 CINEMA AND THE KUWAITI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The National Assembly in Kuwait is the equivalent to the House of Commons in the United Kingdom. The National Assembly is made up of fifty members of parliament that are elected by the people of Kuwait. The fifty-seat house is elected every four years. The National Assembly also currently includes sixteen ministers that are in charge of twenty-two ministries in Kuwait, with some ministers being in control of more than one ministry.[22] Political parties are illegal in the State of Kuwait; even through the Kuwaiti constitution does not prohibit them. In theory, candidates running for the National Assembly of Kuwait elections stand in a personal capacity. However, in practice, several political groups that act as *de facto* parties exist. Conservative members of parliament in a Kuwaiti context are considered to be traditionalists or members of an Islamic *de facto* party such as, the Islamic Salafi Alliance or Islamic Constitutional Movement. Many of them aim to change the Second Article of the Kuwaiti constitution to make Islam the only source of legislation. Many liberal members of parliament are part of the Democratic Foundation of Kuwait. They are part of a leftist political faction that is often backed by the National Democratic Youth Association, which aims to develop a new generation of Kuwaitis that are interested in public affairs, politics, and human rights. Conservative MPs often accuse liberal MPs of trying to Westernise Kuwaiti society.

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[22] The ruler of Kuwait (the *Amir*) is the only person who has the power to appoint Ministers. No one can interfere with the decision made by the *Amir* in regard to his selection of ministers, not even members of the parliament.

The current relationship between members of parliament and ministers is strained, so much so that ministers often dread making decisions, in fear of the members of parliament who are ready to call them out to question their actions. This is one of the reasons behind the Censorship Department's irregular censoring patterns. Employees from both Cinescape and the Censoring Department assert that the censorship committee allow or ban certain films depending on the majority of the current members of parliament. For instance, if the majority of the members of parliament that were elected in any given term were 'conservative', then the censorship committee would be stricter in the way they censor films to avoid having the Minister of Information undergo a grilling. However, if the majority of the members of parliament were 'liberals', then the censorship committee would be more lenient in their censoring process.

2.6   KUWAITI PRODUCTIONS

The first Kuwaiti full-feature film ever produced in the State of Kuwait was entitled *Bas Ya Bahar* [That's Enough Sea] in 1971, and was directed by Khalid Al Saddiq.[23] It is a period piece about Kuwait before the discovery of oil when fishing was the predominant occupation. Recognized for being the first feature film to be produced in Kuwait, this film leaves a significant mark in the history of Kuwait's developing film industry. *Bas Ya Bahar* is the story of a crippled pearl diver who forbids his son Mussaid to go to sea in search of precious pearls. A shark attack has left Mussaid's father's left arm crippled. However, the boy cannot see any other way to earn enough money for Noura's *mahr* [a dowry traditionally given to the

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[23] 'That's Enough Sea' is the literal translation of *Bas Ya Bahar*. However, it is also referred to as 'Cruel Sea' on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb).

bride and her family by the groom in Muslim societies]. Finally, his father gives Mussaid permission to go to sea to be a pearl diver and even gives him his old diving kit. While Mussaid is away, Noura is forced by her family to marry a rich, older suitor. During his last dive Mussaid puts his hand in a giant clam, which closes shut. As Mussaid gasps for air, his friend Bader is forced to amputate his hand in order to rescue him. However, Mussaid does not make it, and is pronounced dead upon his arrival to the boat. During the night Bader rummages through his deceased friend's sack to find three oysters, when he opens the first oyster he was shocked to find what every pearl diver risks his life for, a *dana* (the biggest, and most precious type of pearl). Mussaid's death may not have been in vain after all. When the boat reaches Kuwait, Mussaid's shipmate gives Mussaid's father his son's diving kit and informs him of the loss of his son. Mussaid's mother cries hysterically on the beach. Bader hears her cries, and approaches her. He then gives her Mussaid's prize, the *dana* for which he lost his life in search of. The distraught mother stares at the sea with anger and screams, "you exchanged me the most precious *dana* for the worst *dana*!" and throws the *dana* back into the sea.

The film lasts 106 minutes, and won a number of awards at international film festivals. It was the first prize recipient in the Damascus Film Festival in 1972. It also received an honour award in Tehran International Film Festival in 1972, and won the International Critics' Award in Venice International Film Festival in 1972. *Bas Ya Bahar* has made a lasting impression on the people Kuwait and the Gulf region in general, because it was the first film that portrayed the way people from the Gulf lived during the pre-oil era. Therefore, it was no surprise that *Bas Ya Bahar* was mentioned in every focus group discussion conducted as part of this study (results of the focus group discussions will be discussed later in the thesis).

Over forty years have passed since *Bas Ya Bahar* (1971) was produced. During this period only a few feature films have been made. However, recently, particularly during the past decade, Kuwaiti producers and directors have once again focused on producing feature films. *Losing Ahmed* (2006), *Shabab Cool* (2007), *Cute* (2008), *Al-Dinjwana* (2009), and *Ma'atoog fee Bangkok* (2010), *Hello Cairo* (2011), and *Tora Bora* (2011) are some of the most recent. These films were shown to the Kuwaiti public in Cinescape's screens. According to Cinescape officials, they exceeded the cinema company's expectations in regard to overall attendance and profits made. The films were popular with Kuwaiti audiences because they were produced by 'real Kuwaitis' and depicted a realistic representation of Kuwait and its people. Kuwaiti films offer audiences a sophisticated representation of Kuwaitis that Western films often lack. Unlike Western films that fail to show the diversity that exists within Arab countries, films produced by Arabs excel in depicting these differences.

The most recent full-feature film produced in Kuwait is directed by one of Kuwait's most famous film directors – Walid Al-Awadi – and is entitled *Tora Bora* (2011). Although the film was released in cinemas throughout Kuwait, it has yet to be distributed in other formats and, as a result, is not available for home viewing. Therefore in order to discover more about the film, an interview with Walid Al-Awadi was conducted in his film production studio in Kuwait City. During the interview Al-Awadi told the story of *Tora Bora*, which revolves around an elderly Kuwaiti couple, *Abu* Tareq [*Abu* translates to father in English] and *Om* Tareq [*Om* translates to mother in English][24] who travel to Afghanistan in search of their youngest son Ahmed who has been brainwashed by Islamic extremists. Ahmed joins a camp in Tora Bora, and is given a suicide mission. Tareq, the eldest child of the elderly couple seeks to find and rescue his family with the support of Pakistani intelligence. *Tora Bora* offers

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[24] It is common practice in Arabic societies for men and women to be called 'father of' or 'mother of' followed by their first-born son's name. Example: father of Tareq and mother of Tareq.

a portrayal of the suffering and devastation the war has had on the people of Afghanistan. In addition, the film portrays how the decisions of one family member can cause so much hardship and grief for an entire family in Kuwait.

Tora Bora (2011) lasts 102 minutes, and was shown at numerous international film festivals. The film first made headlines when it made its debut at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011. Later, in 2012, the film opened the fifth round of the Gulf Film Festival held in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and received a special jury prize. *Tora Bora* was also nominated in the Arab Film Category at the 35th Cairo International Film Festival.

Typically, films produced by Arab filmmakers reflect a more realistic account of issues concerning Arabs. Furthermore, Arab filmmakers that share their films worldwide through international film festivals are in fact actively countering the distorted representations of Arabs often projected in films produced in the West. In an interview conducted by the Kuwait News Agency (2012), director Al-Awadi declared that he considers his film's participation in international festivals as "a source of pride". The message Al-Awadi sends out through the film is "to reject extremism in all its forms, whether political, intellectual or religious". He further emphasized that the Arab youth must be aware of illegitimate groups that pursue corruption in the name of Islam and Arabs.

Cinescape bought the film's distribution rights in Kuwait, and was shown in all thirteen of their venues. During an interview with a manager from Cinescape, it was asserted that the film achieved more than they had expected in regard to admission sales. *Tora Bora* was first shown on the 29th of August 2011, and sales records obtained from Cinescape showed that a

total of 56,611 tickets were sold during the 6 weeks it ran.[25] Perhaps one of the main reasons

that motivated Kuwaiti audiences to attend the film in cinemas was the fact that the film's

producer, director, and most of the cast were Kuwaitis. Since the vast majority of the films

shown in cinemas in Kuwait are imported from abroad, the very few films that are locally

produced are often greeted by an eager audience that are in search of films that they feel they

can genuinely relate to.

Films produced by Kuwaiti filmmakers often challenge the Arab stereotypes that are apparent

in most Hollywood productions. But stereotypes are not only apparent in Hollywood films.

Kuwaiti and *Khaleeji*[26] stereotypes can also be found in other Arab productions (especially

Egyptian films), which tend to depict Kuwaitis and *Khaleejis* as either being filthy rich, or as

drunken womanizers. The issue of Kuwaiti stereotypes in Arabic productions is discussed

further in the Discussion chapter. Nevertheless, having the advantage of emerging from the

society in which they are representing, Kuwaiti filmmakers offer audiences more accurate

depictions of Kuwaiti society. In return Kuwaiti audiences appreciate these more authentic

portrayals that reflect their culture and traditions.

2.7 SUPPORTING KUWAITI FILMMAKERS

During interviews conducted with Cinescape officials, the topic of how they, as Kuwait's only

cinema company at the time, gave something back to the local filmmaking community was

raised. Their enthusiastic responses emphasized that they are active in the development of the

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[25] The number of tickets sold for *Tora Bora* was obtained from Cinescape's sales records, which were given to
the researcher in a meeting with a Cinescape manager, held on 1 August 2013 in their headquarters in 360 Mall.

[26] *Khaleeji* is a term given to people from the six Gulf (*Khaleej* in Arabic) countries.

Kuwaiti film industry, and that they attempt to support local Kuwaiti filmmakers by holding competitions that aim to encourage young filmmakers to produce films. They also host various film events at their venues, where filmmakers can hold screenings for the press. Cinescape encourages local filmmakers to contact them in order to negotiate the date, time and place for such events to take place. Furthermore, as an incentive, they offer these services free of charge to Kuwaiti filmmakers. They are also able to provide filmmakers with news coverage and recognition, by employing their networks and connections to contact bloggers and journalists to attend such film screenings. However, it was stressed that if Kuwaiti filmmakers want to show their film to the public, Cinescape must first evaluate the film thoroughly as it is their responsibility as a reputable cinema company to ensure that the film is of a certain standard before it can be shown to the public in their cinemas.

Another way Cinescape support and encourage local filmmakers is by showing short films directed by Kuwaiti filmmakers among the trailers, and often before the start of a Hollywood blockbuster. This helps give local filmmakers recognition, and sheds light on some of their work. For instance, two three-minute short films directed by two different Kuwaiti filmmakers were shown before the screening of *Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol* (2011), which, according to sales records, was among the top ten most popular films shown in Cinescape that year. Cinescape also works closely with local universities in an attempt to support media students. For instance, they provide Kuwait University's Media Club with transportable projectors and cinema screens to showcase their projects. Anas Al-Rasheed, who served as Minister of Information from March 2006 to May 2007, is currently teaching Media Studies at Kuwait University. Al-Rasheed assigned his graduating class a film production project, which required students to produce a five-minute short film. Cinescape were approached to host the class project, and they agreed to screen the students' short films in one of their venues free of charge. Cinescape agreed to showcase the media students' work

in order to grant the students a sense of achievement whilst they watch their films on the cinema's big screen. This was done in the "hopes of inspiring the young students to work on developing Kuwait's film industry in the future" (Cinescape Interviews, 2011).

In addition, as part of Cinescape's 'bridging cultures through film' initiative, they have collaborated with various embassies in Kuwait in order to organize frequent foreign film festivals. For instance, in association with the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait, Cinescape hosted the Japanese Animation Festival in November 2011. Cinescape also annually organizes a French Movie Festival in association with the French Embassy. All these events and festivals are organized free of charge, and in the words of Cinescape's Programs manager:

> What we as a cinema company try to do is to create cultural bridges. We work with foreign embassies in Kuwait in order to build these cultural bridges. As a cinema company we care to spread the cultures of other countries, because this creates understanding and respect between nations. We organize these events free of charge in order to motivate people in Kuwait to attend such events, and learn about other people, cultures, and traditions through film.

Another Film Festival hosted by Cinescape is called the Kuwait Film Retreat. This event is different from any other film event hosted in Kuwait because all the films shown are exclusively directed and produced by Kuwaitis. Filmmakers, directors, and members of foreign diplomatic communities in Kuwait are invited to attend. Foreigners residing in Kuwait are also invited, and are encouraged to attend this film festival in order to experience local film productions first hand which offer an authentic Kuwaiti flavour that cannot be found in other film productions.

Events such as the Kuwait Film Retreat give local filmmakers the opportunity to develop new relationships within the local and international filmmaking industry. For instance, in the last Kuwait Film Retreat, officials from the Egyptian Embassy were so impressed with a number

of the Kuwaiti films that after the event they contacted the directors and informed them that they were willing to help them show their films in various film festivals held in Egypt. According to Cinescape officials, the main goal is to improve relations by gaining knowledge and understanding of the various cultures of the world. Most importantly, events such as the ones mentioned above offer Kuwaiti filmmakers a platform on which to present their work to audiences that have primarily been exposed to the Hollywood productions that project inaccurate and often negative stereotypical representations.

Naif Al-Mutawa, creator of Islamic comic superheroes *The 99,* is a prime example of a Kuwaiti creative thinker who was unhappy with the current manner in which Arabs and Muslims were represented in the Western media. Al-Mutawa took the initiative to challenge Western depictions of Arabs and Muslims by creating new representations that project Arabs and Muslims in a more positive light.

> *The 99* is the first group of comic superheroes born of an Islamic archetype. *The 99* has received positive attention from the world's media. Recently, Forbes named *The 99* as one of the top 20 trends sweeping the globe and most recently, President Barack Obama praised Dr. Naif and *The 99* as perhaps the most innovative of the thousands of new entrepreneurs viewed by his Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship.[27]
>
> (Al-Mutawa, 2013)

In an interview with me, Al-Mutawa he stated that:

> *The 99* is a reference to the 99 attributes of Allah in the Quran. These attributes, when not in their absolute form, inform the core of good human values. I was sick and tired

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[27] To view the short video of President Obama talking about *The 99* please visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xULeq3JrAEk [Accessed 15 August 2013].

of people linking their violent acts to Allah and decided to challenge them by linking

the basic human values they represent as a further link to the rest of humanity.[28]

During the interview, I asked him what had inspired him to create his comic superheroes. His

response was: "I was simply unhappy with the way we were represented and I thought I

should do something to challenge these representations". Al-Mutawa believes that change can

only occur when people begin to take calculated actions, and asserts that the representation of

Arabs and Muslims in Western media will likely continue to remain negative as long as Arabs

and Muslims do not take the initiative to represent themselves. The opinions of the young

Kuwaitis in regard to the way Arabs are depicted in Hollywood films, and the way they

negotiate these representations are explored in the Discussion chapter.

2.8   SUMMARY

This chapter has offered a detailed explanation as to how the first cinema in Kuwait was

established, and the development process that the Kuwait National Cinema Company has

gone through from its early beginnings is presented. Furthermore, the behind-the-scenes

operations that cinema companies manage when purchasing films is discussed. The cinema

company's target audience, and the way in which the company communicates with them are

also addressed. The relationship between cinema companies and the Ministry of Information's

Censorship Department is also investigated. Particular attention is given to the role that the

censorship committee plays when making censorship decisions. Finally, the chapter draws

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[28] Naif Al-Mutawa was interviewed on 18 December 2013 in his office at The Soor Center for Psychological
Counseling and Assessment in Kuwait City.

attention to the local filmmaking industry, and presents examples of Kuwaiti film productions.

The next chapter offers an overview of the available literature that serves as a basis for this research. Key studies conducted by scholars and researchers that tackle the issue of media representations, power, and ideology will be explored before moving on to an in-depth investigation as to how young Kuwaitis negotiate the issue of Arab representations in Hollywood films.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1   ARAB REPRESENTATIONS IN HOLLYWOOD FILMS

Literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth century that depicts the East, especially Arabs and Muslims, was used as the basis for many of the early images of Arabs in Hollywood's productions. Cinema did not create new representations of the East and its people. When the cinema industry first began producing films, filmmakers simply took existing depictions from literature, paintings and other visual imagery inspired by Orientalists (Ramji, 2005; Andrews, 2014). Extensive studies conducted by various researchers (Poole, 2002; McAlister, 2005; Khatib, 2006) investigate how ideology and myths have been utilized by Hollywood as defamatory devices when depicting the Middle East and its inhabitants.

In an article entitled 'The Wild East: Deconstructing the Language of Genre in the Hollywood Eastern' (2002), John Eisele argues that a genre labeled 'the Eastern', which deals specifically with the Middle East, should be created. Subgenres would typically include films with 'Arabian Nights', 'sheik', 'Foreign Legion', and 'terrorist' themes. He also asserts that the Middle East provides a "unifying narrative" that furthers a "long-standing European tradition of using the East as a sounding board for the creation of myths of identity" (*ibid*: 91).

Edward Said's highly influential book *Orientalism,* which was first published in 1978, can be considered a foundation that serves to provide an in-depth and multi-layered explanation to the relationship that exists between Arabs and Westerners. Said emphasizes that the Orient in Orientalist discourse provides a realm in which Europeans could freely express their fantasies "according to a logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections" (Said, 2003: 8). In this study, the use of Said's (1997; 2003) work, which is both deep and vast, will be narrowed down to the notion of 'Otherness'. An analysis of the notion of Middle Easterners' 'Otherness' serves to justify the construction of Western thought, and the ways in which Westerners developed their image and defined themselves by defining the 'Other' (Fries, 2005).

This study sets out to investigate whether the images of the Middle East and its people are established through observation and critique, or organized depictions based on imperial motives. Eagleton (2011) argues that to clearly see how the hegemonic forces of American supremacy are hidden in Hollywood films, it is crucial to understand how stereotypes have evolved in Hollywood since its early beginnings. Said (2003) illustrates four Orientalist dogmas revolving around the depiction of Arabs and Muslims. The first is to create obvious differences that divide and set apart the West from the East. The second factor promotes generalized perceptions about the East, whilst ignoring the diversity that exists within the Middle East. The third dogma suggests that "the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically 'objective'" (*ibid*: 301). The fourth and final dogma encourages the idea that the East is a dangerous place that is in need of Western control and discipline. These dogmas can easily be identified in Hollywood films, where stereotypical depictions related to Arabs, that are often

linked to exoticism, serve to further strengthen the notion that 'they' [Arabs] are different from 'us' [Westerners].

In the book *Home/Land/Security: What We Learn About Arab Communities from Action-adventure Films* (2009), Karin Gwinn Wilkins points out that there is a high volume of literature that discusses the narrow representations of Arab societies, Islam, and the Middle East, which can be found in popular culture and news narratives. She asserts that little is known about the consequences of these representations. Thus, using comparative approaches, her research sets out to explore how Arab-Americans, along with members from other communities in America, map fear and danger through their engagement with action-adventure films. Although her research provides insightful findings in regard to the way Arab-American audiences and members of other communities differ in the way they interpret and negotiate villain characters (specifically Arabs and Muslims) in action-adventure films, like many other studies that aim to offer an insight on the consequences of distorted images of Arabs, this research also only offers an Arab-American perspective to the issue.

Even though the opinions of Arab-Americans are just as important and valid as the opinions of Arabs living in the Middle East, it must be pointed out that although Arab-Americans are originally from the Arab world, many may not associate themselves with the Arabs depicted in Hollywood films. Therefore it is essential to develop research further, by conducting studies that investigate the way Arabs living in the Middle East decode and negotiate the mediated image of themselves (Arabs) in Hollywood films, which is exactly what this thesis sets out to do. Some of the results from Wilkins' (2009) study will be discussed further in this chapter.

Jack Shaheen, former consultant for the Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, New York City's Commission on Civil Rights,

and CBS News on Middle Eastern affairs, is arguably one of the most well-known scholars that has dedicated his career to extensively tackling the issue of Arab representations and stereotypes in films. Shaheen is the author of several books that serve to address and challenge the media's damaging stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims. These publications include *The TV Arab* (1984), and *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* (2008). However, his most iconic piece of literature is the award-winning book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001). In a meticulous and comprehensive study that concludes with the identification of over nine hundred films, Shaheen carries out the painstaking task of identifying every film ever produced that features Arabs, from the earliest days of cinema to modern Hollywood blockbusters. The book was updated in 2009 to add another three hundred films. Upon analysing over one thousand films that portray Arabs, Shaheen (2009) listed over two hundred offensive epithets that have been used to describe them. Some of these epithets include: 'buffoon', 'terrorist', 'dirty sheikh', 'camel-humper', 'filthy swine', 'towel-head', 'dog', 'half-savage', 'Mideast maggot', 'camel fart', and 'sand-nigger'.[29] The use of such degrading names to refer to Arabs and Muslims is still evident in films that have been recently released.

One way Shaheen examines the development of Arab characters in film is by linking them to the developments made in the portrayals of other marginalized groups, such as Jews, Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics. Hollywood is perceived to constitute the propaganda machine, which portrays economic, political and cultural conditions that advance the image of America whilst degrading the image of others. This is especially true in films where the plot revolves around a conflict between Americans and Arabs. These conflicts often occur when Arabs strike an unprovoked attack on Americans. Films that demonstrate this

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[29] See page 581 in Jack Shaheen's second edition of the book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* for the full list of epithets directed at Arabs in films.

pattern include *The Siege* (1998), *Rules of Engagement,* (2000), *The Point Men* (2001), and *Red Mercury* (2005).

Shaheen (2000b) describes the film *Rules of Engagement* (2000) as being one of the most racist movies he has ever seen. The film revolves around a fictional conflict that takes place in current day Yemen. Audiences are presented with a mob of Yemenis, including angry men, women and children, shouting and chanting with hate in Arabic "America! America! Withdraw from Yemen!" (0:16:25), as they surround the American Embassy in Yemen's capital, Sana'a. No explanation for the Yemenis' behaviour is provided for the audience. According to Karim (2000), this tradition of emphasizing violent acts in the media, without giving explanation as to what caused these actions, is deeply related to power relations. The scene then shifts inside the embassy and the audience witnesses a conversation between the ambassador's wife and her frightened son, as she worryingly explains that "the people are upset about some things" (Friedkin, 2000: 0:17:10) and that "they want attention, they're trying to get attention" (*ibid*: 0:17:18). Like many films before, Arabs are portrayed as weak emotional people who have no self-control and act upon emotions, unlike their Western counterparts who are more refined and disciplined. Audiences are told that the Yemenis are 'upset', however, the film fails to explain what they are upset about. Nowhere during the 128 minutes is it made clear as to why the Yemenis have rallied outside the American embassy. By not giving a reason for the Arabs' behaviour in regard to the Yemenis' grievance, audiences are not given the chance to have any sympathy towards the Yemenis, who are portrayed as a mob who are simply out there to cause havoc.

Colonel Terry Childers, the main character in the film played by Samuel L. Jackson, is a career marine. He and his men have been sent to rescue the ambassador and his family. As the colonel and his men take their positions on the embassy's rooftop, Yemeni snipers shoot

aimlessly at them. Childers appears to have arrived just in time, dodging bullets as he guides the ambassador, his wife and son to the helicopter waiting on the roof. Once the ambassador and his family are safely in the helicopter, Childers realizes that the American flag has not been taken down and he bravely turns back to retrieve it. Risking his life, Childers crawls towards the flagpole and begins to lower the flag as Yemini snipers continue to shoot at it. Once it is in his hand, he quickly folds the flag in a triangular shape and delivers it back to the ambassador on the rooftop. The gunfire intensifies as marines struggle to keep control. Childers is shown crawling on his elbows as he passes two blood covered injured marines, followed by two other dead marines. Finally a bullet hits Childers. He looks down at the shooting crowd (audiences however do not witness gunfire coming from the ground) and orders his marines to engage in hostile fire into the crowd. "Are you ordering me to fire into the crowd?" (*ibid*: 0:28:50) questions one of the captains. "Yes, goddam it! Waste the motherfuckers!" (*ibid*: 0:28:52) affirms Childers. With that, the Americans open fire at the crowd below, and the bodies of 83 dead Yemenis lie scattered on the ground as women scream and weep. Childers then looks down at the scene below and declares the "mission complete" (*ibid*: 0:30:44).

It must be pointed out that the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Marine Corps cooperated with the producers *Rules of Engagement* (2000) in order to produce the film. This is not the first time that U.S. governmental agencies have collaborated with Hollywood producers to produce films that have purposely presented Arabs in a negative stereotypical light. The Department of Defense, the Marines, the Navy, the National Guard and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have all been involved in assisting with the production of films that have demonized Arabs and Muslims. According to Shaheen (2009: 21) it appears as though the Pentagon condones 'bash-the-Arab' type films by offering support to "[m]ore than fourteen feature films, all of which show Americans killing Arabs". Some of these films

include: *Navy Seals* (1990), *True Lies* (1994), *Executive Decision* (1996), *The Siege* (1998), and many more.

During a news briefing session that took place on 20 April 2000 at the Pentagon, spokesman Kenneth Bacon was asked to comment on the Department of Defense's involvement in Hollywood productions, and on the film *Rules of Engagement* (2000) specifically. The following excerpt was taken from the Department of Defense's news briefing transcript.

> Q: Arab American groups are protesting outside of this movie *Rules of Engagement*, complaining that the film is racist in the depictions of Arabs -- racist and so on. And one of the things that they are complaining -- at least to CNN -- about is that the Defense Department did provide support to the producers of this movie -- and are calling into question DOD support of a movie that would put forward a racist view of any ethnic group or a derogatory view of any other group. What sort of criteria does DOD use for providing support to projects like this? And is that sort of thing a consideration when the scripts are reviewed?

> MR. BACON: Our primary consideration is making sure that movies provide a fair and, hopefully, accurate, portrayal of the military. We tend not to support movies that put the military in situations that we do not support. For instance, if a movie showed the military taking a light view of a mutiny on board a ship, we would not support such a movie because we would never be in that position. If a movie showed us condoning discrimination as a policy, we would not support a movie like that because the military does not support discrimination as a policy; we condemn discrimination. And fairness is our policy. So that really governs how we make decisions about supporting movies.

> Q: What about in this particular instance, where the Arab American anti-defamation groups and so on, claim that this is just a flagrantly racist depiction of Arab people? Is that the kind of thing that is part of the process when you are considering what to provide support to and what not to?

MR. BACON: Our consideration really focuses on the portrayal of the military. We have to obviously balance how we work with movie production companies. They have a right to make the movies any way they want to make them. We pay attention to how they portray the military when we decide whether to support the movie or not.

(U.S. Department of Defense, 2000)

Shaheen (2000b) criticizes Bacon's statement by emphasizing that what Bacon basically means is "that as long as the film's marines look good, it's perfectly permissible to show them gunning down Arabs". Shaheen then questions whether Bacon would have reconsidered his statement if it were Israeli civilians that were shot down by the marines instead of Yemenis.

The Arab characters in many of Hollywood's films are presented as being less than human. They only understand the language of violence. Any force used by Western protagonists against the Arabs is justified, and audiences are left to believe that it was even necessary. This concept not only applies to films but in real life situations and in America's foreign policy. In an interview with Jack Valenti, the former president and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), explained the relationship between Hollywood and the objectives of the U.S foreign policy. He emphasized that in order to win a war, the public's support was vital. Thus it was the film industry's role to prepare the American public for the events to come, and stressed that "Hollywood is a seamless web on this project, we are all united" (Valenti, 2002: 71). When he was told that the majority of Americans lacked knowledge about the Muslim world he stated:

Well, we know one thing about the culture of some of these people we are dealing with. They only understand force. To back down in the face of someone who has hit your family is to show weakness and softness. If you are not willing to avenge the death of your own, then you are nothing. So, this is a war where you cannot be hesitant. Benevolence is a word that must be struck from our vocabulary in this war.

(Valenti, 2002: 71)

The representation of Arabs and the Middle East in Hollywood films is constructed through various "multifaceted factors that shape the relationship between the stereotypical portrait and American imperial objectives in the region" (Arti, 2007: 17). Furthermore, the continuous use of stereotypes demonstrates how Orientalist views of the 'Other' are still apparent in Hollywood films today. It is common for Arab characters in films to generally be the polar opposite of Western ones. This clear divide differentiates the two sets of characters, and creates a mental image that remains in audiences' psyches. Hall's (1997) description of the three main features associated with stereotypes, includes the reduction of people to certain traits, creating differences, and being a result of imbalanced power relations. It is obvious that all three aspects that Hall identifies are present when discussing the issue of Arab stereotypes in Hollywood films.

Hollywood has been accused of presenting a distorted image of various groups, countries and nations (Deep, 2002). The Middle East and the people living there are one of the many constituencies that have been alienated from the rest of the world chiefly due to Hollywood's constant negative representations. This power and ability to alienate certain groups has been exercised by Hollywood from the very early days of its establishment. Since its inception Hollywood films have typically depicted Arab-Muslims as:

> one of the three "Bs," namely, "billionaires, belly dancers or bombers", who, as the prototypical Other (as perceived by the Judeo-Christian West and within colonial discourse) are characterised as heathen, evil, uncivilized, anti-modern, unreasoning, cruel, antagonistic, obsessive, rascally, barbaric, punitive, blood-thirsty, villainous, dissolute, hot-tempered, money-grabbers, lustful, polygamous, patriarchal, or bumbling buffoons. Furthermore, not only are Hollywood's Arab-Muslims depicted as dirty, thieving, lecherous, involved with vice, crime and corruption, but they usually spring from the lunatic fringes of Islamic faith unfairly.

> (Kozlovic, 2007: 218)

3.1.1 EARLY REPRESENTATIONS

During the early twentieth century, when cinemas were rapidly increasing in popularity, American audiences were able to experience 'the Arabian Nights', and look into the lives of people living in the Arab world more than ever before through Hollywood's depiction of Arabs in film. The media allows people to 'encounter' other people – in this case Arabs – whom they would have never met if not for films (McAlister, 2005). Worldwide audiences, and American audiences in particular, are able to learn about Arabs through the films that portray them. It can be argued that, Hollywood films play a crucial role in influencing the American public by essentially shaping the image of Arabs and Muslims in the minds of millions of audiences through propagated misinformed representations.

Some of the earliest feature films that projected Arabs include the 1921 silent romance entitled *The Sheik*. The film is an adaptation of Edith Maude Hull's romance novel, which was published in 1919. Dancing harem girls, licentious bandits, and uncivilized sheikhs inhibiting unruly lands are some of the depictions that the film features. The film's main character, a Sheikh known as Ahmed Ben Hassan (played by Rudolph Valentino), is portrayed as having many concubines that are held captive in lavish tent-palaces. These images suggest to audiences that sexual abuse and slavery of women are part of Arab culture. This is emphasized further when Ahmed abducts Diana Mayo, the Western heroine, in an attempt to force her to be one of his concubines. Nevertheless, Diana resists all sexual advances made by Ahmed, and makes it clear that she despised him (when she though he was an Arab) and his lifestyle.

In the book *Beyond the Stars: Plot Conventions in American Popular Film*, Paul Loukides and Linda Fuller (1991: 25) assert that some films "appeared to break the convention, only to later expose the illusion". In *The Sheikh,* the idea that a Western heroine (Diana) was to

engage in a romantic relationship with an Arab desert-sheikh (Ahmed) was considered so scandalous when the film was first released that the *New York Times* review of the film assured readers that "[y]ou [audiences] won't be offended by having a white girl marry an Arab, for the sheik really isn't a native of the desert at all" (Michalak, 1989: 3). Towards the end of the film, Diana is informed that Ahmed was in fact born to a British father and Spanish mother who died in the desert, and that he was rescued and raised by an Arab sheikh. It was only after this fact has been made known to Diana that she confesses her love to him. In this regard, an implicit message is being sent that Arab men are inferior to Western men, and that they are not worthy of a Western woman's love.

3.1.2 WESTERN SUPERIORITY

Hollywood has a tradition of improving and advancing the American image by producing films that depict heroic Americans that are often superior in comparison to other characters in the film (Zogby, 1980; Terry, 1983; Kellner, 1991; Shaheen, 2001; Semmerling, 2006). This superior projection strategy can be observed in many films since the early 1920s, where American and Western characters are given positive traits, whereas non-Western characters are given less favourable characteristics. Whether the non-Western characters in films were Black, Native-American, or Arab, they were often given inferior traits in contrast to the white Western characters. Some films that present Westerners in positive light in comparison to Arabs include: *The Son of Tarzan* (1920), *Legion of Missing Men* (1937), *Tripoli* (1950), *East of Sudan* (1964), *Eagles Attack at Dawn* (1970), *Rollover* (1981), *The Finest Hour* (1992), and *Full Disclosure* (2001). Arabs in these films are presented as dangerous, cunning villains that have no morals, whereas the Western characters, on the other hand, are portrayed as decent individuals with high morals, and are often in a position of superiority. Said (2003: 7)

refs to this as "positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand".

In 2008, Jack Shaheen published another book under the name *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11*, which tackles the issue of Arab representations in Hollywood film productions in a post 9/11 timeframe. Unlike *Reel Bad Arabs* (2001; 2009) that serves as a type of encyclopedia that identifies films with Arab representations since the inception of motion pictures, this book examines the way Arabs are presented in post 9/11 Hollywood films in light of the geo-political developments that have occurred since the 11 September 2001. Shaheen (2008) notes that the images projected in films are negotiated arrangements between Hollywood and the U.S. foreign policy, which is based on American political and economic interests. Although many Arabs have migrated to America throughout the decades, Americans in general lack knowledge about the Arabs' history, traditions, culture, and their contributions to civilization. Consequently, this lack of interaction and knowledge has created an information gap that is frequently filled by media myths, distorted images, and misleading information. Moreover, studies show that people in general tend to readily accept information when given to them about places or people they have never personally experienced (Karim, 2000).

Early representations of barbaric Arabs in films such *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924) and *The Garden of Allah* (1936), have influenced the production of more recent films that to this day perpetuate Edward Said's (1978) concept of the 'Other', which emphasizes the idea that 'they' (Arabs and Muslims) are different from 'us' (Westerners). Said (2003) asserts that the foundation of the Occidental narrative concerning Arabs and Muslims is built on a binary opposition that portrays polar opposite depictions of the Orient and the Occident. Essentially, "Orientalism establishes a set of polarities in which the Orient is characterised as irrational,

exotic, erotic, despotic and heathen, thereby securing the West in contrast as rational, familiar, moral, just and Christian" (Lewis, 1996:16).

Poole (2002: 32) argues that throughout history, Orientalist discourse regarding Muslims, Arabs, and the 'Other' has perceived them as having a "confrontational relationship" with the West. From early film beginnings, and up until the Cold War, the image of Arabs has typically been poorly depicted due to Orientalist influences that have projected a narrow perspective in which Arabs are shown. From a post-Cold War context, Achugar (2004: 304) argues that most Western discourses about Islam have a tendency to casually refer to fundamentalism as 'Islam', to terrorists as 'Muslims', whilst emphasizing that America and Israel signify "'our side'" in the troubled Middle East region. The Arabs presented in films today are often depicted as enemies of America and the Western world. They are continuously portrayed as a group that is willing and ready to kill innocent people, thus further cementing the notion that all Arabs are terrorists.

Due to the political nature of the relationship America has with Israel, most films that represent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict appear to be more sympathetic towards the Israelis. In films such as *Exodus* (1960), *Cast a Giant Shadow* (1966), *Black Sunday* (1977), *The Delta Force* (1986), and *Death Before Dishonor* (1987), Palestinians are depicted as crazed maniacs who kill anyone for no apparent reason. They kill and torture Israelis and anyone who stands in their way.

3.1.3 THE ARAB WORLD

Shaheen (2001) maintains that Orientalism has always been involved in seeing in a way that distorts, imagines, emphasizes, and exaggerates the cultural differences of the Arab world in

comparison to Western cultures. Yvonne Haddad (2002) indicates that the Arab world and the diversity that exists within it are oversimplified into a monolithic subordinate category through verbal descriptors, visual images and so-called 'experts' in the media. Hollywood in particular, has the tendency to portray Arabs and Muslims as being synonymous with each other. Arabs are projected as a homogenized group of people. Hollywood films have blurred the differences that exist between the various groups of Arabs and Muslims (Naber, 2000). As Wilkins (2009: 7) rightly points out, "[t]he homogenization of Arab communities and conflation with other Middle Eastern as well as Islamic communities can be seen as part of a process benefiting dominant groups, such that subordinate groups can be cast easily as inferior masses".

Countries within the Arab world are not as uniform as Hollywood films often present them. The term 'Arab world' refers to 22 countries that share a common Arab culture, the Arabic language, and are part of The Arab League.[30] The Arab League, formally known as the League of Arab States is an organization that brings together independent Arab states. The purpose of the league is to strengthen ties among the members, co-ordinate their policies, and promote their common interests. Members of the league are spread across North Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) highlights that "Arab countries have a rich diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities" (ADC, 2013). However, Hollywood has a tendency to lump all Arabs into a 'one-size-fits-all' representation. Hollywood puts forward the idea of Arabs as a homogenized group of people by stereotyping them, and ignoring the diversity and differences that exist

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[30] Members of the Arab League include: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Syria's membership was suspended in November 2011, due to the ongoing conflict in the country.

between them. For instance, not all Arabs live in, or are a part of the Middle East. Many Arabs live in America, Europe, Africa and other parts of the world. UN reports indicate that there are over 28.6 million Arab migrants worldwide (UNPD, 2009). Although the majority of Arabs share one common language – Arabic – many speak French, English or Spanish as their first language.

While Islam is the dominant religion in the Arab world, there are many Arabs who are not Muslims. In addition to Muslim Arabs, there are many Arab Christians and Jews. According to the 2012 Global Religious Landscape report, it is estimated that 23% of the world's population are Muslims (Desilver, 2013). However, Islam is not monolithic. There are many sects and sub-sects under the umbrella of Islam. Some sects include: Sunnis, Shiites, Ishmaels, and Sufis and many more. Cultural differences are apparent in these sects, and they often differ in the way they practice and interpret Islamic ideologies (Brown, 2011; Karim, 2000; Kumar, 2012). There is a vast diversity within the notion of Arabs and Muslims, a diversity that Hollywood films often ignore.

The Islamic world not only contains Arabs, but also includes Persians (Iranians), Turks, Europeans, Africans, Asians, and people from almost every group and ethnicity. Contrary to the popular belief that Islam is directly linked to the Middle East (Desilver, 2013), most Muslims do not come from the Middle East nor are they Arabs. In fact, 60% of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims come from Asian countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan and Malaysia. Arabs, on the other hand, make up less than 20% of the world's Muslim population (Pew Research Center, 2011). Nevertheless, "moviemakers ignore this reality, depicting Arabs and Muslims as one and the same people. Repeatedly, they falsely project all Arabs as Muslims and all Muslims as Arabs. As a result, viewers, too, tend to link the same attributes to both people" (Shaheen, 2009: 10). To bring together and class such a vast and diverse group under

the broad term 'Muslims' is bound to create inaccuracies. "To many in the West, however, Islam and an 'Arab psyche' override all such aspects and reduce such societies to one conscious essence" (Muscati, 2002: 134).

3.1.4 Films and the Middle Eastern Political State of Affairs

Shaheen (2000a) indicates that despite the participation of various modern institutions in structuring knowledge about the Orient, the media plays an important role in the process because it acts as a central institution through which knowledge is distributed. However, the media is still linked integrally to political, economic, and military agencies that benefit from the deliberate limited views that media outlets present on certain issues. In order to explore more thoroughly the culture of Orientalism and Arab representation in Hollywood films, various studies (Said, 1997; Ramji, 2005; Semmerling, 2006; Shaheen, 2008 and 2009; Riegler, 2010) have reviewed Hollywood's representations of Arabs.

In the book entitled *"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film* (2006), Tim Simmerling analyses three Hollywood films produced in the 1970s and early 1980s that feature Arabs. He argues that the representation of Arabs in the films *The Exorcist* (1973), *Black Sunday* (1977), and *Rollover* (1981) served to strengthen the American public's sense of control after the Arab oil embargo in the seventies. Studies hint that the representation of Arabs in Western films appears to fluctuate according to political and historical events that take place. According to Kellner (1991: 19):

> Reading film and popular culture diagnostically presents insights into the current political situation, into the strengths and vulnerabilities of the contending political forces, into the hopes and fears of the population. Film thus provides important

insights into the psychological, socio-political, and ideological make-up of a specific society at a given point in history.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, some of the major events that have influenced the way Arabs have been depicted in the media, and in films specifically include: the discovery of oil during the 1930s; the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict; the oil embargo of 1973; the Iraqi-Iranian war in 1980; the invasion of Kuwait and the first Gulf War in 1990; the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks that led to the second Gulf War in 2003; and more recently, the Arab Spring in 2010.

Moreover, Hollywood has conveniently constructed Arabs to be the ideal evil villain that every 'good guy' versus 'bad guy' film needs, and in doing so they have produced stereotypical images of Arab 'Otherness'. Throughout the twentieth century Arabs have continuously been represented stereotypically. These images, however, have not remained static, and at certain times they have evolved into an even more negative image of Arabs. The way in which Arab men and women have developed, changed and evolved in Hollywood films is discussed in the chapters to come.

3.1.5 ARAB THEMES IN FILMS

Some of the earliest recurring themes in Hollywood films about Arab men are concerned with their desire for Western women. Depictions of Arab men attempting to abduct Western heroines can be found in films like *Captured by Bedouins* (1912), *The Lad and the Lion* (1917), and *The Sheik* (1921). Throughout the 1920s, Hollywood films have maintained their negative representation of the Arabs. For instance, *The Sheik's* sequel entitled *The Son of the Sheik* was released in 1926, and revolves around Ahmed, a rich sheikh, and his reckless and

impulsive son. The Arab characters in the film are depicted to be living in an area that is volatile and ruled by barbaric tribal laws. Consequently, flogging, torture, slaughter, and abduction are common in the culture projected in the film. Women are depicted as having no freedom, and are projected as being treated like commodities.

Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and Arabs are still represented in the same distorted manner. Very rarely do films show modern Arabs appearing in normal family scenes. The interactions between Arab mothers, fathers, children, and teenagers are not given any importance. It is as if Hollywood has deemed that it is not relevant to show audiences scenes of Arabs bonding with their families like any average family would. When Arabs are shown in a family setting it is often when family members are part of a terrorist group and/or are planning a terrorist attack. Such depictions can be seen in films such as *The Kingdom* (2007) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001). Depriving audiences of scenes that depict Arab characters bonding with their families serves to further distance and alienate Arabs. In contrast, scenes of Western heroes with their families are often portrayed to allow audiences to relate to them.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Westerners are almost always placed in a position of power over Arabs in Hollywood films. However, when Arabs are shown as having power, they are often shown abusing it. The power that Arabs are given in films is generally linked to money, oil, and greed. The topic of oil always seems to arise whenever Arabs are included in a film's plot. The issue of oil as an indispensable source of energy that gives 'them' [Arabs] power over Western livelihoods is always projected with the purpose of perpetuating fear. This was especially the case after the 1973 oil embargo. The interest in Middle Eastern oil was articulated in a *Foreign Affairs* article that emphasized that oil "must be conceived in terms of a 'common heritage of mankind' that must serve both the welfare of producing countries and that of the importing countries" (McAlister, 2005: 138). Therefore after the

sudden rise of oil prices in 1974, films such as *Network* (1976) reflected the concerns that have been raised about Americans "being at the mercy of foreign oil producers" (Said, 1997: 36).

Francesco Casetti (2008) believes that the representations projected in Hollywood films are produced with the aim of solidifying governmental viewpoints. On this basis, it can be argued that the depictions of Arabs as a potential threat to Americans are used to justify the U.S. government's involvement in the Middle East region. Films such as *Team America: World Police* (2004), *The Stone Merchant* (2006), and *Fatwa* (2006) show terrorist acts from the Arab World being transferred to the West, which indicates how Hollywood is keen on projecting America in the role of the 'protector' and not as the 'invader'.

Arabs involved in terrorist activities are also presented in films such as *Air Marshal* (2003), *District B13* (2004), *The Kingdom* (2007), and *American Sniper* (2014). Arabs are portrayed as having no mercy, even towards children and women, and are willing to kill Westerners and even fellow Arabs. According to Kalan (2004), 'Arab Terrorism' is a concept that is exaggerated in Hollywood films, and the general assertion that Arabs commit most terrorist activities is propaganda created in co-operation between Hollywood productions and the American government. Shaheen (2008) reports that films produced by major Hollywood studios are generally created to make Arabs appear as terrorists, whilst the decisions made by the American government and the effects of its foreign policy are seldom discussed in Hollywood films. Audiences are rarely shown the destruction caused in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan as a result of American interference, or lack of interference, in the case of Palestine. It is almost as if the terror and hardship endured by the people of these countries is not significant enough for Hollywood to shed light on. Films such as *The Sum of All Fears* (2002) and *The Four Feathers* (2002) also use elements with recognizable Orientalist

influences, where obvious depictions of the dichotomy between the 'backward' Orient and the 'civilized' West are presented. Consequently, such representations suggest that the Arab world is essentially in need of the West to guide it, thus justifying their [American] presence and intervention in the region (Said, 1978).

3.1.6 NEGOTIATING THE IMAGES

The constant stereotyping of Arab characters in Hollywood films has encouraged scholars to write critically on the topic. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 on America have incited media professionals and academics in the West and in America in particular to view Islam and the Arabs in a less biased manner, and with a more inquisitive mind in an effort to understand them better (Elouardaoui, 2011). American filmmakers in the last decade have tried to distance themselves from the Orientalist portrayals of Arabs and Muslims to produce films that depict them in a more wholesome and fair manner. This explains why there seems to have been a shift in the representation of Arabs in some post 9/11 films such as *Syriana* (2005), *Paradise Now* (2005), *Babel* (2006), *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), and *Green Zone* (2010) where Arabs have been more fairly depicted.

In *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), after Salah Al-Din successfully takes over Jerusalem, audiences are shown a scene where he picks up a Christian cross from the church floor and carefully places it back on the altar as a sign of religious respect. Robert Spencer (2004; 2005) the director of Jihad Watch criticized the film, and accused the film's director (Ridley Scott) of being misinformed and pandering to Osama bin Laden. On the other hand, it was witnessed that Arab audiences that watched the film gratefully rose to their feet and clapped during the film's screening in Lebanon (Shaheen, 2008). The way in which Arab viewers, especially

those living in the Middle East, react to general representations of the Arabs without stereotypes, indicates that Arab audiences are aware of the way Hollywood represents Arabs' cultural and religious heritage.

Another film that also projected Salah Al-Din and Muslims in a positive manner is *The Crusades* (1935), which is considered one of the key "historical films depicting events in the Middle East" (Eisele, 2002: 90). The film's director, Cecil B. DeMille, asserted in his autobiography that it was one of his objectives "to bring out that the Saracens were not barbarians, but a highly cultivated people, and their great leader, Saladin, as perfect and gentle a knight as any in Christendom" (DeMille and Hayne, 1960: 313). Audiences in the West did not receive *The Crusades* as eagerly as DeMille had hoped (Birchard, 2004). According to Kozlovic (2007: 227), this was "probably because it showed the good and noble side of Muslims, and contrasted it with the darker deeds of Christianity". Nevertheless, audiences in Arab and Muslim countries were fond of the film and responded positively to it.

In the autobiographical book *Lionheart in Hollywood: The Autobiography of Henry Wilcoxon* (1991), Henry Wilcoxon, who played the role of King Richard I, the Lionheart of England, in *The Crusades* (1935), recalls a conversation he and DeMille had with the late president of Egypt Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser (Prime Minister at the time) and his friend General Abdel Hakim Amer during a filmmaking trip to Egypt. In the course of their introduction, Amer struck the following conversation:

> "Mr DeMille, Mr. Wilcoxon, you will perhaps remember a movie you made called *The Crusades*?" "Oh, yes," Mr. DeMille said, as he at least felt his feet touch firm ground. "I made that one in 1935." "Quite right," Amer said, "and Mr. Wilcoxon here starred as Richard Coeur-de-Lion." We nodded. "Well, perhaps you did not know that *The Crusades* was a very popular film in our Muslim country—due to its fair presentation of both sides and its portrayal of Saladin as a great holy leader of his

people. So popular, in fact, that it ran for three years in the same theatre. And during those three years, when Colonel Nasser and I were first in military academy, we saw *The Crusades* perhaps as many as twenty times. It was our favorite picture." "That's very gratifying," Mr. DeMille said, thinking the speech was over. "It's always been my favorite as well." "Just a moment please," Amer said gently. "Colonel Nasser was so taken with the character of the Lionheart in your movie that he told everyone in the military academy that when he grew up he was going to be just like that, and that's how the other boys came to call him Henry Wilcoxon!"

(Wilcoxon and Orrison, 1991: 274-275)

There has been a long tradition of watching Hollywood productions for entertainment purposes within the Arab world. The conversation mentioned above between Cecil B. DeMille, Henry Wilxcoxon, General Amer, and the late president of Egypt about a film that was produced as early as 1935, indicates how popular Hollywood films have always been in the region. The fact that Arab and Muslim countries constitute up to ten percent of Hollywood's total overseas profits indicates how keen Arabs are in watching Hollywood films (Shaheen, 2008).

Nevertheless, unlike *The Crusades*, which was considered very popular in Egypt largely due to its fair representations of Muslims, more recent films continue to reinforce long-held misconceptions (Shaheen, 2008; Elouardaoui, 2011). For instance, *The Kingdom* (2007) presents a disturbing and controversial representation of Saudis, who are portrayed as hateful people that are keen on killing Americans. The film ends in a dark pessimistic manner where both the Saudi terrorist leader and Special Agent Ronald Fleury (played by Jamie Foxx) make the statement that they "will kill them all", suggesting that mutual understanding cannot be reached. These distorted representations of the Arabs have had a negative impact on the lives of young Arabs, both in America and abroad (Wilkins, 2009). It is for this reason that the

more recent films that appear to project more balanced portrayals of Arabs need to be promoted further in order to benefit both American and Arab societies (Elouardaoui, 2011).

Many studies and opinion polls (Slade, 1981; Daniel, 1995; Jones, 2001; Elliot, 2003; Dixon, 2004; Newport, 2009; The Gallup Poll Editorial Staff, 2002; Zogby, 2010) have been conducted to examine the way Americans have felt towards Arabs both prior to and post-9/11. These studies have provided details regarding how much Americans really know about Arabs and about Islam. Research results offer a variety of attitudes that include both negative and positive feelings towards Arabs. According to Jones (2001) "polling data measuring attitudes toward Arabs over the past decade suggests that the American public has generally held somewhat negative views of Arabs, even before the recent terrorist attacks on September 11". Ten years after 9/11 James Zogby (2010) conducted an online survey to gather the views of Americans on Arab and Muslim Americans. A total of 2100 adult Americans took part in the survey. Emphasis was given to region, party, age, race, religion, gender, and education in order to obtain a representative sample of the American population. Results showed that 43% of participants had a favourable opinion of Arabs, whereas, only 35% had a favourable view of Muslims. 60% of the participants wanted to know more about Arabs, whereas 49% wanted to know more about Muslims (Zogby, 2010: 3-4).

Studies on how the media's portrayal of Arabs has had an effect on Arab-Americans have been conducted (Zogby, 1980; Arab American Institute, 1997; Samhan 2001; Shaheen, 2008). There have been mixed reactions from Arabs based on their interpretations of the representation of Arabs in Hollywood films. It was found that negative stereotypes influence the perception of the public about Arabs, and these distorted images also affect how stereotyped Arabs perceive their own image. Due to alienation, some Arabs find themselves denying their Arab roots, either for fear of prejudice, or from embarrassment at the images

perpetuated in the media. According to Abraham (2013), "Arab-Americans cope with their marginality in one of three different ways: denying their ethnic identity; withdrawing into an ethnic enclave; or engaging mainstream society through information campaigns aimed at the news media, book publishers, politicians, and schools". Literature on the way Arab Americans feel towards the media's representation of Arabs, and Hollywood's representations in particular, is available. However, there is a lack of knowledge of how these representations are consumed and decoded by Arab audiences in the Middle East. There is very little literature dedicated to offering the perspective of young Arabs who live in the Middle East in regard to the way they and their countries are portrayed in Hollywood films.

3.2 IDEOLOGY AND ARAB REPRESENTATIONS IN HOLLYWOOD FILMS

Generally, the term 'ideology' refers to a set of ideas and beliefs that groups in society embrace. It is the way in which people understand the world around them. However, an ideology is not only a simple "construct of the mind" (McLellan, 1995: 28). It has "a quasi-material existence" (*ibid*), which we are able to observe through products and cultural institutions. Ideology is closely linked to notions of power, whereby power inequality is justified and made natural. This link between power and ideology will be discussed throughout the subsequent subsections. Anthony Giddens (1997: 583) defines ideology as "shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups". Hollywood is a prime example of powerful cultural institutions that is able to perpetuate a certain ideology, whether it is politically, economically, or culturally driven (Coulthard, 1985).

From the start of the twentieth century to the modern day, Hollywood has continued its long tradition of using images to develop attitudes, provoke emotions, encourage imitation, and

strengthen certain beliefs. Misinformed and negative stereotypes in Hollywood films have the capacity to support, change and influence an individual's principles and values (Plate and Jasper, 1999). As reported by Khatib (2006: 1), "[c]inema, as a powerful tool of cultural production, stands at the heart of representation of the modern Middle East. One of the most salient angles of this representation is cinema's engagement with the depiction of politics in the region". This tradition is clearly portrayed in Hollywood's relationship with the Orient, through its constant distorted representations of the Orient in films.

The Middle East and its citizens have been exotically represented in ethnic terms since the creation of the moving picture (Steinberg, 2002). The distorted representations of Arabs in films have produced the image of the 'dangerous' Arab that signifies 'Otherness'. Many scholars (Said, 1978; Shaheen, 2001; Fries, 2005, Semmerling, 2006) have attempted to analyze this image by scrutinizing America's cultural fears. It is acknowledged that these fears have been fuelled by national ideologies, myths, and legends. Ramji (2005) explains that commercial film industries develop cultural products that reflect social norms and concerns. According to Miles (1996: X), the popularity of films is determined by the fact that they portray the "anxiety and longings" of their immediate audience, who are the end users. Films are viewed as a window that is able to project "the pressing concerns" of a nation at any given moment in time (*ibid*). The images created by the film industry are capable of articulating major historical and political concerns in any way they choose to present it.

The film industry is also a powerful conveyor of religious values, ethics, and ideology in contemporary societies. Representations by the media often portray an exaggerated and distorted version of reality, which tends to reinforce stereotypes. In the book *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* (1995), Joel Martin and

Conrad Ostwalt emphasize that films are saturated with religious values, and have more to present to audiences than simply entertainment.

Riegler (2010) argues that since the late 1960s, Hollywood films have distorted and shaped audiences' insight into terrorism. He maintains that Hollywood has never assessed the issue of terrorism accurately, and claims that it offers a mediated version of terrorism that surpasses reality instead. For instance, using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an example, Khatib (2006: 108) notes that Hollywood's representation of Arab and Israeli conflicts generally revolve around three themes:

> the construction of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians as an ethnic conflict; the establishment of physical and ideological borders between Israelis and Palestinians, which entails the construction of each side as a predominantly homogeneous group; and the representation of the United States as a godfather whose role infantilizes both Israel and Palestine.

She goes further to say that:

> Hollywood constructs the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians as an ethnicity relying on the use of ethnic myth in the representation of Israel. Not only do Israelis in the film share a common ethnic myth, but Jews worldwide are portrayed as sharing this common sentiment and history, and even origin, with no distinction between Zionist and non-Zionist.

(ibid: 110).

According to Kellner (1991: 19), "[r]eading film and popular culture diagnostically presents insights into the current political situation, into the strengths and vulnerabilities of the contending political forces, into the hopes and fears of the population". Thus historical and political development can easily be observed upon reading Hollywood's take on terrorism. Random terrorist-related narratives prior to the 1970s became more frequent during the 1970s,

due to the international terrorist acts and Palestinian hijackings that took place at the time. As a result of these events, Hollywood began to intensively produce films that revolved around such issues. Thus Hollywood's typical villain during that period was an Arab gunman who hijacks airplanes, threatens innocent passengers, and kills anyone who stands in their way. Such films include *Black Sunday* (1977), which tells a story of Dahlia Iyad, a German woman of Palestinian roots who plans a terrorist plot to kill thousands of Americans and the President of the United States of America (Jimmy Carter) at the Super Bowl finale in Miami.

Other films produced during the 1970s that projected Arabs as terrorists include *Rosebud* (1975) that revolves around the rescue of five wealthy girls abducted by the Palestinian Liberation Army from a yacht named Rosebud. *Warhead*, also known as *Prisoner in the Middle* (1977) shows Arab terrorists blowing up an Israeli school bus, and as a result killing dozens of children on board. Although America during the 1970s had not yet been struck by terrorist attacks, Hollywood as an entertainment industry was undeniably inspired by foreign acts of terrorism, which were then dramatized in the movie theatres for American audiences. For instance, the Munich massacre, where eleven Israeli athletes were taken hostage and eventually killed during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, was depicted in William A. Graham's *21 Hours at Munich* (1976). Operation Entebbe was also re-enacted in Marvin J. Chomsky's *Victory at Entebbe* (1976); the film enlisted a cast of A-list actors including Burt Lancaster, Anthony Hopkins, and Elizabeth Taylor. The plot was then adapted for television viewing a year later, and was entitled *Raid on Entebbe* (1977). All the films mentioned above share a similar formula that includes:

> high-ranking politicians in crisis centres make daring decisions, while elite commandos first train meticulously for their mission and then free the hostages in a climactic shoot-out sequence. It is a triumphant celebration of the commando's

capacity to dare and win – a myth to which Israel contributed by commissioning its own cinematic version of the events in *Operation Thunderball* (1979).

According to Shaheen (2003a), many Hollywood films produce one-dimensional portrayals of the Arabs. He clarifies his argument by stating that:

I am not saying that an Arab should never be portrayed as the villain. What I am saying is that almost all Hollywood depictions of Arabs are bad ones. This is a grave injustice. Repetitious and negative images of the real Arab literally sustain adverse portraits across generations.

With Hollywood films constantly churning out films that portray Arabs as terrorists, it comes as no surprise that the term 'terrorist' has now become synonymous with 'Arabs'. This terrorist-Arab linkage is highlighted by Kozlovic (2007: 222) who notes that a "cultural equation" whereby "Arabs = Muslims = terrorists" is perpetuated in Hollywood films. *The Siege* (1999) can be observed as an exemplar of this linkage, in that religious Islamic rituals (pre-prayer *wudo* or ablution*,* praying, and reading the *Quran*) are associated with terrorist acts of violence, which "reinforces the idea that the Islamic religion is closely associated with terrorism" (Deep, 2002: 2). General reference to the terms 'Islam', 'Muslim', or 'Arab' unfairly conjure images of suicide bombers, Islamic extremists, and violent jihadists in the minds of many, especially after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Elliot, 2003; Dixon, 2004; Nessim, 2005).

The absence of ordinary Arabs in Hollywood films has developed a fallacious view concerning their character and qualities. It also distorts their cultural, and religious beliefs (Shaheen, 2003). The film industry, and Hollywood in particular, play an important role in

sustaining stereotypes. Since the late nineteenth century, the image of Arabs in motion pictures has always been stereotypical. They have been represented as "the cultural other" (Shaheen, 2001: 2). Filmmakers in Hollywood today have a tendency to "link the Islamic faith with male supremacy, holy war, and acts of terror, depicting Arab Muslims as hostile alien intruders, and as lecherous, oily sheikhs intent on using nuclear weapons" (*ibid*: 9).

Conflicts in the Middle East are used to fuel the portrayals of Arabs as a dangerous threat to Westerners. Such conflicts include the first Gulf War, the second Gulf War in Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, and the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. Most Hollywood movies that depict terrorism project the issue of terrorism from America's perspective. Film audiences are often introduced to a foreign 'evil other' that threatens the security of America and its citizens. The reason for their hatred is unknown, and their irrational behaviour is projected as being part of their violent nature. On the other hand, audiences are given the opportunity to know more about the American protagonists, often by introducing them in a scene that includes their families. American protagonists that symbolize superiority and power are often shown triumphing over Arabs. Moreover, the cultural and religious appearance of Arabs and Arab societies in film reinforces the power structure between the United States of America, the Western world and the Middle East.

3.3   FILM AS DISCOURSE, POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

The term 'power' can be thought of it in terms of direct force or restraints. However, it can also be understood "in broader cultural or symbolic terms, including the power to represent someone or something in a certain way – within a certain 'regime of representation'" (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates, 2001: 338). This section will look into how discourse was used

by Westerners to represent themselves and 'Others', and to describe the differences that exist between them. Said (2003) explored the ways in which European Orientalists used the power to create stereotypical images of the Middle East, and Arabs in particular. He contested that the work of Orientalists did not merely reflect the reality of countries of 'the Orient', and asserted that:

> Without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.

> (Said, 2003: 3)

One of the pioneers that discussed the issue of representations in the context of social knowledge and power was the French social theorist Michel Foucault. The influence of Foucault is apparent in Said's seminal study on Orientalism, where he uses Foucault's notion of discourse to examine the way Europeans produced knowledge about the Middle East and its inhabitants. Unlike the semiotic approach that looks into how representations are "understood on the basis of the way words functioned as signs within language" (Hall, 1997: 43), Foucault was more interested in "the production of knowledge (rather than just meaning) through what he called discourse (rather than just language)" (*ibid*). Moreover, Foucault (1980: 115) stressed that he was concerned more on "relations of power not relations of meaning".

Linguistically speaking, the term discourse is generally used to describe written or spoken forms of communication. However, Foucault uses the term more specifically. Hall (1992: 291) summarizes Foucault's definition of discourse as:

a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. … Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But … since all social practices entailing *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect. (Italics in original text)

Foucault (1980) notes that in knowledge production and discourse, power circulation produces a knowledge/power nexus where 'truth' heavily relies on the impact of the relations of power in a society. Thus, what is considered to be 'true' is determined by power, rather than factual reality. According to Foucault (*ibid*: 27) "[w]e should admit that power produces knowledge … That power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute … power relations".

Meaning and truth are created mainly through the discourse. However, it must be emphasized that discourse is not a single statement, but rather a collection of statements that come together in, what Foucault (1980) refers to as, 'discursive formation'. In every age, there are dominant discursive elements that individuals unconsciously live on. We are currently living in the second century of the "Age of Hollywood" (Paglia, 1994: 12), and it can be argued that "literature is no longer the dominant form of expression" (Kappelman, 2000: 119-120). As a result, "scriptwriters, directors, and actors do more to shape the culture in which we live than do the giants of literature or philosophy" (*ibid*). Therefore, when Hollywood films inundate audiences with negative representations of Arabs, Hollywood limits audiences to a particular mindset, whilst depriving them of more favorable images of Arabs.

The circulation and production of discourse are mechanisms of social power. Consequently, those wishing to exercise social power must use discourse to achieve this goal. According to Hall (1997: 49), "[k]nowledge does not operate in a void. It is put to work, through certain

technologies and strategies of application, in specific situations, historical contexts and institutional regimes". Discourse is manifested through organizations such as Hollywood that have the power and the means to make news or speak on certain topics. Such discourses provide knowledge that is employed in the production of 'truth'.

Foucault (1980) notes that delicate power mechanisms cannot function unless knowledge is organized, and made to circulate through institutions. The media is a prime exemplar of such institutions, which is considered to have an important role in influencing the general public. The power the media and films in particular have to articulate everyday discourses can be seen as an example of how the media is able to represent cultural and social realms, not through facts but through its representation procedures. In most cases, the mass media is infused by discourse that determines the media's representations. These discourses are created by institutions, which follow tactical procedures that allow the exercise of complex powers on target populations (Van Dijk, 2008).

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that there is a need to be attentive to the reactions and suggestions of audiences since they form part of the knowledge, and are a part of the discursive economy (Foucault, 1966). Giving emphasis to inherent abilities for resistance within power relations, Foucault (*ibid*) opines that freedom and power relations are inseparable. This is due to the recalcitrant will at the center of all power relationships, which is constantly provoked. Moreover, knowledge and power networks are sites for resistance in which all partners in the power relationship contest and produce the truth. Therefore, it can be seen that discourse becomes very important when analyzing societies. It is also notable that discourse tends to operate in a fluid, negotiated and open manner (Leeuwen, 2010). This is where this study offers an important perspective to the issue of representation. Arabs that are

generally considered at the receiving end of Hollywood productions are given the opportunity to challenge and voice their opinions on the representations of Arabs in films.

In short, Foucault's definition of discourse can be summed up "as a system of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak" (Lessa, 2006: 285). However, there can be claims and thoughts that exist independent from a certain speaker; hence pre-existing discourses are resources for communication with other people. In essence, people's sense of subjectivity is mainly constructed through engagement with various discourses. This subject position construction is used by Hollywood films to shape Americans' acceptance of their relations with people from various parts of the world (Parry, 2004).

Foucault (1980) indicates that it is mainly through knowledge that people develop their ideas, and that their experiences – encountered knowledge – come from those controlling their early experiences in life. For instance, the knowledge of a child who is brought up in a family that lives in an isolated place will depend on the very few people they have encountered. Similarly, audiences that are continuously exposed to films that depict a specific group in a stereotypical manner will eventually accept those stereotypes as the truth if they themselves have never encountered people of that misrepresented group (Williams, 2005). Consequently, it is not surprising that most of what Americans know about Arabs and Muslims derives from the narrow stereotypical images of Arabs that audiences are constantly shown in films. The variation in Hollywood's Arab characters is limited to Bediouns, belly dancers, black faceless women, terrorists, and rich sheikhs.

Meleni McAlister's [2001] (2005) book entitled *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* discusses the issue of encountered knowledge. Using a post-orientalist approach, McAlister offers an analysis of America's engagement with the

Middle East since the end of World War II. McAlister (2005: XVII) focuses "on the ways in which people in the United States have encountered representations of the Middle East that helped to make it meaningful to them". The book aims to highlight "the intersection between cultural texts, foreign policy, and constructs of identity" (*ibid*: 307), in an attempt to understand how Americans make sense of Middle Eastern nations from an imagined community context that heavy relies on media representations. McAlister (2005: 46) claims that films operate as a symbolic form of "benevolent supremacy" to support America's self-given right to involve itself in Middle Eastern affairs. She also asserts that Hollywood's representation of the Middle East has "helped to underwrite the expansion of U.S. power" (2001: 276) in the region.

Those in control of the media have the power to decide what issues they want the mass media to talk about. This explains how discourse is perpetuated and created by those having the means and power of communication. According to Foucault (1980), all discourses act in this way. Ada Salazar (2004) conducted an experimental study to examine audiences' attitudes towards Arabs after watching edited versions of films that highlighted negative representations of Arabs – *True Lies* (1994) and *Rules of Engagement* (2000) – as opposed to more positive representations, such as *Three Kings* (1999). The study concluded that prejudicial attitudes were linked to the type of images and representations that the audiences were exposed to. Film viewing habits, in addition to their personal experiences with Arab countries and friends, also played a role. The fear of Arabs is not established through personal experience or contact but through the existence of the demonized 'Other' that is created and perpetuated in popular culture.

Shaheen (2009) argues that people are taught to fear and hate certain groups, people, and ideas. Through the images disseminated in media and films, audiences learn who to love and

who to despise. When films constantly portray Arabs as villains and Western protagonists as heroes, audiences are consequently conditioned to dislike Arabs and Muslims whilst favouring Western characters (Marrison, 2004). "A stereotype or the reinforcement of a stereotype removes the need to examine individuals on the basis of their character" (El-Farra, 1996). The repetitive stereotypical depictions of Arabs perpetuated in films have created a distorted image of Arabs. Some of these misconceptions are that "Arabs are rich and have oil. All Arabs are named Mohammed. All Arabs are nomads" (Morris International, 1980). As El-Farra (1996) accurately points out, "[w]hile these may seem to be minor misconceptions, they are the foundations upon which stereotypes and judgments are based".

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Wilkins (2009) conducted an exploratory research designed to investigate how audiences interpret Hollywood representations of Arabs and Arab communities. Wilkins highlights that in order to "understand the long-term consequences of normative racism perpetuated through media, more attention to media publics is warranted" (Wilkins, 2009: 11). Therefore, with the use of focus group discussions, Wilkins sets out to explore how Arab-Americans along with other non-Arab-American communities in America 'map fear and danger' through their engagement with action-adventure films. Participants that took part in Wilkins' focus group discussions were limited to university students in the Southern Mid-Western region of the U.S. Most of the participants that took part in the study were students in the College of Communication (27%) or Liberal Arts (32%) (*ibid*: 22).

Wilkins' (2009) study found that Arab-American participants were less likely to enjoy action-adventure films than participants from other communities. Arab-Americans were also more aware of the stereotypical problems with the genre especially on issues concerning the film's villains and setting. Arab-American participants claimed that the Middle East is not realistically depicted in Hollywood films, which often opts to portray this region as a

backward and undeveloped place. In addition, Arab-Americans were more inclined to view the narrative in a historical context to give reasons for the villains' behaviour. Results also showed that other non-Arab-American groups, who also took part in the research, did not critically analyze the narrative from a political or historical perspective. Non-Arab-American participants were more likely to consider villain Arab characters as being portrayed in a realistic manner. Moreover, audiences that frequently watched action-adventure films that depict Arabs and Arab communities were more likely to be fearful of the Middle East and Arab communities. According to Wilkins (*ibid*: 76):

> For those who are ardent fans of the [action-adventure] genre, fundamental knowledge of the political history of the Middle East appears to be lacking, along with sensitivity to prejudicial attitudes toward Arab and Muslim communities. Instead, there seems to be an unquestioning acceptance of U.S. foreign policy, legitimizing the use of violence as an appropriate means toward resolving conflict and the United States as the primary arbiter of global negotiation.

Wilkins' (2009) study provides an excellent platform for uncovering how Arab-American and non-Arab-Americans differ in their interpretations of Arab representations in Hollywood films. However, there are few issues that must be addressed. For instance, although the constriction placed on the study to only include university students may be valid, and even necessary in order to gather responses from young educated Americans in regard to film consumption and interpretation, it must be highlighted that the sample used in the study's focus group discussions was not a representative sample of an entire university student body. As mentioned earlier, most of the participants that took part in the study were communication and liberal arts students. This can be problematic due to the fact that because of the nature of their studies, students from communication and liberal arts backgrounds are often more aware of issues concerning representations, stereotypes, and the media, thus limiting the scope of the study's findings. As a result, the study falls short of providing the interpretations of American

students from an array of subject areas. This 'representativeness' factor is crucial in providing valid interpretations of university students from various cultural and educational backgrounds.

As with Wilkins' study, my research also involves collecting data from university students in the form of focus group discussions (and surveys). However, unlike Wilkins' sample, added emphasis was given to the representativeness of the sample used in this study. The input of students from all colleges within two universities in Kuwait (the American University of Kuwait and Kuwait University) was given priority in order to gather the most representative and diverse set of responses and interpretations. The importance of a representative sample and the sample used for both the survey and focus group discussions is discussed in the Methodology chapter.

Another point that must be highlighted is that Wilkin's (2009) study, like many other studies before (Zogby, 1980; Arab American Institute, 1997; Samhan 2001; Shaheen, 1984, 2008, 2009), all focus on the way Arab-Americans in particular interpret Arab representations in Hollywood films. While the opinions of Arab-Americans on the issue of representation and stereotype is important, less however, is known about how Arabs living in Arab nations negotiate these representations, and how the media's portrayal of Arabs affects them. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the way young Arabs from the State of Kuwait decode and interpret Hollywood's representations of Arabs. As will be revealed in the following chapters, it is this authentic Arab interpretation of film representations that offers a genuine Arab discussion on issues of representation, power, supremacy, and censorship.

3.4   HEGEMONY AND FILM

Understanding film in a political and ideological context taps into Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony (1971). Hegemony can be described as the state of unequal power relations that one social group (the dominant class) has over another group. The power of this group is not limited only to political and economic control, but also extends to the way they are able to perpetuate their ideology to subordinate groups that accept it as being the norm. The concept of hegemony is mainly rooted in the distinction between consent and coercion as alternative mechanisms of social power. The power of hegemony works towards convincing social classes and people to consent to the social norms and values of a system that is inherently exploitative. It is a way of having social power that relies on participation and voluntarism, rather than on the threat of punishment for non-compliance. Hence, ideological hegemony appears to be a form of 'common sense' or 'general knowledge' that guides people in understanding the world. Based on this view, the inherited world is absorbed uncritically, and assists in reproducing more social, political, and moral passivity.

Scholars such as Williams (1977), Said (1978), Kellner (1979; 1991), and Hall (1986; 1996; 1997) have expanded on Gramsci's theory of hegemony to develop a concept of ideology that examines developing hegemonic ideologies within neo-capitalist societies.[31] The development of this notion allows for a historical and socio-political analysis, which "grounds ideology critique in the context within which ideological conflict actually occurs" (Kellner, 1991: 11). It is acknowledged that hegemony is achieved and strengthened by employing the media,

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[31] For more literature regarding active audiences and film consumption please refer to Katz, Blumbler, and Gurevitch (1973-1974), Hall (1980), Levy and Windahl (1984; 1985), Rosengren, Wenner, and Palmgreen (1985), Ruggiero (2000), Stokes and Maltby (2001), Brooker and Jermyn (2003), Jancovich, Faire, and Stubbings (2008), and Lovell and Sergi (2009).

which plays an important role in the structuring of an ideology due to its dynamic composition. However, there are other aspects that play a role as well. Everything that directly or indirectly affects or can impact the opinion of the public plays a part, some of which include educational institutions, bureaucracies, various types of clubs, and the media. All these established institutions are employed by the dominant group to disseminate their own points of view while marginalizing the views of others. However, Forgacs (2010) emphasizes that a major concern for dominant social groups revolves around their ability to ensure the necessary level of the 'ideological unity' in order to secure the consent of governed people.

Boothman (2008) describes hegemony as a process and not a structure or a system. It is a complex of relationships, activities and experiences with changing limits and pressures. Unlike Marx's concept of ideological domination that suggests that the dominated masses cannot challenge the dominant class, hegemony allows for a negotiation to take place "between competing social, political and ideological forces through which power is power contested, shifted or reformed. *Representation* is a key site in such struggle, since the power of definition is a major source of hegemony" (Hall, 1997: 348) (Italics in original text). This notion of the negotiation of representations in hegemony allows us "to conceptualize the production of definitions and identities by the media industries in a way that acknowledges both the unequal power relations involved in the struggle and at the same time the space for negotiation and resistance from subordinated groups" (*ibid*).

It has been argued that those in control of the media are able to utilize the media to influence others to abide by their values, beliefs and ideas. The media's hegemonic influence is both complex and vast, particularly with regard to culture, religion, and politics. The media is often employed to propagate certain images and ideas in order to secure hegemony. For instance, Hollywood films that portray negative representations of Arabs or any other constituency can

be seen as working within a hegemonic process for a larger purpose. These portrayals are carefully selected, created, and presented to audiences worldwide. Even though audiences consent to the consumption of the information they receive in films, they are in fact still subjected to Hollywood's preferences on what they are actually shown. This means that audiences are shown only what those in control of the media want them to see, often by presenting certain facts or points of view and ignoring others (a one-sided view of the conflict). Nevertheless, this hegemonic process opens up a vortex in which subordinate groups can resist and challenge the representations. Such negotiations will be addressed in the Results and Discussion chapters of this study whereby young Arabs from Kuwait were given the opportunity to contest the Arab representations in Hollywood films.

Howson and Smith (2008) attest that there is a need for further critical assessment of how people, their cultural image, and religion have been made a commodity by the media to become 'reality'. This is crucial, perhaps more now than ever before due to that fact that many "are often distracted by the fragmented knowledge available on the internet and the mass media" (Said, 2003: XX). Hegemonic strategies are used in economic, religious, cultural, and political ideology. These aspects have all been discussed and disseminated by the media, and in Hollywood films specifically. This is primarily because cinema and film have become an important factor of popular culture. Being part of popular culture is crucial because, as emphasized by Gramsci, particular attention needs to be given to the normality of routines and accepted norms.

Said (2003: XV) asserts that media outlets have a habit of recycling "the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations so as to stir up 'America' against the foreign devil". This is especially effective when audiences have not been in contact with what the media is representing. Consequently, what the media represents often becomes 'reality' to many

audiences. In fact, Said emphasizes that "[w]ithout a well-organized sense that these people [Arabs] over there were not like 'us' [Westerners] and didn't appreciate 'our' values … there would have been no war" (*ibid*).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the depiction of American superiority over the 'Other', in this case Arabs, along with increased propagation of negative stereotypes about Arabs is a recurring theme that is perpetuated in many Hollywood films. The ability to create depictions of the Arab world as a barbaric and backward place is a form of power that Hollywood utilizes to spread messages and ideas they support. By depicting an inferior Arab world Hollywood is able to promote America's superiority and dominance. These contrasting representations can be linked to Orientalism, whereby the "relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees for a complex hegemony" (Said, 2003: 5). It can also be viewed "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (*ibid*).

The concept of ideological hegemony plays a very important role in exploring both the political and economic interests of America, in regard to the possible gains they acquire by justifying their presence in the region in the manner that they represent Arabs. Moreover, analyzing Hollywood films politically provides more insight into how Hollywood films represent the existing struggles in modern American society. It also provides insight into religious, political, economic, and social dynamics. According to Wilkins (2009: 9), "[m]ediated characterizations of racial and ethnic groups reflect their hierarchical positions within broader social structures, in ways that facilitate the hegemonic justification of those who wield privilege against those who face prejudice". It is for this reason that film viewers are advised to watch films proactively, by examining film representations with regard to real-life events that have taken place. Kellner (1991: 8) stresses that "[r]eading films politically,

therefore, can provide insight not only into the ways that film reproduces existing social struggles within contemporary U.S. society but can also provide insight into social and political dynamics".

It is very difficult to prevent the influence and spread of distorted images once a powerful institution like Hollywood distributes such representations. It becomes even harder for audiences to get a truthful and balanced impression of Arabs and their culture when such media distortions are ongoing and go unchallenged. However, as mentioned earlier, there is room for negotiation within the hegemonic process. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research and shed light on the impact media representations have on groups and societies (in this case Arabs). This thesis aims to challenge such ongoing distortions by conducting the appropriate fieldwork in the State of Kuwait. Young Kuwaitis living in Kuwait were approached with the purpose of offering them the opportunity to present their perspective on the issue of Arab representations in Hollywood films. Details of the fieldwork are provided in the following Methodology chapter, whereas chapters five and six offer participants' responses that retaliate against, resist, and challenge hegemonic advances made through Hollywood films.

The past three chapters – including this chapter – serve as an important foundation for which the main contribution of this research is built on. The purpose of these chapters was to offer an overview of the relevant issues related to Arab representations in film and the tradition of cinema in Kuwait. The following chapter (chapter four) focuses on the methodology that was used to gather the primary data for this research. The chapters that follow – five and six – provide an original contribution to the issue of Arab portrayals in films. These two chapters delve deeper into the topic by providing firsthand accounts regarding Arab representations from the perspective of young educated Kuwaitis.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to explain the various methods used to gather and analyze the data collected for this study. The research investigates the way young educated Kuwaitis negotiate the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films. People interpret the images they see in films very differently depending on their own experiences.

> [A] person must call upon his or her own experience to fully grasp what is happening on the screen … People apply their own knowledge to what they see. This is evident, for example, in the identification with characters. People who have had certain experiences will be more likely to identify with characters in similar situations.
>
> (Gilbert, 2003: 1)

Due to the nature of this study, which relies on personal interpretations and opinions of young Kuwaiti film viewers, it is acknowledged that certain variables, such as one's experiences, travel history, and educational background, will undoubtedly have an impact on the results obtained. These variables, and the way in which an adequate methodology was developed in order to account for such variables, will be discussed further in this chapter.

The sections included in this chapter will cover topics regarding research design, which also includes the sampling design. The way online surveys, focus group discussions, and

interviews were conducted, in addition to any pilot tests used will also be presented. Furthermore, data collection and data analysis methods will be discussed. The last two sections of this chapter will look into issues of research limitation and ethical considerations, followed by a summary of the chapter.

4.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

The study utilizes a mixed methods approach, which requires the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to John W. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007: 5):

> Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.

Three data collection methods are employed in this research study. They include semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and online surveys. The use of various methods in the research enables the researcher to triangulate the findings, thus enhancing the validity of the data collected (Denscombe, 2006). According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007: 123), this type of research is described as:

> the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

There are multiple advantages for using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Christian Erzberger and Gerald Prein (1997) highlight three advantages of using the multi-method approach. The first is that the convergence of the results can be seen as an indicator of the results' validity. Secondly, it can offer a new insight into the phenomenon under investigation by linking missing parts of knowledge together. Thirdly, it can lead to divergent results that allow the refutation of past assumptions. It is also argued that the results obtained through the use of mixed methods show that the issues the research addresses are often more multi-faceted than originally expected. Furthermore, the use of qualitative and quantitative research approaches in a mixed methods research format offers pragmatic advantages in the exploration of complex research questions. Survey questionnaire responses can be understood at a deeper level when supported by qualitative data. In addition, patterns in responses can be identified by the statistical data collected.

However, it must be emphasized that when using method triangulation the aim must not be that the results of each method should confirm each other. On the contrary, the results of each method used should be treated as an individual piece of knowledge that is "added to the puzzle" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 4). What this means is that, although all the methods used in this research are linked to one another, each method serves to uniquely contribute to the way young Kuwaitis watch and interpret Arab representations in Hollywood films.

4.3   SAMPLING DESIGN

"There is no one best sampling strategy, because which is best will depend on the context in which researchers are working, and the nature of their research objective(s)" (Given, 2008: 697). Researchers are advised to follow theoretical guidelines before choosing a sampling

technique to be used in their research. Curtis *et al.,* (2000) set five general guidelines. Firstly, the sampling technique should emerge from the conceptual foundation. It must validly answer the research question, and should be capable of providing insight either to maintain or reject the research hypothesis. Secondly, the amount of data collected using a particular technique must be sufficient to answer the research questions. For instance, if a study is descriptive – as the current research is – then the researcher must question whether or not the data collection method they will employ is capable of providing rich data. Thirdly, the sample should provide data that can offer clear inferences to be made. In quantitative research, such inferences are deemed to provide the research with internal validity. Fourthly, the particular sampling technique must be ethical with regard to the participants. Participants must have given informed consent. Fifthly, the sampling plan must be viable for the researcher. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) have added a sixth guideline, which questions whether or not the results from the sample used in the study can be generalized to represent a larger population.

4.4   PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling is employed to gather in-depth data on specific cases that are selected depending on the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990). This particular sampling strategy was used to select participants that took part in this research. To utilize "purposive sampling signifies that one sees sampling as a series of strategic choices about with whom, where, and how one does one's research" (Given, 2008: 697). There are several purposive sampling techniques available to researchers in the field of social science. Some purposive sampling techniques include: convenience sampling, disconfirming or confirming cases, extreme or deviant cases sampling, stratified purposive sampling, random purposive sampling, and

homogenous cases sampling (Patton, 1990). This research uses the homogenous cases sampling technique since it is designed for researchers who want to pick out certain elements from a particular group or subgroup to investigate in depth. This sampling technique is suitable for this research because studies that employ focus groups discussions or interviews – such as this study – frequently use this method, given that one of its objectives is to collect people's opinions that are educationally, professionally or demographically similar (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

It is necessary to purposively select participants to take part in the study. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, for the purpose of this study, I am interested in gathering data from three different groups of people. The first group, which I have named 'importers and regulators', is in charge of importing and censoring films for public viewing in Kuwait. This group consists of people employed in Cinescape and in Kuwait's Ministry of Information (Censoring Department). The second group, the 'production group', includes Kuwaiti filmmakers, directors, producers and other Kuwaiti professionals in the local film industry. The third and most crucial group for the sake of this study is the 'Kuwaiti audience' which has been exclusively narrowed down to include both male and female university students between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four, from the State of Kuwait. The 'Kuwaiti audience' was limited to the specific sample mentioned above due to that fact that this target sample are more likely to come into contact with Hollywood films than any other age group. Moreover, educated university students are in a position of negotiating their image and the representations they see in Hollywood films. They are also more likely to graduate and be put in a position where they can make an effective change to the issues that are covered in this study.

To collect in-depth accounts of how the film industry in Kuwait operates, semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from the first two groups: 'importers and regulators' and the 'production group'. Interviews were conducted with Cinescape personnel, employees in the Censoring Department at the Kuwait Ministry of Information, and members of the censorship committee. Kuwaiti film director Walid Al-Awadi, and Naif Al-Mutawa the producer of *'The 99'* superheroes animation, were also interviewed to provide information on the local film production scene in Kuwait. Details regarding how the interviews were conducted will be discussed later in this chapter.

Data from the 'Kuwaiti audience' group were collected through the use of a survey and focus group discussions. Prior to conducting the final set of focus group discussions (FGDs) and survey, a pilot survey FGD was designed and implemented to test the survey. The next section is dedicated to explaining how participants were approached, and how the pilot survey and focus group discussion were conducted.

4.5 PILOT TEST

Pilot studies are defined as test studies that try "out the research approach to identify potential problems that may affect the quality and the validity of the results" (Lucienne, Blessing, and Chakrabarti, 2009: 114). Pilot studies take place prior to conducting the main exploratory study. Testing the study as planned for the future final study includes collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. Conclusions collected from pilot tests and the feedback obtained from pilot study participants indicate the changes that will need to be made in order to make future research more effective. Possible changes may include changing the questions in the questionnaire to make sure they are less ambiguous, or changing the recording instruments to

enhance the quality of the recordings. The data collected from the pilot test is crucial as it provides guidance for the steps to be taken for future research (*ibid:* 114).

In order to check that the methods selected were appropriate for the research, it was necessary to try them out in a pilot test. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014), there are two methods to test a survey: qualitative and quantitative tests. There are various techniques that can be used to collect information regarding a survey within the qualitative method. Some of these techniques include: skirmishing, focus groups, pre-testing, and observational studies. Quantitative tests, on the other hand, include pilot testing and dress rehearsals.

When I began preparing for my fieldwork visit to Kuwait in the summer of 2012, my initial intention was to conduct a pilot test of the survey I planned on using later in the study. However, upon conducting the necessary research, it was decided that conducting an FGD to obtain information about the surveys would be more beneficial than conducting a pilot survey alone. This decision was made on the basis that the results from the FGD would provide more detailed and concise information regarding the survey questions. The aim was to test the efficiency of the survey through the use of an FGD. Not only would the focus group allow me to receive a sample of responses from the target group intended for this research, but I would also be able to ask them directly about the survey questions and make notes of their input in order to improve the survey further.

4.5.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE SURVEYS

Fliers appealing to Kuwaiti students between the ages of 18-24 to participate in an FGD were posted in numerous locations at Kuwait University and the American University of Kuwait.

The fliers were posted on notice boards in various departments, staircases, admissions offices, and cafeterias throughout the two universities. Students contacted me on the mobile number that was listed on the fliers. During the telephone conversation I recorded information such as their name, age, and current university major. I also asked them which days suited them best in order to conduct the FGD; this was important to ensure that the day of the FGD suited most of the participants. The dates for the FGDs were set based on the information provided by the students. A text message with information about the date, time, and location of the FGD was sent to all the participants.

Two focus group discussions were conducted to test the efficiency of the surveys. Table 1 below provides details of the participants that took part in pilot survey focus group discussion at Kuwait University, while Table 2 on the following page provides details about the American University of Kuwait participants.

Table 1: Kuwait University Focus Group Discussions (PILOT TEST)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
A	Male	Kuwaiti	18	College of Social sciences
B	Male	Kuwaiti	19	College of Science
C	Male	Kuwaiti	19	College of Law
D	Male	Kuwaiti	20	College of Law
E	Male	Kuwaiti	20	College of Business administration
F	Male	Kuwaiti	21	College of Engineering and Petroleum
G	Female	Kuwaiti	19	College of Social sciences
H	Female	Kuwaiti	23	College of Women

Date: July 2012. Location: Kuwait University – Shuwaikh Campus

Table 2: American University of Kuwait Focus Group Discussions (PILOT TEST)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
A	Male	Kuwaiti	18	Arts and Humanities
B	Male	Kuwaiti	19	Business and Economics
C	Male	Kuwaiti	21	Sciences and Engineering
D	Female	Kuwaiti	18	Social Sciences
E	Female	Kuwaiti	18	Social Sciences
F	Female	Kuwaiti	19	Arts and Humanities
G	Female	Kuwaiti	20	Business and Economics
H	Female	Kuwaiti	22	Arts and Humanities

Date: July 2012. Location: American University of Kuwait – Salmiya Campus

The FGDs each took approximately one and a half hours to conduct, and took place at each of the two universities' main campuses. Eleven of the sixteen surveys filled out in the FGDs were in English and the remaining five were filled out in Arabic. The surveys completed in Arabic were translated and transcribed into English by myself. The responses given by the participants in the FGDs were provided in both English and Arabic since it is common for most Kuwaitis to speak in a mixture of English and Arabic in informal conversations.

4.5.2 PARTICIPANTS' INPUT (PILOT SURVEY FGD)

The participants in the pilot survey FGD noted that the questions were generally clearly stated. However, a couple of the participants found some questions to be somewhat unclear. One of the questions that the participants did not understand properly was Q23: 'Have you ever watched a film that presented Arabs in a manner that you could take issue with?' After I explained to them what the question meant, the participants felt that it needed to be amended; instead of using 'you could take issue with' they suggested 'bothered you', 'offended you', 'annoyed you' and/or 'angered you'.

In addition, some participants felt that some questions had the same meaning but were structured slightly differently, and they believed that these questions could be incorporated together to make just one question. They felt that Q24 – 'Why do you think that Hollywood directors choose to present Arabs in the image currently being presented in their films?' – and Q28 – 'Do you think that Hollywood's representation of Arabs are politically motivated?' – gave similar answers. They also felt that Q31 – 'When travelling abroad do you ever feel that the way you are treated is linked to your Arab origin?' – and Q32 – 'Do you think your treatment while abroad is in anyway related to the representation of Arabs in films?' – were similar in that they gave the same answer for both questions, and thus suggested merging the two questions together. Although the two questions are not necessarily the same, their suggestions were taken into account since they were ultimately the target group that the study was interested in.

Participants suggested that the answers provided for Q10 – 'How many movies do you usually watch in a week?' – should be presented numerically instead of text (i.e. 1, 2, 3, instead of one, two, three, etc.) because, according to them, numbers are easier to read. Participants also thought that Q13 – 'How often do you watch films in cinemas?' – should have been a multiple-choice question with participants simply ticking a box rather than writing down the answer. In addition, participants agreed that the option 'somewhat' or 'sometimes' should be added to the 'yes' and 'no' answers provided in Q21: 'Do you think that the images of Arabs in Hollywood films are an accurate portrayal of Arabs?' They also suggested adding the term 'generally' into the question.

On average, it took participants approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. Participants agreed that the questions flowed well and that they were able to easily move from one question to another. However, many were concerned that it was too long and that it

needed to be made easier by increasing the number of multiple-choice questions whilst decreasing the number of open-ended questions. Some participants admitted that they felt bored halfway through the survey, stating that, "if I was given this outside I don't think I would have answered all these questions the way I did just now" (Participant B: AUK Pilot Test). Most of the critical feedback revolved less on the questions and more on the structure of the survey. The most popular suggestion was that the survey needed to be shorter and easier for respondents to fill out. One participant emphasized that, "people won't bother answering long questions because they get bored quickly if the questions make them think a lot" (Participant G: KU Pilot Test). These comments were clear indicators that the survey had to be altered to make it more appealing to participants. The necessary changes that needed to be made in the survey were noted, and were eventually incorporated into the final version of the survey.

Even though the two FGDs were organized to focus on the actual structure of the survey and less on the content, the participants were eager to voice their opinions on the various questions that were asked in the survey. Participants found the subject interesting and were keen on discussing the issue throughout the FGDs. They were found to be giving more details in the answers they had given in the survey than on the structure of the survey itself. I was encouraged by the feedback as this indicated that the FGDs that were to be conducted later on the topic itself would be highly successful in gathering information on the subject.

4.5.3 ONLINE PILOT SURVEY

As mentioned earlier, another way to test a survey is by conducting a pilot test (quantitative test). Therefore, in addition to the FGDs regarding the questionnaire, a pilot test of the survey

itself was conducted. Since I intended on using an online version of the final survey in future, it was sensible to test the electronic version of the survey as well. Therefore, the survey was posted electronically and was made available to target audience via the online survey service 'SurveyMonkey'.[32]

Using three means of social networks – Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram – I broadcasted a message that I (a PhD student from the University of Birmingham) was conducting a survey on the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films and that I needed Kuwaiti university students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four to fill out the survey by simply clicking on the website link, which directs them immediately to the online survey.

I contacted the relevant individuals in charge of maintaining the American University of Kuwait and Kuwait University Twitter and Facebook accounts and asked them to spread my message since my target sample group was most likely to follow their universities' online social media accounts. I chose to disseminate the message using the mentioned social networks because my target group is frequent users of these programs. In addition, once I had broadcast my message, many individuals 're-tweeted' and 're-posted' my message, which helped in spreading the word and reaching even more people. However, since this was only a pilot survey, I limited the responses to only fifty; after fifty surveys were completed the survey was automatically closed.

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[32] SurveyMonkey.com is a website that allows researchers to conduct online surveys. Users of this website must pay to have a membership, which allows members to create surveys and analyze their results.

4.5.4 PARTICIPANTS' INPUT (ONLINE PILOT SURVEY)

The most obvious difference in the responses from the online version of the survey was that more questions were ignored than in the survey that was given to the FGD participants. In the online version of the survey some questions were clearly ignored more than others. The top five questions that received the least responses were questions: Q15 – 'Where do you buy your DVDs from?'; Q16 – 'Approximately how much does a DVD cost you?'; Q17 – 'What do you know on the process through which films shown in Kuwait are selected?'; Q18 – 'What is your opinion on cinemas in Kuwait cutting scenes from films?'; and Q27 – 'At which point in history do you think that the image of Arabs in Hollywood films has changed and to what extent?' This led me to conclude that the respondents either did not know the answers to the questions or felt that they were not important. One way to motivate respondents to answer these questions was by changing the format of the questions from open-ended to multiple-choice questions.

Even though this was only a pilot survey, and its audience constituted a small sample of the target audience, the responses gathered showed collective agreement on certain questions and sharp contrasting opinions in other questions. For instance, in respect to Q21 – 'Do you think that the images of Arabs in Hollywood films are an accurate portrayal of Arabs?' – 87% thought that Hollywood films did not portray Arabs accurately. In Q22, 90% of the respondents stated that the image of Arabs in Hollywood films is negative, while 15% thought it is neutral, and only 2% deemed it positive. The answers to these two questions show that most of the participants shared a common opinion on a certain question.

On the other hand, in Q30 – 'Do you ever feel that your treatment abroad is linked to your Arab origin?' – 51% felt that they were treated differently, whereas 49% did not sense that at all. Another question that split the responses into two groups was Q32 – 'Do you think your

treatment while abroad is in anyway related to the representation of Arabs in films?' – with 57% believing that the way they were treated abroad was related to their representations in films, compared to 43% who did not think that there was a correlation. These responses – although from a small sample – provide important information about the way young Arabs view themselves both in reality and in Hollywood productions.

The combined results from both the FGDs and the online pilot survey have been successful in pointing out the weaknesses and strengths of the survey. The feedback that was given in regard to the questions and structure of the survey was taken into account, and the necessary amendments were made in order to insure the quality of the answers given in final survey that was later conducted.

4.6   DATA COLLECTION

As mentioned earlier, a combination of focus group discussions and surveys were utilized to gather information from the 'Kuwaiti audience' (university students). Interviews were also used to collect data from 'importers and regulators' and the 'production group'. Upon receiving permission from participants, data from both interviews and focus group discussions were collected using a digital recorder. Each recorded interview and FGD session was saved on an individual file. The files were then uploaded on to the computer where a special transcribing software package (Express Scribe) was used to allow the researcher to review and play back the data as much as was needed in order to manually transcribe the data collected. The software allowed the researcher to control the quality and speed of the recordings; this was particularly useful when participants spoke in a low tone or when a number of

participants spoke at the same time. The sections below provide details to how data was collected in all three data collection methods employed in this study.

4.6.1 ONLINE SURVEY

It is important that prospective social researchers identify precisely the type and nature of the data they are seeking, as to whether it is opinion or fact, in order to enable the wording of the questions in the questionnaires to be formulated appropriately. Questionnaires are formatted into a series of questions, either close-ended or open-ended, to collect particular data that will be subsequently subjected to in-depth analysis. To make sure that a questionnaire is consistent for each participant, it is vital that all participants receive the same version of the online questionnaire, and that they complete the survey without the presence of the researcher. Problems linked to the reliability and validity of measurements utilized in the design of a survey may still lead to particular difficulties for investigators when faced with interpreting the findings. It has been argued that measurement difficulties may be a result of a lack of framework. Therefore, it is important that the researcher refer to scholars and other social researchers in order to obtain guidance during the questionnaire design phase.

This research uses a representative sample group in order to distance itself from problems associated with reliability and validity. Furthermore, because the survey is conducted online, the researcher does not run the risk of influencing participants' responses. Anonymous participants are more likely to answer questions more accurately and truthfully without the presence of the researcher (Tourangeau and Smith, 1996). Studies show that there was less misrepresentation in the data when making use of a computerized questionnaire in contrast to regular pen-and-paper questionnaires (Richman, *et al.*, 1999). It has also been observed that

"[r]espondents feel more comfortable admitting to embarrassing, stigmatizing, or illegal behavior when participating in more confidential interview processes, such as computer-based surveys" (Gideon, 2012: 383).

In addition, online surveys allow participants to complete the survey at the time that suits them best. This also gives participants the liberty to take as much time as they need to answer the questions. The cost of using online questionnaires is minimal since there are no postage fees. They are also considered to be more time-efficient. Researchers are able to immediately receive the responses once participants complete the survey. Moreover, since the survey was submitted to the scrutiny of the target audience during the pilot test phase, the details set out in the survey have become shorter and more straightforward to help encourage responses.

Online surveys are considered to have a number of weaknesses, due to the fact that several assumptions are unstated about the participants. They are presumed to be able to understand the full meaning of the questions, and to understand what they are supposed to do when faced with the questionnaire. As this is an anonymous data collection method, the researcher is unaware of the participants' abilities to fill out the questionnaire. Indeed, as Foddy (1993) has argued, researchers cannot know if participants are able to complete the question correctly without the presence of the researcher. However, there is a possibility that the results could be seen as anomalies if the researcher was present during the questionnaire process (*ibid*). Moreover, "an understanding of computers and confidence in one's ability to use a computer is an important factor" when taking part in online surveys (Gideon, 2012: 388). Participants must have the necessary computer skills to complete the questionnaire, and those without such skills are inevitably excluded from the research. Nevertheless, since this study focuses on young university students, it is very unlikely that the target group does not have the required computer skills needed to complete the survey.

The online survey was created using the same online survey service that was used in the pilot survey, 'SurveyMonkey'. Once the survey was designed and ready to collect responses, participants were sought for completing it online.[33] Fliers advertising the study and the link to the survey were posted in various locations around the American University of Kuwait and Kuwait University. The fliers were posted on notice boards throughout the campuses, in corridor notice boards, staircases, and cafeterias. Copies of the fliers were also placed in the pigeonholes of teaching staff with a note asking them to encourage their students to complete the survey. Interested individuals simply went to the link and completed the survey.

Approximately two weeks after heavily advertising the survey throughout the university campuses, it was clear that students from certain colleges participated in the study more than students from other colleges. For instance, more students from the colleges of Education, Law, and Social Science took part in the survey than those from medical-related colleges such as, Pharmacy, Dentistry, and Medicine. Therefore, in order to even out the number of participants in each college/department, lecturers in colleges that had a low number of students that participated in the survey were asked to urge their students to take part. This step was important to ensure that the data collected from the survey was representative of the whole student population. This action proved to be successful, as the number of students from low-participating colleges/departments began to rise. Overall 520 participants responded to the survey.

Upon conducting the FGDs in a later stage, it was apparent that students from certain colleges and departments were more knowledgeable and interested in topics related to media, films, and representations than students from other educational backgrounds. Students from social science and humanities departments were more enthusiastic to voice their opinions on the

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[33] Please refer to Appendix 7 on page 299 to see the final version of the online survey that was used in this study.

issue of Arab representations in Western media, and thus were more motivated to participate in the study than students from medical-related colleges.

4.6.2 INTERVIEWS

This study uses semi-structured interviews to gather information from cinema officials, Censorship Department employees, censorship committee members, and various filmmakers and producers. Semi-structured interviews have both the easiness and flexibility of unstructured interview formats, whilst being structured enough to guide in the direction of the survey and focus group discussions' objectives.[34] This method provides a qualitative focus for the research. The questions are set out in an open-ended manner, which allows participants to elaborate on certain points. The researcher can also encourage the participant to provide more details about a particular point (Schensul and LeCompte, 1999). This research uses semi-structured interviews to collect in-depth data from both the 'importers and regulators' and the 'production group' on issues regarding importation, censorship, and local regulations and other obstacles related to the film industry in Kuwait. The use of semi-structured in-depth interviews is appropriate for this research, since individuals' opinions and attitudes can ideally be collected through semi-structured interviews (Lucienne, Blessing, and Chakrabarti, 2009).

Semi-structured interviews are defined as interviews that:

> Consist of predetermined questions related to areas of interest, administered to a representative sample of respondents to confirm study domains, and identity factors, variables and items or attributes of variables for analysis or use in a survey.

> (Schensul and LeCompte, 1999: 149)

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[34] Please refer to Appendix 10 to view the outlines of the questions used for each interview.

According to Schensul and LeCompte (1999), semi-structured interviews may have one or more of the following objectives. They aim, firstly, to clarify the elements, factors and domains to be investigated in the research; secondly, to make use of such features in the research variables; thirdly, to formulate or to further develop initial hypotheses; and, finally, to set out a qualitative framework for the design of an ethnographic survey.

Researchers have argued that there are weaknesses in semi-structured interview methods. Denscombe (2006) argues that research participants respond in different ways as a result of how they view the researcher. He notes, for example, the 'interviewer effect'. The participant may be affected by the researcher's age, sex, and/or ethnic origin, thus having an impact on the sort of information they are willing to disclose, the amount of such information they are willing to give, and how honest they are when revealing their opinions and experiences. Arguably, the interviewer effect may be more apparent in some interviews than others, depending on the nature of the information required. Furthermore, Gomm (2004) argues that a participant may give particular responses because they think the researcher requires such responses. Presumably, if the researcher provides the participant with an information sheet detailing the nature and purpose of the study, participants are less likely to be affected by perceived research demands or requirements.

Gomm (2004) observes that the main strength of semi-structured interviews is that it creates a collaborative situation between the researcher and the participant. The interaction between the researcher and the participant tends to be a fact-producing form of interaction. However, it must be highlighted that that facts are not always what are produced in semi-structured interviews. Another strength semi-structured interviews have is the ability to allow researchers to engage their participants and encourage them to think about perceptions and experiences that they may not normally consider relevant to their day-to-day lives. It also

enables researchers to discuss perceptions and experiences that participants may not feel comfortable with disclosing to others in other social settings. Gomm (*ibid*: 230) claims that "[t]he argument is that only by developing intimate, trusting and empathetic relationships will respondents feel able to disclose the truth". However, he adds that this statement does not always reflect how things work out during such forms of interview, and argues that researchers often tend to regard an interview as being successful if they have been able to change participants' experiences. On the other hand, he notes that the strength of semi-structured interviews is that they can generate original and rich data, based on unique experiences and perceptions that make this type of method invaluable.

All the interviews carried out in this study were conducted at the interviewees' place of work. For example, interviewees from the 'importers and regulators' group, such as the officials from Cinescape, were interviewed in the company's headquarters in 360 Mall. Furthermore, employees that work for Kuwait's Ministry of Information (Censoring Department) were interviewed in their offices. The head of the censorship committee, Suliman Arti, who is also the Dean of Student Affairs in Kuwait's Higher Institutes for Theatre Arts and Music Arts, was interviewed in his office in the institute's main campus in Salmiya. Interviewees from the 'production group' were also interviewed at their place of work. For instance, Kuwaiti director and filmmaker Walid Al-Awadi was interviewed in his office in Kuwait City. Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa, producer of *'The 99'* Muslim superheroes animation, was also interviewed in his production office in Kuwait City.

4.6.3 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A focus group discussion takes place when a group of individuals come together to be involved in a discussion on a particular topic guided by a researcher. FGDs have a clear and focused agenda. As mentioned earlier, FGDs must have a sampling frame of participants that are representative, or an approximation of the population of interest in relation to the research questions (Stewart, *et al.*, 2007). In this research the sample frame for the FGDs were both female and male Kuwaiti students between the ages of 18-24 years of age (from every college/department in the two selected universities).

Some advantages of FGDs include that within them it is possible to capture participants' attitudes and opinions in a real life social context. The FGD process can be flexible and can easily be altered to better suit the participants taking part. A FGD also has a high level of face validity, which means it measures exactly what needs to be measured. It obtains fast results, some of which are unexpected and may not have been obtained through personal interviews. Furthermore, it gives participants some freedom regarding what is said in the discussion (Hatch, 2010).

However, as with all methods, there are also some disadvantages associated with FGDs. Unlike in interviews, the researcher may have less control over the discussion (Byers and Wilcox, 1991). On the other hand, the more control the investigator has, the less freedom the participants have in what they wish to say (Morgan, 1997). Furthermore, data generated from FGDs can be time-consuming and difficult to interpret and analyze. In addition, researchers need to have the ability and skills to direct participants in their conversation as some participants may be difficult to guide (Stewart, *et al.,* 2007).

As with the initial pilot FGD, fliers asking Kuwaiti students between the ages of 18-24 to participate in an FGD were posted in various locations at Kuwait University and the American University of Kuwait. Once students began contacting me, I organized the FGDs and placed them in a group on the day that suited them best.

Overall, six focus group discussions were conducted in Kuwait. Four of the FGDs were carried out at Kuwait University (KU), and the remaining two were conducted in the American University of Kuwait (AUK) from 17 to 20 December 2012. The reason why more FGDs were conducted in KU than in AUK is due to the fact that the student population in AUK is considerably smaller than that of KU. Another reason is that KU has more colleges and departments than AUK. Therefore, it was appropriate to conduct more FGDs in KU.

Each FGD was composed of eight, both female and male, university students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. However, it was not always feasible to gather four female and four male participants to take part in each of the FGDs. As a result, participants that took part in the FGDs were not always divided equally. Table 3 below, shows the gender breakdown of all six FGDs.

Table 3: FGD Male to Female Ratio

GROUP	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Group 1 (KU)	6	2	8
Group 2 (KU)	5	3	8
Group 3 (KU)	5	3	8
Group 4 (KU)	3	5	8
TOTAL	17	15	32
Group 5 (AUK)	3	5	8
Group 6 (AUK)	4	4	8
TOTAL	7	9	16
GRAND TOTAL	24	24	48

*KU = Kuwait University
**AUK = American University of Kuwait

Overall, 48 students participated in the FGDs. The representativeness of the university student population was important to the research. In order to collect data from participants with varying degrees of knowledge about issues related to films, representations, stereotypes, and image, the researcher took added care that the study included students from various fields of education. Hence students from every college in both universities took part in the survey and FGDs (see Tables 4 to 9 on the following pages for the breakdown of participants).

Table 4: Kuwait University Focus Group Discussions (FGD 1)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
1	Male	Kuwaiti	18	College of Social sciences
2	Male	Kuwaiti	19	College of Science
3	Female	Kuwaiti	23	College of Women
4	Female	Kuwaiti	20	College of Law
5	Female	Kuwaiti	19	College of Business administration
6	Male	Kuwaiti	21	College of Engineering and Petroleum
7	Male	Kuwaiti	20	College of Social sciences
8	Female	Kuwaiti	23	College of Law

Date: Monday 17 December 2012: 2 - 3:30 PM
Location: Kuwait University – Shuwaikh Campus

Table 5: Kuwait University Focus Group Discussions (FGD 2)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
1	Male	Kuwaiti	19	College of Arts
2	Male	Kuwaiti	19	College of Science
3	Female	Kuwaiti	18	College of Business administration
4	Female	Kuwaiti	19	College of Engineering and Petroleum
5	Female	Kuwaiti	24	College of Pharmacy
6	Male	Kuwaiti	20	College of Education
7	Male	Kuwaiti	21	College of Social sciences
8	Male	Kuwaiti	22	College of Medicine

Date: Tuesday 18 December 2012: 2 - 3:30 PM
Location: Kuwait University – Shuwaikh Campus

Table 6: Kuwait University Focus Group Discussions (FGD 3)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
1	Female	Kuwaiti	21	College of Women
2	Male	Kuwaiti	20	College of Education
3	Male	Kuwaiti	22	College of Sharia and Islamic Studies
4	Male	Kuwaiti	24	College of Sharia and Islamic Studies
5	Male	Kuwaiti	19	College of Social Science
6	Female	Kuwaiti	20	College of Engineering and Petroleum
7	Male	Kuwaiti	22	College of Allied Health Science
8	Female	Kuwaiti	20	College of Business administration

Date: Tuesday 18 December 2012: 3:30 - 5 PM
Location: Kuwait University – Shuwaikh Campus

Table 7: Kuwait University Focus Group Discussions (FGD 4)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
1	Male	Kuwaiti	19	College of Engineering and Petroleum
2	Male	Kuwaiti	20	College of Allied Health Science
3	Male	Kuwaiti	23	College of Pharmacy
4	Female	Kuwaiti	19	College of Arts
5	Female	Kuwaiti	20	College of Social sciences
6	Female	Kuwaiti	21	College of Medicine
7	Female	Kuwaiti	22	College of Dentistry
8	Female	Kuwaiti	22	College of Law

Date: Tuesday 18 December 2012: 11 - 12:30 PM
Location: American University of Kuwait – Salmiya Campus

Table 8: American University of Kuwait Focus Group Discussions (FGD 5)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
1	Male	Kuwaiti	18	Arts and Humanities
2	Male	Kuwaiti	19	Business and Economics
3	Male	Kuwaiti	21	Sciences and Engineering
4	Female	Kuwaiti	18	Social Sciences
5	Female	Kuwaiti	18	Social Sciences
6	Female	Kuwaiti	19	Arts and Humanities
7	Female	Kuwaiti	20	Business and Economics
8	Female	Kuwaiti	22	Arts and Humanities

Date: Thursday 20 December 2012: 1- 2:30 PM
Location: American University of Kuwait – Salmiya Campus

Table 9: American University of Kuwait Focus Group Discussions (FGD 6)

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	NATIONALITY	AGE	COLLEGE / ACADEMIC DIVISIONS
1	Male	Kuwaiti	19	Business and Economics
2	Male	Kuwaiti	20	Social Sciences
3	Male	Kuwaiti	21	Social Sciences
4	Male	Kuwaiti	23	Arts and Humanities
5	Female	Kuwaiti	18	Business and Economics
6	Female	Kuwaiti	19	Business and Economics
7	Female	Kuwaiti	20	Sciences and Engineering
8	Female	Kuwaiti	20	Sciences and Engineering

Date: Thursday 20 December 2012: 3:30 - 5 PM
Location: Kuwait University – Shuwaikh Campus

4.6.4 PARTICIPANTS' INPUT (FINAL FGD)

There was a rich diversity in the cohort of students that participated in the FGDs. The responses to the questions that were raised varied considerably. Some students had absolutely no idea about the processes that all films go through to reach cinema screens, while others displayed excellent knowledge of the processes. In fact, one of the students who participated had once sat in a film screening with the censorship committee at the Ministry of Information. I was later informed that this had taken place when he worked as a part-time employee in the Ministry of Information (Participant 5 from FGD 3).

It seemed that nearly every participant had a story to tell regarding their experiences of Arab representations in Western media. They shared their travel experiences, and it was evident that many participants felt that they were sometimes directly and indirectly discriminated against. Some of the participants' experiences were not very pleasant. For instance, several complaints included being checked more thoroughly at airport customs, and being overcharged in shops and taxis because, as a participant put it, "they have an image that all Kuwaitis are super-rich" (Participant 7: FGD 2). Another participant argued that they should not blame taxi drivers and shop assistants for trying to make extra money out of Arabs, as

many Arabs often show off their money abroad with the clothes and jewelry that they wear, and the cars they drive.

Nevertheless, not all of the participants' experiences were negative. A number of girls who wore the *hijab* explained that when they travelled abroad, they were asked questions about their *hijab* from curious people they met on their vacation. "They are curious, you can see it in their eyes. They want to ask me about it but they are shy, or afraid they might offend me", claimed Participant 6 (FGD 1). They stated further that people who asked them about their *hijab* did not bother them at all. Instead, they felt it was their duty to answer to the best of their ability any *hijab*-related questions.

Questions regarding censorship in Kuwait stirred a heated debate between the participants. The participants' views on the issue of censorship varied from one individual to another. Some participants felt that the current way films were censored and shown in cinemas around Kuwait was suitable. Even though they complained that scenes often jumped and skipped, they believed that it was simply a small price to pay to maintain their culture, morals and religion. On the other hand, some participants had very opposing views in regard to censoring films in cinemas. They highlighted that nearly every household in Kuwait had satellites wired to their televisions that show films in their uncensored versions. They pointed out that if some people felt that watching uncensored films was immoral, then they should simply avoid going to cinemas to watch a particular film. One participant stressed: "I'm paying money to enjoy the film in the cinema with a big screen and a loud surround-system; I want to make the most of it. If they don't want to watch the full movie, they can sit at home and watch it in their house where they can pause and fast-forward any scene they don't like" (Participant 6: FGD 3).

These remarks motivated me to take a closer look at satellite television in Kuwait. Pay-

television is a term used to refer to subscription-based television services. Orbit Showtime Network (OSN) is one of the largest pay-TV networks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and is the most popular subscription-television network in Kuwait. It features over 100 channels that offer a wide selection of international television entertainment content, such as blockbuster movies, documentaries, sporting events, children's entertainment, and top-rated local and international TVseries. Moreover, the "movie offering includes over a 100 uncut and uninterrupted movie premieres a month, so viewers can watch them the way they were meant to be watched" (Orbit Showtime Network, 2012). Furthermore, "OSN boasts the most comprehensive portfolio of exclusive rights from all the major studios, including Warner Brothers, Paramount, Fox, Disney, Sony, MGM, Universal and DreamWorks and offers access to the world's leading television brands including Disney channel, Sky News, Discovery Network and Nat Geo" (*ibid*).

There are many households that are currently subscribed to OSN. The remaining households that are not subscribed to OSN are likely to have other forms of free satellite TV such as NileSat, ArabSat, Hot-BirdSat, etc. It is obvious that people are able to watch uncensored films via pay-television subscriptions, pirated DVDs, and the internet. Yet it seems that some participants are not willing to accept the idea of substituting censorship for an age-rating system. When the idea of using a rating system was brought up during the discussion, nearly all the participants agreed that some kind of rating system needed to be implemented in Kuwait. However, some participants still felt that films needed to be censored even if a rating system was to be employed. This discussion, along with other FGD outcomes, will be addressed further in the subsequent chapters.

One suggestion that participants made was to have cinemas show two versions of a film, one screen showing a censored version, and the other showing an uncensored but age-rated

version. It was pointed out that a cinema's main objective was to make money; therefore cinemas would lose revenue if two screens were occupied for a single movie. It was also suggested that cinemas could charge audiences more for the uncensored, rated version, so that cinemas could make up for the lost profit that could have been made if only one screen was being used to show the film.

Suggestions like the ones mentioned above were only a few of a long list of suggestions put forward by the FGD participants. I will discuss the results of these FGDs in more detail in the Results and Discussion chapters. Some of the questions that will be answered by analyzing the responses of the FGD and survey include:

- What are the most popular film genres in Kuwait?
- What is the most popular means of watching films in Kuwait, and why?
- How aware are Kuwaiti film audiences of film censorship processes?
- How do Kuwaitis feel towards film censorship processes in Kuwait?
- What do Kuwaiti audiences think of the way Arabs are portrayed in films?
- According to Kuwaiti audiences, what are some of the reasons behind the way Arabs are represented in Hollywood films?
- Are participants who travel abroad frequently more sensitive to the representation of Arabs in Hollywood films?

4.7   DATA ANALYSIS - THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The data collected from all methods used in this research was analyzed thematically. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006: 79) define thematic analysis as a predominantly qualitative method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally

organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic". Six steps are used to analyze data thematically. One must first familiarize oneself with the data; secondly, generate codes; thirdly, search for themes within the data; fourthly, review the themes; fifthly, define and label the themes; and finally, report the findings (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In the book *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*, Richard E. Boyatzis (1998) set out five characteristics of an efficient coding system. To begin with, labels must be created for themes. Definitions that state what each theme is about are then constructed, whereby the principal characteristics that make up each particular theme are identified. Descriptions or indicators that show or 'flag up' a particular theme are put into place. Descriptions of any exceptions or exclusions, or qualifications are identified and set. Finally, negative and positive themes are identified to eliminate any likelihood of confusion when searching for themes (Boyatzis, 1998).

There are several possible weaknesses linked to this method of analysis. For instance, it is possible to set up themes and neglect to analyze the data. Although the researcher can use questions from the interview outline as themes for the overall analysis, this does not necessarily provide a convincing analysis. Conversely, themes should be identified across the range of the whole data set (Bryman, 1988). Nevertheless, thematic analysis has the advantage of being extremely flexible and is independent of any epistemology. It can also be used with a wide range of theoretical approaches. As a result of its theoretical freedom, the method of thematic analysis offers an important, flexible research instrument for data analysis since it is capable of presenting a detailed account of research data (Holloway and Todres, 2003).

4.8   LIMITATIONS

Given that the study focuses on university students between the ages of 18-24, it clearly excludes portions of the society who are: a) not university students or, b) not within the target age group. The rationale for choosing this target group while excluding other groups is discussed earlier in the sampling design section of this chapter. Furthermore, recommendations for future research that overcome this limitation can be found in the Conclusion chapter of this thesis.

4.9   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any research has to take into account ethical considerations. The precautions used to protect the study's participants will be addressed in this section. In the *Dictionary of Sociology,* John Scott (2014: 645) defines research ethics as:

> The application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct to the collection, analysis, reporting, and publication of information about research subjects, in particular active acceptance of subjects' right to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent.

Clifford G. Christians (2000) sets out four guidelines for social researchers to consider both when designing research studies, and during the process of their research. Firstly, attention must be given to informed consent. Participants should agree to, and volunteer to take part in the study. The participants must be informed about the study, and on the data collection method that they will take part in. Secondly, the researcher must not deceive participants regarding what the research is about. Thirdly, emphasis must be given to participant confidentiality and privacy. The researcher should reassure participants that their personal

details will remain private and confidential, and that the research data and finished written research will not link to them in any way. Participants need to be assured that they will remain anonymous (unless they consent otherwise). Furthermore, research practices should be considerate of the participants. Researchers must make sure that they do not cause participants any harm or embarrassment.

Terry Evans and Victor Jakupec (1996) argue that the conduct of research is assessed by the degree to which it is concerned with moral agency, and to what extent it considers the respect of participants. It is not ethically sound to infringe on a participant's sense of purpose or determination. According to Evans and Jakupec (1996), four questions should be posed concerning research conduct, to establish whether or not the research is ethically acceptable. To begin with, is the participant being treated as an autonomous individual? Is the aim of the study in the participants' best interests? Could the findings be used for anything else other than the research and is this conveyed to the participant? Finally, is the research using the participant or the researcher as an instrument of the study? Researchers must answer these questions to ensure that their study is valid ethically. May (2001) urges researchers to seek guidance from various sources, such as a code of ethics, or research bodies or colleagues in order to protect their reputation and credibility.

As mentioned earlier, it is important that participants know their rights. All participants were verbally given a brief description of the research. They were informed that they could stop and withdraw from the research any time during or after the interview and/or FGDs, without giving any reasons for doing so. Participants that agreed to take part in the study were required to read and sign a consent form prior to taking part in any interviews or focus group discussions.[35] In addition, all the research data collected for this study is stored electronically

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[35] Please refer to Appendix 8 on page 306 to view the consent form that all participants were required to sign.

on an external hard-drive to ensure that the information may not be exposed to any sort of online system hacking, or to viruses that may affect data on a computer's memory. Files are also encrypted and protected with a password that only the researcher knows. Moreover, all personal information provided by the participants is saved on encrypted files, and will be deleted once the thesis is complete.

4.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has offered an in-depth justification for the research design that was used in this study. The data collection methods that were utilized in the research and their significance were also explained. The chapter also addresses issues regarding the sampling design, and the ways in which the target sample was reached. In addition, the early testing processes that took place prior to the final survey and focus group discussions were also discussed. Furthermore, the study's limitations and ethical considerations were also highlighted. The chapter also highlighted some of the output that was provided by FGDs participants. This offered a glimpse of what is to come in the following Results and Discussion chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

5.1 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS: INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study uses a mixed methods approach, whereby both qualitative and quantitative approaches are utilized. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and an online survey were all used as data collection methods. The use of various methods enables the researcher to triangulate the findings, thus enhancing the validity of the data collected (Denscombe, 2006).

This study in a sense gives a voice to a constituency, which at least in Western discourse, has been voiceless. The way Hollywood representations of Arabs are interpreted by real Arabs is explored in depth. This study differs from other studies in its area of interest, because it provides an Eastern perspective on a topic that for the most part has been discussed from a Western perspective. I will be tracing where Arab stereotypes are apparent, and will examine to what extent these studio-generated characterizations match real Arabs who live in the real Arab world.

Films have the capability to play a positive role in bridging social and cultural gaps. However, it can be argued that films can also be used to further distance people and cultures from each

other. With the flow of information apparently meant to enlighten people, this study serves to show how stereotypes in a globalized world are perpetuated and further deepened. Hollywood appears to have amended their representations of other groups. However, this has yet to happen with the representation of Arabs. The reason this has not happened is one of the research questions that this study explores.

In 1986 Sam Keen said: "[y]ou can hit an Arab free; they're free enemies, free villains – where you couldn't do it to a Jew or you can't do it to a black anymore" (Shaheen, 2001: 6). This statement is true today as it was nearly twenty years ago. In an article entitled 'Arabs in Hollywood: An Undeserved Image', Scott J. Simon (1996) argues that out all the ethnic groups represented in Hollywood films "the Arab culture has been the most misunderstood and supplied with the worst stereotypes". He continues to state that, "[e]ven in this age of 'political correctness,' Hollywood has been either unable or unwilling to change its representation of Arabs and the Middle East" (*ibid*).

This chapter is dedicated to providing results from the online survey. Results gathered from the online survey are divided into 4 sections. Section 5.2.1 looks at the demographics of the participants that took part in the survey, and provides details regarding their age, gender, marital status, and educational background. Section 5.2.2 investigates the participants' film-viewing habits. The participants' opinions on the issue of censorship in Kuwait are presented in section 5.2.3. Finally, section 5.2.4 highlights the participants' opinions in regard to Arab representations in Hollywood films. These topics are then followed by an introductory section that briefly discusses the qualitative findings of the FGDs, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

5.2   QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS: SURVEY

This section will present the results gathered from the final online survey conducted for this study. The online survey consisted of 32 questions. These questions are categorized into four sections: demographics, film-viewing habits, censorship in Kuwait, and Arab representations in Hollywood films. The way in which results are presented will depend on the data collected. To ensure the clarity of the results and findings, some of the results will be presented descriptively, and others in the form of charts, graphs, or tables.

5.2.1   BACKGROUND INFORMATION – DEMOGRAPHICS

The first set of questions in the survey aims to provide information regarding the participants' demography. It is important to point out the open-accessibility nature of an online survey means that ensuring all the participants fit the initial criteria set for the target group is impossible. The survey aimed to specifically gather responses from Kuwaiti university students. Nevertheless, individuals that were not Kuwaiti, and individuals below and over the required age group also took part in the survey. A total of 520 individuals completed the online survey. However, out of the 520 survey participants, only 507 were Kuwaiti nationals. Furthermore, another 30 participants were not within the age group (18-24) intended for this study.[36] Since this study is specifically interested in the perspective of young Kuwaiti university students between the ages of 18-24, only their responses will be addressed in this chapter. A filter for nationality and age was placed on the survey to ensure that only the

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[36] Of the 30 participants that were not within the target age group, 15 were under 18 years old, and 15 were older than 30 years old.

responses from the target group were collected when analyzing the survey results. Upon placing the filter, the initial 520 participants that took part in the survey dropped to 463.

Of the 463 Kuwaiti participants, 43% were male and 57% were female. Most participants were single (87%), whereas only 13% were married. When profiled by occupation: 97% of the participants were full-time students, 2% were part-time private sector employees, and another 1% worked part-time in the public sector.

There are two main educational systems in Kuwait: public and private school education. Public schools are free to all Kuwaiti citizens and classes are taught primarily in Arabic. On the other hand, expensive private schools offer their students a Western-based educational curriculum. Survey results show that 44% of the participants studied in private schools, whereas 56% studied in public schools. Furthermore, 47% of the participants continued their higher education in a private university (American University of Kuwait), while 52% attended a public university (Kuwait University).

As mentioned previously, in order to collect a representative sample of the overall student body, students throughout various academic disciplines were sought after to take part in the online survey. This was to ensure that a rich and diverse collection of responses was gathered from participants who had varying levels of knowledge and experience concerning the issue of media representations. This is important because, for example, a media student is more likely to be aware of issues related to media representations and stereotypes. Responses from students from other academic backgrounds that do not deal with such issues would also provide another dimension to the topic being addressed, which is equally as important, especially since not all Kuwaitis or Arabs are familiar with media-related matters. Table 10 on the next page displays a breakdown of the participants according to the college or academic division they are part of in their university.

Table 10: Breakdown of participants according to College/ Academic Division

College/ Academic Division	Percentage
Kuwait University	
College of Law	5%
College of Science	4%
College of Arts	4%
College of Education	6%
College of Allied Health Science	3%
College of Sharia and Islamic Studies	4%
College of Women	3%
College of Social Sciences	5%
College of Pharmacy	3%
College of Dentistry	3%
College of Business Administration	5%
College of Medicine	4%
College of Engineering and Petroleum	5%
American University of Kuwait	
Arts and Humanities	11%
Social Sciences	11%
Business and Economics	13%
Sciences and Engineering	10%

One must point out the Kuwait University divides academic disciplines into colleges, and the university consists of thirteen colleges overall. In contrast, the American University of Kuwait divides academic disciplines into academic divisions that include several departments. For instance, the Arts and Humanities faculty includes the departments of Arts and Graphic Design, Communications and Media, and English. The Science and Engineering faculty consists of the Department of Computer and Electrical Engineering, and the Department of Computer Science and Information Technology. The Social Sciences faculty includes the Department of International Relations, and the Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences.

As can be seen in the table above, there is a balance in the number of participants that took part in the study across various colleges and departments within the two universities. As

mentioned in more detail in the previous chapter, posters advertising the survey were placed across both university campuses in order to reach the majority of the student population. The strategic placing of the survey advertisements was crucial to the success of obtaining responses from participants across all academic disciplines.

5.2.2 FILM-VIEWING HABITS

The second section of the survey serves to identify what type of films the participants prefer, how frequently they watch films, where they watch them, and how often they visit cinemas. Thus, this section presents the results of questions regarding the participants' film-viewing habits. This is important in order to compare and contrast the responses given from Kuwaiti film audiences (student participants) to the information given by the officials in Cinescape. An in-depth examination of the results will be carried out in the Discussion chapter.

Participants were asked to identify what film genres they preferred to watch. Table 11 below displays the participants' film genre preferences. This question allowed participants to choose more than one option.

Table 11: What film genre do you prefer to watch?

ANSWER OPTIONS	RESPONSE PERCENT	FREQUENCY*
Horror	28%	131
Action	39%	180
Science Fiction	13%	60
Comedy	68%	314
Adventure	27%	124
Drama	27%	124
Animated	27%	122
Thriller	18%	85
Romance	36%	167
Other (please specify)	1%	3

According to the participants' responses, comedy (68%) was the most popular film genre; the second most popular genre was action (39%), followed by romance (36%). This finding is interesting since, according to the head of the Kuwaiti censorship committee, comedy films are often subjected to heavy censorship due to 'adult' content that many of them contain. This then raises the question as to where and how the majority of the participants watch films. These questions will be answered further in the chapter.

Participants were asked to identify what attracted them to a particular film. They were given four options to choose from: genre, actors, directors, and the story. The table below illustrates the reasons why a particular film would attract them. Participants were allowed to choose more than one option.

Table 12: What attracts you to a particular film?

ANSWER OPTIONS	RESPONSE PERCENT	FREQUENCY*
Genre	16%	71
Actors	50%	229
Directors	4%	18
Story	85%	388
Other (please specify)	0%	0

* This question allows all 463 participants to choose more than one option.

As can be seen, Table 12 clearly indicates that the storyline (85%) was one of the main features that attracted audiences to a particular film, followed by the actors (50%) that are featured in the film.

When participants were asked what film productions they preferred the most, it was obvious that they favoured Hollywood productions the most.

Table 13: Which film productions do you prefer the most?

ANSWER OPTIONS	RESPONSE PERCENT	FREQUENCY*
Hollywood	95%	438
Bollywood	22%	102
Arabic	21%	95
European	12%	57
Asian (Japanese/ Chinese/ Korean)	4%	20
South American	0%	2
Russian	0%	1
Other	1%	4

* This question allows all 463 participants to choose more than one option.

Table 13 above clearly indicates that Hollywood films were the most popular amongst the participants (95%). Bollywood (22%) and Arabic productions (21%) were very similar in popularity. These results match claims made in an interview with Cinescape officials. Participants were asked to provide reasons for why they preferred certain film productions. There were four main reasons why participants favoured Hollywood productions. The primary reason was linked to the technological advances and the quality of Hollywood productions. The second reason was that participants felt Hollywood films offered realistic stories that audiences could engage with. The participation of well-known actors that they liked was also another factor that made them popular. The final factor was that participants acknowledged that they were brought up watching Hollywood films, and therefore were used to watching them.

Overall, there were four reasons why participants enjoyed watching Bollywood productions. The first reason was linked to the strong presence of Indian traditions and culture that can be seen in their productions. The extensive attention to detail in Bollywood film actors' costumes

and wardrobes, along with the extensive musical scenes that can be found in most Bollywood productions were some of the reasons that attracted many Kuwaiti participants to Indian film productions. The second factor revolved around the Bollywood star actors that many Kuwaiti audiences loved to watch. The third reason was concerned with the film's plot. Participants highlighted that stories in Bollywood productions were more interesting, as they would often end in very unexpected ways, which did not always involve a happy ending. The fourth aspect was tied to the level of imagination evident in Bollywood films. Participants felt that part of Bollywood's charm was the exaggerated and unrealistic details in many of their films, which they felt they could not accept from any other film productions.

Ranking slightly lower than Bollywood productions, participant responses placed Arabic productions as the third most popular film production. One of the reasons provided for why they enjoyed Arabic productions was linked to the fact that they could directly relate to the issues discussed in the films. They mentioned that Arabic films would often highlight real political, economic, and social concerns that Arabs had in their societies. Another important factor was associated with language. Participants felt that they connected better with the narrative conveyed in Arabic productions. On the other hand, survey participants also criticized Arabic productions. They criticized Arabic productions of being repetitive, and using similar storylines over and over again. Some participants claimed that lately many Arabic productions were made poorly simply to make profits quickly.

In order to find out how frequently participants watched films, they were asked how many films they would usually watch in a week.
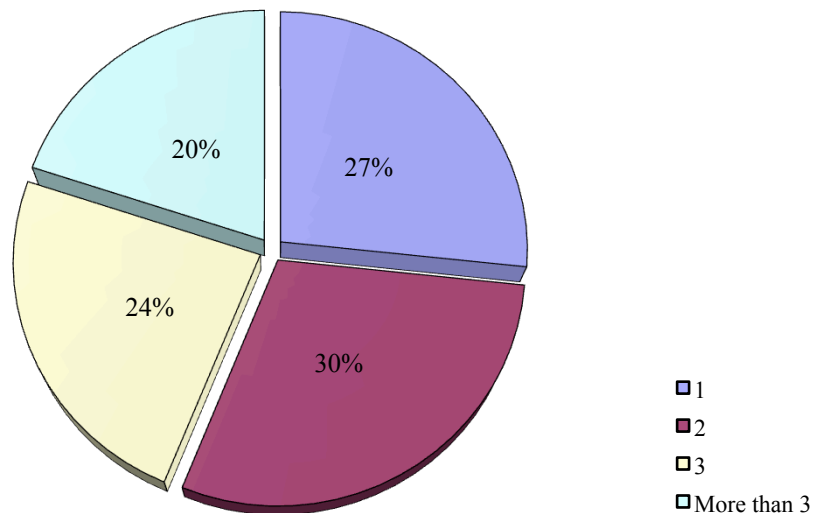

Figure 4: How many movies do you usually watch in a week?

As can be seen from Figure 4 above, the responses regarding how many times participants usually watched films in a week varied. However, most participants (30%) claimed that they often watched two films per week.

When organizing the most popular mode in which participants watched films, 33% claimed that they often watched films on cable TV, 24% on DVDs, 22% in cinemas, and 21% online. Participants were also asked to identify the type of DVD they would typically buy: 67% claimed that they often bought pirated DVDs, while the remaining 33% bought original DVDs. This question is important when the issue of film censorship is addressed in the next chapter.

It is important to know how often participants visited cinemas in order to examine later if they take issue with the censoring process that films shown in cinemas must go through. Figure 5 below shows the number of times participants visit cinemas in a month.
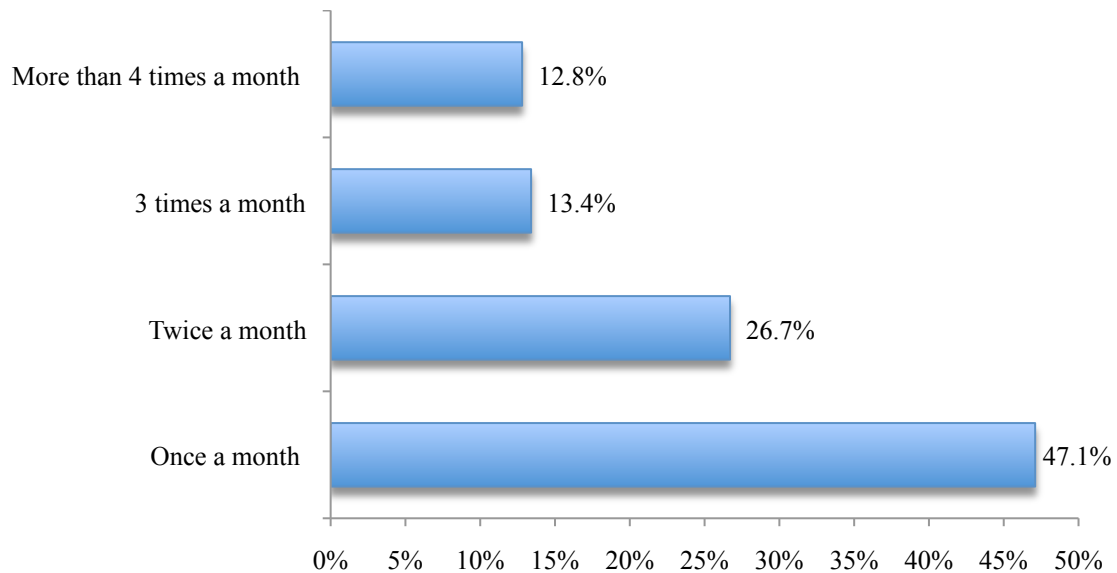

Figure 5: How often do you watch films in cinemas?

As can be seen from the chart above, the majority of participants (47%) watched at least one film in cinemas each month, while 27% of the participants visited cinemas twice a month. The remaining 26% watched films in cinemas more than twice a month. This indicated that more than 50% of the participants were avid cinemagoers that watched at least two films in cinemas per month. Such results are a sign that participants were informed and were up-to-date in regard to both the latest films released by Hollywood, and other international film productions; thus they were able to comment on the various issues raised in this study.

5.2.3 CENSORSHIP IN KUWAIT

This section will provide results on questions regarding the participants' views concerning the current censorship process films go through in Kuwait. Participants were asked if they were aware of the fact that all films in Kuwait must undergo a censorship process. Results show that the majority of the participants (93%) were aware that films were censored in one form or another. Only 7% of the participants were not aware of this fact. Participants were then given three options to describe their opinion on the current manner in which films are censored in Kuwait. They were asked if they believed censorship in Kuwait was suitable, too strict, or had no relevance to them.
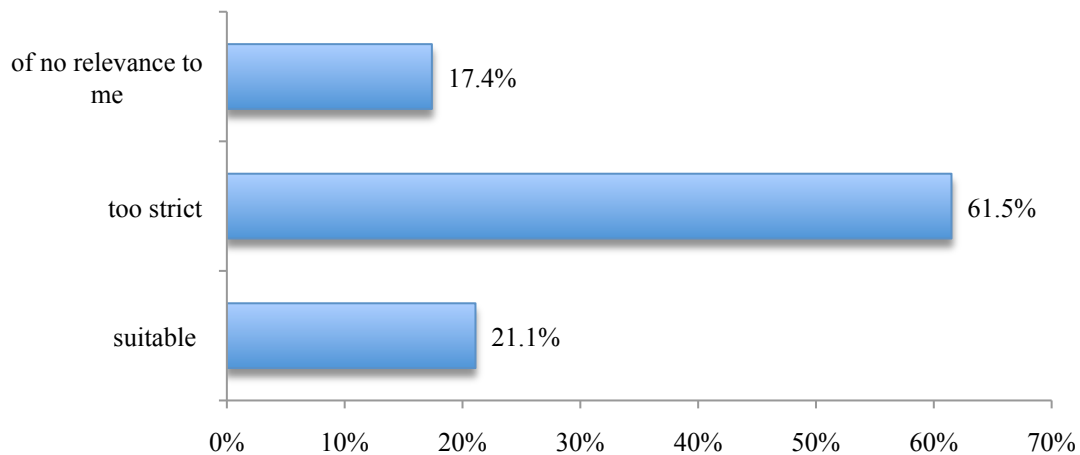
Figure 6: What is your opinion on the censoring of films shown in cinemas?

Figure 6 clearly indicates that the majority of the participants (62%) believed that censoring was too strict, 21% thought that it was suitable, whereas 17% were not concerned about the censoring that took place. Participants were also given the opportunity to give reasons for their choice. Upon analyzing the responses, it was clear that most of the comments made by the respondents who supported the current mode of film censoring in Kuwait linked their responses to Kuwaiti social norms. For instance, one participant justified their claim that

censorship was suitable by stating that it was necessary "so that our conservative society is not lost". Another participant shared the same view by stating that some scenes are "not suitable for our society".

On the other hand, participants that were opposed to the way films in Kuwait were censored often linked their responses to two issues. The first issue is the argument that film narratives were affected due to censorship. The second issue is linked to the lack of an age-rating system. Responses regarding the way film plots were affected as a result of censoring include: "due to censorship nearly half of the scenes in the movie is missing", "sometimes when I enter a horror movie, it becomes a drama genre because scary scenes are censored", and "you can't understand the story if they cut off one small part; a small scene can make a big difference in the overall movie".

The second theme that emerged from the participants' responses that were opposed to the censoring of films was linked to the lack of an age-rating system in cinemas in Kuwait. For instance, one participant pointed out that, "the problem with cinemas in Kuwait is that they do not care about age ratings. This is a serious problem; thus many scenes are cut out of films, which is a really bad solution". Another participant's comment supported the previous response by claiming that the reason why censorship was too strict was "because no age rating system is implemented". Other responses included: "if they [Ministry of Information] implement an age limit then there's no need to censor", and: "censorship ruins movies; they should just put strict restrictions on the audiences' ages entering the movie".[37]

The comments made by participants in the survey showed that Kuwaiti film audiences were aware of the importance of age-rating systems, and that they were not oblivious to the role of

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[37] There was no cinema age-rating system in place in Kuwait during the time the online survey was conducted. However, a rating system was introduced in February 2013.

the Censorship Department. They justified the censorship that takes place on films according to the traditional and cultural norms of Kuwaiti society. However, some participants challenged censorship decisions, and claimed that they were irrelevant, due to the fact that people in Kuwait were now more likely to turn to illegitimate means of obtaining uncensored films. The issues of film censorship and rating systems are discussed further in this chapter, and in more detail in the Discussion chapter.

5.2.4 ARAB REPRESENTATIONS IN FILMS

This section will offer results on questions regarding the participants' opinions on the representation of Arabs in Hollywood films. The first question in this section asked participants whether or not they had ever watched a Hollywood film that presented Arabs. The vast majority (90%) claimed that they had watched at least one film that portrayed Arabs.

Participants were provided with a list of characteristics and attributes describing Arab women and men in Hollywood films to choose from. The purpose of this question was to understand how the participants viewed and decoded the Arab characters projected in films. Eleven characteristics were available for participants to describe Arab women in Hollywood films. These options included: educated, exotic, dangerous, independent, mysterious, successful, belly dancers, terrorists, fashionable, oppressed, and promiscuous. These characteristics were generated during the FGD of the pilot survey where participants were asked to describe Arab characters in Hollywood films. Table 14 on the following page illustrates which of the listed characteristics participants believed reflect the way that Arab women are represented in Hollywood films.

Table 14: From your experience, which of the characteristics/ attributes have been given to Arab women in Hollywood films?

ANSWER OPTIONS	RESPONSE PERCENT	FREQUENCY*
Oppressed	37%	166
Belly dancers	36%	160
Terrorists	35%	155
Mysterious	33%	149
Exotic	31%	138
Dangerous	30%	136
Fashionable	13%	57
Educated	12%	53
Successful	9%	39
Promiscuous	6%	28
Independent	5%	21
Other (please specify)	3%	12

* This question allows all 463 participants to choose more than one option.

As can be seen from the table above, the three characteristics that participants chose the most to describe Arab women in Hollywood films were: oppressed, 37%; belly dancers, 36%; and terrorists, 35%. The three characteristics that participants chose the least to describe Arab women in films were: independent, 5%; promiscuous, 6%; and successful, 9%.

Participants were also given the opportunity to express other representations that were not mentioned within the list of characteristics and attributes. Of those that selected the 'other' option to describe the representations of Arab women in films, most expressed that they do not recall ever noticing the Arab women in Hollywood films. This is perhaps because Arab women characters in films are often silent and serve as a backdrop. Other responses described Arab women as 'dressed in black' and 'Black Moving Objects'. Participants also expressed that one repetitive portrayal of Arab women was that of oppression. They highlighted that Arab women in films are often shown as being 'controlled by their husbands', 'dominated by men', and that they are 'slaves to men''.

Likewise, participants were given eleven characteristics to describe Arab men in Hollywood films. The characteristics available for participants to choose from included: rich, poor, Bedouin, terrorists, angry, friendly, stupid, smart, brace, lascivious, and noble. As with the Arab women's characteristics, these attributes were created during the FGD of the pilot survey. Table 15 below illustrates which of the characteristics participants believed reflect the way that Arab men are represented in Hollywood films.

Table 15: From your experience, which of the characteristics/ attributes have been given to Arab men in Hollywood films?

| ANSWER OPTIONS	RESPONSE PERCENT	FREQUENCY *
Terrorists	72%	331
Rich	60%	275
Bedouin	46%	211
Angry	44%	199
Stupid	37%	168
Poor	13%	59
Brave	12%	54
Smart	11%	50
Noble	7%	34
Lascivious	7%	33
Friendly	6%	25
Other (please specify)	1%	3

* This question allows all 463 participants to choose more than one option.

As can be seen from table above, the three characteristics that participants chose the most to describe Arab men in films were: terrorists 72%, rich 60%, and Bedouin 46%. The three characteristics that participants chose the least to describe Arab men in films were: friendly 5%, lascivious 7%, and noble 7%.

Participants were also given the opportunity to add other representations that were not mentioned within the list of characteristics and attributes. Only three out of 463 participants selected the 'other' option to describe the representations of Arab men in films. Out of the

three participants, two did not specify their answers, whereas one maintained that Arab men in films were "always hairy".

When participants were asked if they thought the images of Arabs in Hollywood films were generally accurate, the vast majority (72%) believed that films did not project an accurate portrayal of Arabs. Figure 7 below, illustrates the participants' view on the question.
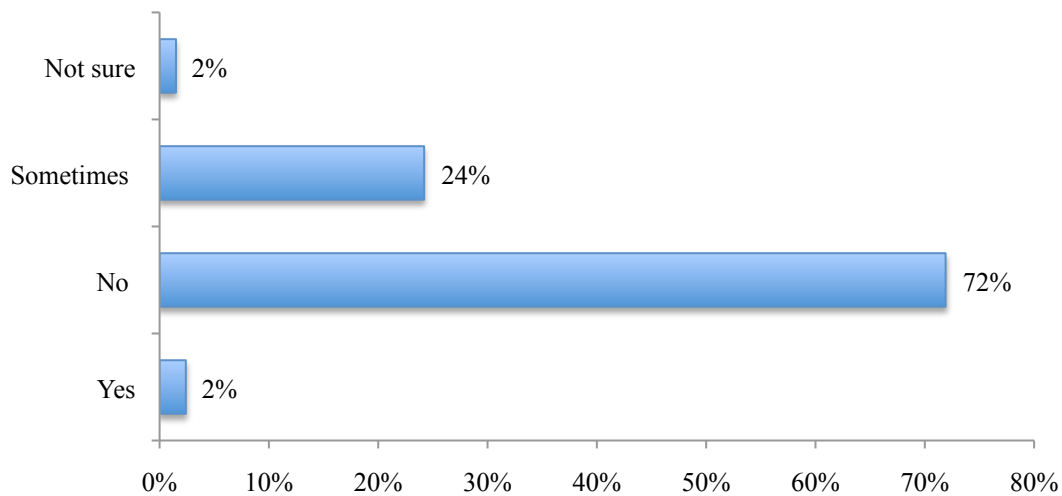
Figure 7: Do you think that the images of Arabs in Hollywood films are generally an accurate portrayal of Arabs?

The figure above indicates that participants were highly aware of how Arabs are represented in Hollywood films. In fact, only 2% of the 463 survey respondents were unsure whether or not Arabs representations were generally accurate. Participants were also asked if they thought the images of Arabs in Hollywood films were generally neutral, negative, or positive.

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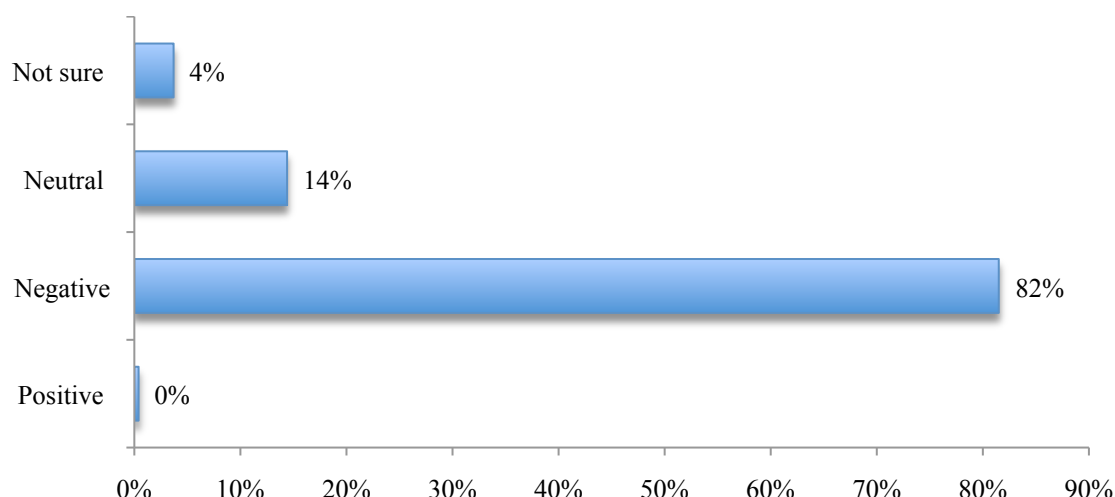
Figure 8: Do you think that the image of Arabs in Hollywood films is generally: neutral, negative, or positive?

Figure 8 above indicates clearly that the vast majority of participants (82%) believed that the image of Arabs in Hollywood films was generally negative, while 14% think that it was neutral. The remaining 4% of participants were not sure whether the images were positive or negative.

Participants were asked to recall if they had ever watched a film that presented Arabs in a manner that offended them, to which the responses were: 73% yes, and 27% no. Participants were then asked to choose from a list of emotions to indicate how they felt when they watched films that presented Arabs in a manner that offended them. Table 16 below illustrates the emotions participants feel when watching films that they found offensive due to the negative representations of Arabs.

Table 16: How do these images make you fee as an Arab?

ANSWER OPTIONS	RESPONSE PERCENT	FREQUENCY*
Upset	42%	194
Angry	42%	192
Embarrassed	27%	123
It does not bother me	20%	93

* This question allows all 463 participants to choose more than one option.

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Participants were asked what they believe determined Arab representations in Hollywood productions. Political, religious, economic, cultural, and historical factors were given as options for participants to choose from. Table 17 below shows which of the factors participants believed had the most influence on the way Arabs were depicted in films.

Table 17: What do you think determines Arab representations in Hollywood productions?

ANSWER OPTIONS	RESPONSE PERCENT	FREQUENCY*
Political factors	47%	189
Religious factors	28%	110
Economic factors	23%	90
Cultural factors	23%	90
Historical factors	20%	80
Other	11%	50

* This question allows all 463 participants to choose more than one option.

The table above clearly indicates that participants believed that political factors were among the main reasons that determined the way Arabs were projected in Hollywood films. 50 participants also selected the 'other' option to justify the reasons that influenced the way Arabs were represented in films. Most of the participants that chose this option specified that the media, and the news in particular, played a major role in the way Arabs were presented to film audiences. The images of Arabs in the news are often reflected and exaggerated in films.

In order to observe if the Kuwaiti participants were aware of the transition Arab characters in Hollywood films have gone through, participants were asked if they thought that Hollywood's image of Arabs has changed since the introduction of films over 140 years ago. 40% of the participants believed that Arab characters in Hollywood productions had indeed changed since the emergence of the motion picture. On the other hand, 29% did not think that the representation of Arabs had changed, while 31% were unsure.

When participants were asked if they thought that the general image of Arabs in films had become better or worse, 72% believed that the image had become worse, while 28% thought it was better. Kuwaiti Arabs living in Kuwait were asked if they thought the images of Arabs in films had had an effect on their lives personally. This question was inspired by previous studies that claim that Arab Americans living in America were affected by Hollywood's representation of Arabs in films (Shaheen, 2001; McAlister, 2005). Survey results show that 68% did not think that the Arab representations in films affected them personally; 22% believed that it did indeed have an effect on their lives, whereas 9% were not so sure.

According to studies (Shaheen, 2001; 2009), most prejudices against Arabs often occur when they travel to other countries. For instance, Kuwaiti Arabs can experience prejudices in non-Arab countries, and in non-Gulf Arab countries from other Arabs (e.g. Egyptian Arabs in Egypt). Therefore, it was important to ask participants questions regarding their travel experiences. Participants were asked if they had ever travelled to a non-Arab country. The survey results show that 85% claimed that they had, whereas 15% had never travelled to a non-Arab country.

Participants were then asked if they ever felt that their treatment abroad was linked to their Arab origins. The majority (43%) of participants claimed that they sometimes felt that their treatment while abroad was linked to their Arab ethnicity. 39% confirmed that they did in fact feel that their origins influenced the way people treated them abroad. The remaining 18% believed that their origins did not in any way affect the way they were treated.

Participants were also asked if they thought their treatment while abroad was in anyway related to the representation of Arabs in films.
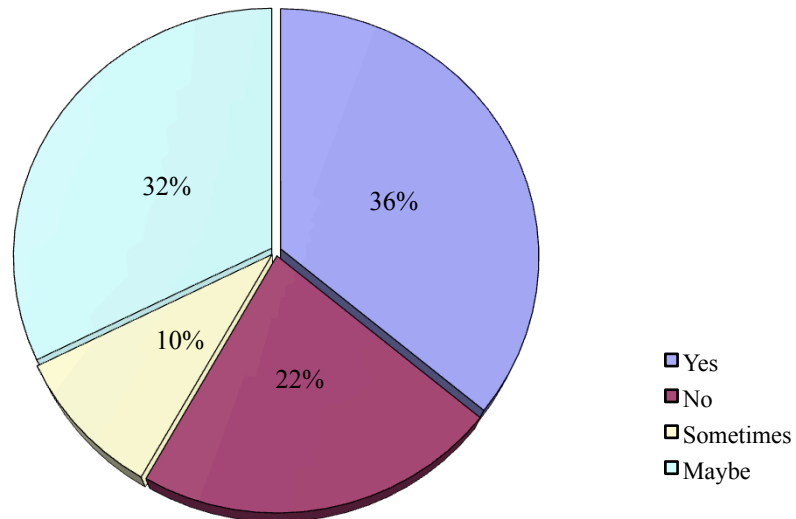
Figure 9: Do you think your treatment while aboard is in anyway related to the representation of Arabs in films?

As can be seen on Figure 9 above, 36% of the respondents believed that the representation of Arabs in films did have an effect on the way they were treated abroad; 22% did not think their treatment had anything to do with the representation of Arabs in films; 9% felt that sometimes it did; whereas 32% thought that it may have influenced the way people treated them while they were abroad. FGD responses to travelling abroad-related questions such as those asked above will be discussed further in the Discussion chapter.

5.3   SURVEY SUMMARY

The results mentioned in this chapter indicate that the survey participants watched films frequently. More than 73% of respondents watched at least one film per week. 93% of the participants chose Hollywood films as their favourite productions. Such results clearly illustrate the popularity of Hollywood films among Kuwaiti audiences. However, although Hollywood films appear to be popular in the Middle East, and in Kuwait especially, the

question as to why Hollywood continues to perpetuate distorted images of Arabs is worth exploring in more detail.

Most respondents (82%) believed that the images of Arabs in Hollywood films were negative, and that the Arab representations shown to film audiences were biased. Results show that 72% of the survey participants believed that the image of Arabs had gradually become worse since the development of the earliest films. More than 70% of the respondents felt offended by some of the Arab images they saw in films. Findings show that the majority of the participants (47%) believed that political factors influenced the way Arabs were represented in films. Although 68% of the participants claimed that misguided representations of Arabs in films did not have an effect on their personal lives, 43% believed that when they travelled abroad they felt like they were treated differently because of their of Arab origins.

5.4   QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The previous section provided results from the online survey. This section, on the other hand, acts as an introduction to the following Discussion chapter, which investigates the results of the data collected from the focus group discussions (FGDs). The purpose of the FGDs was to gather information from the participants' perspective regarding an array of issues related to their film-viewing experiences. Due to the more flexible nature of FGDs the results presented will offer more detailed responses to the questions asked in the survey. The FGDs explored the participants' knowledge of the processes that films go through in Kuwait. Furthermore, FGDs also enabled participants to voice their opinions and attitudes on issues regarding Hollywood films in general, and on Arab representations specifically.

The objective of the research is to investigate how young Arab audiences from Kuwait decode and interpret the images of Arabs in Hollywood films. The FGDs were used as a suitable platform for young Kuwaitis to voice their opinions on the topic of interest. Questions asked during the FGDs were formulated to cover issues regarding film-viewing habits, censorship in Kuwait, Arab representations in Hollywood films, stereotypes, and personal experiences concerning the issues mentioned above. The participants' responses are significant to this study as they offer a point of view that is often neglected in literature concerning Arab representations in the media.

Although it was expected that every FGD conducted would not produce the same outcome, an outline was designed by the researcher to ensure that each FGD discussed the same issues. The outline was guided by questions used in the online survey, which was also used for the purpose of this study.

5.4.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PARTICIPANTS

As mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter, six focus group discussions were conducted in Kuwait. A total of 48 individuals participated in the FGDs, all of whom were Kuwaiti students between the ages of 18-24. Although Arabic is the native language in Kuwait, English is widely spoken. Thus, it was expected that participants in the FGDs would use both Arabic and English to express themselves. Any Arabic responses given during the FGDs were translated into English and later transcribed by the researcher.

5.4.2 THEMES FOR ANALYSIS

Data collected from FGDs were examined using a thematic analysis approach, which aims to identify patterns and themes within a set of rich data. Upon analyzing the FGD transcripts various key findings were extracted and categorized into themes. Results from the FGDs are divided into four main themes: participant film-viewing habits, censorship in Kuwait, Arab representations in Hollywood films, and participant experiences. These themes will be discussed in more detail in the following Discussion chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to discuss the results collected from all three methods of data collection used in this study: survey, focus group discussions, and interviews. Upon analyzing the data collected throughout the research, various key findings were extracted and categorized into themes. These themes were organized into six sections: film-viewing habits, censorship in Kuwait, Arab representations in film, discussing the representations, an appeal for more accurate representations, and participant personal experiences. The following subsections aim to discuss these six topics.

6.2 FILM-VIEWING HABITS

As with the survey, it was important to identify how often the FGD participants watched films, where were they most likely to watch films, and in which format. Upon analyzing the FGD transcripts, it was clear that cinemas and DVDs were the two most popular modes of film viewing among participants. It was evident that in every FGD there were those that

preferred watching films on DVDs, as opposed to those that would only watch films in cinemas. Those that preferred watching films in cinemas disliked the idea of watching films at home. However, participants that preferred watching films on DVDs claimed that the reason why they did not watch films in cinemas was because of censorship-related issues in Kuwait. As a result of the censorship process many films never make it to cinema screens in Kuwait. The following two subsections offer the opinions of young Kuwaitis regarding their reasons for watching films either in cinemas or at home.

6.2.1 GOING TO THE MOVIES: CINEMAS IN KUWAIT

Watching films in cinemas is a popular pastime in Kuwait. Most cinema moviegoer participants claimed that there is very little the youth can do, and that "cinemas in Kuwait are a major leisure outlet for us [young people]" (Participant 5: FGD 3). Participants were asked how they watch films the most, whether it was in cinemas, or at home, on DVDs, cable television, or the internet. One participant stated that, "I think it is a habit here in Kuwait that we watch every new film in cinemas; we just have to" (Participant 8: FGD 2). Another participant supported this statement by declaring "if a new movie is released and I really wanted to watch it but I missed it in cinemas I will not watch it at home. If I did not watch the film in cinemas, I just won't bother watching it at all" (Participant 7: FGD 2). Another participant emphasized the importance of cinemas to Kuwaitis by making the following statement:

> I visit European countries frequently, and I want to say that you cannot compare the number of viewers that go to cinema here to cinema audiences there. The number of people that visit cinemas in Kuwait is much hyper! It's almost impossible to find a seat in cinemas in Kuwait during the first week of a film's release. They [Europeans]

don't depend on cinemas as much as we [Kuwaitis] depend on cinemas. Cinemas here are considered as an outlet for escape. However, to them it's something normal; they have other entertainment options. They can go out, take a walk in their beautiful nature. In short, during the summer there is nothing to do in Kuwait other than going to cinemas and restaurants.

(Participant 7: FGD 3)

In contrast to Western societies, there are various cultural and religious factors that constrain what young people in Kuwait can do. For instance, in Western countries it is generally considered acceptable for young adults to go to a club or enjoy a night of drinking with friends. However, while there are some young Kuwaitis that do take part in such activities, such social activities are not publicly available to young people in Kuwait; they are in fact illegal. Thus, many young people in Kuwait turn to cinemas as a source of entertainment. The participants' remarks on cinemas as a main source of entertainment in Kuwait match those given by the Cinescape officials who confirmed that they, as a cinema company, act as a leisure outlet for young adults.

Upon analyzing the transcripts, a list of both advantages and disadvantages to watching films in cinemas in Kuwait was accumulated. An array of participants' responses regarding the reasons why they enjoyed watching films in cinemas will first be presented. Subsequently, the participants' criticisms and complaints regarding cinemas in Kuwait will be raised. One of the main reasons why participants preferred watching films in cinemas was related to the cinema's atmosphere. Participants highlighted that the giant screens, high-definition projectors, and high-tech surround systems are all important components of the process of engagement with a film. Participant 5 (FGD 3) emphasized this cinematic experience by making the following statement:

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I'm one of those people that are addicted to films. If a film with high-tech effects is released, then I feel that I have to watch it in a cinema to truly enjoy the film, even though I have a home theatre system in my house. However, some films are not made to be watched at home; you just have to watch them in cinemas.

Another participant added that watching films is "different in cinemas; it's simply not the same when you watch a film at home on the television" (Participant 2: FGD 3). The majority of the participants agreed that the film-viewing experience is heightened in cinemas.

Although most of the participants preferred to watch films in cinemas, many complaints were made regarding excessive censoring, noisy children in the audience, and expensive cinema tickets. Participants often complained that the problem with watching a film in cinemas was that you could not control other audience members. For instance, "in a comedy it's expected that some people would laugh, but sometimes, even when something is not funny, some people will still laugh and be noisy. I think that's what ruins the cinema experience" (Participant 2: FGD 2). Another participant raised a similar point, stating that "large groups of noisy children in the theatre ruin the experience for other audience members" (Participant 6: FGD 3). This was because "mothers here don't care about what their children are watching … they just take their children to cinemas in order to leave them there for an hour or two while they go shopping around the mall" (Participant 2: FGD 3). It is worth mentioning that most cinemas in Kuwait are built within large shopping complexes. During FGDs it was highlighted that children were often left in cinemas by their parents because they had confidence in the censorship regulations applied to cinemas in Kuwait, which ensured films did not contain any inappropriate scenes. As a result, parents felt that cinemas were a suitable place to leave their children for at least a few hours while they would shop in the mall.

Topics regarding cinema in Kuwait and censorship are inseparable, so much so that the issue of censorship demands a section on its own. The issue of cinema censorship will be addressed

later in section 6.3. However, censorship as a disadvantage to watching films in cinemas will be discussed here briefly. Participants that were opposed to the current manner in which films in Kuwait are censored complained that films are no longer worth watching in cinemas due to the removal of too many scenes. The following excerpt demonstrates a participant's frustration towards the censorship that takes place on many of the films shown in cinemas in Kuwait.

> To be honest, sometimes after watching a film in a cinema I would watch it again on a DVD, and I would be surprised that many vital bits of information and events that took place were cut out in cinemas. This really does annoy me. I want censorship, but not as strict as it currently is now.
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> (Participant 8: FGD 2)

Findings illustrate that participants often complained that they felt that the price of cinema tickets was expensive given that many films are ruined as a result of the strict censoring protocol. Participants often justified their reasons for buying bootleg DVDs by asserting that in comparison to watching films in cinemas, DVDs cost a fraction of the price, and were able to provide viewers with the full version of a film.

> I pay 3.5 KD [£7] to watch a film in cinemas, and I often leave the theatre feeling disappointed. I'm sure I'm not the only one... Is it logical for me to pay 3.5 KD for a film that is heavily censored when I can buy an uncensored version of the same film on DVD for only 1/2 a dinar [£1]? Of course, I'd rather pay 1/2 a dinar.
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> (Participant 6: FGD 3)

Results show that most of the participants enjoyed watching films more in cinemas than on any other format. However, nearly all the participants agreed that DVDs were the next best option, especially when certain films were banned from being shown in cinemas. Both the price and the variety of films that are available on DVDs make them a desirable option to avid

film viewers. The reasons why DVDs are popular in Kuwait, and why some participants prefer DVDs to cinemas, will be discussed further in the following section.

6.2.2 DVDS VERSUS CINEMAS

While it is important to understand how young Kuwaitis consume films, it is also just as important to investigate how they discuss and negotiate the content of the films they watch. Most scholars consider film viewing at home different to a cinema viewing experience due to the isolating nature of watching films at home. However, results from the FGDs show that while some participants preferred watching films in cinemas, many participants also watched films at home with their friends, and in *diwaniya*s[38]. The reasons for watching films at home vary. For instance, results show that, due to stern censorship processes, many films are banned from being shown in cinemas in Kuwait, and as such people have no choice but to watch them at home. Other reasons for watching films at home are linked to the way in which participants preferred watching films with their friends in a more convenient and relaxed environment (at home or in *diwaniyas*). Therefore, the once isolated film-viewing environment has changed into one that involves a community. The issue of watching films in a *diwaniya* setting will be discussed further in this section.

As mentioned earlier in chapter two, unlike cinema film reels, it is not possible to cut out and censor scenes from DVDs. As a result, any DVD that contains content that is considered unsuitable by the Ministry of Information's Censorship Department is banned from being sold in Kuwait. Consequentially, most DVD films are banned in Kuwait, which in return increases

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[38] A *diwaniya* is a reception hall in a Kuwaiti family's home that is typically designated for male members of a household to host social gatherings.

the demand for bootleg DVDs. FGD results show that all 48 participants frequently bought and watched bootleg DVDs. The fact these DVDs are widely available and are inexpensive (£1-2) makes them a very popular substitute for cinemas, especially when certain films are banned in cinemas.

An analysis of the FGDs shows that there are two types of participants that watch DVDs. The first type rarely watches films in cinemas, and would only do so once or twice a year with the encouragement of their friends. This type of film viewer prefers watching films at home for mainly two reasons: the first is associated with the constricting nature of cinemas, which requires audiences to abide by certain rules. The second reason is linked to the strict censoring process that all films shown in cinemas in Kuwait must go through.

Of the participants that preferred watching films at home, one participant made the following statement, "personally, if a movie I really want to watch is released, I won't watch it in cinemas. I'd rather watch it at home, or with my friends in the *diwaniya* or at the *mukhayyam*[39]" (Participant 2: FGD 2).

There are two official institutions that define the formal structure of the political public space in Kuwait: the Kuwaiti constitution and *Majlis AlUmma* (the Parliament). However, it is widely acknowledged that *diwaniyas* are informal structures for public participation in Kuwait (Tretreault, 2000; El-Kebbi, 2013). *Diwaniyas* are known to operate as hubs to discuss and negotiate, exchange views, create public opinion, foster behaviours, and push for public actions. It is in *diwaniyas* that Kuwaitis living within a traditional authoritarian state such as Kuwait discuss and voice their views on a variety of issues. Hence, when Kuwaitis choose to

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[39] During the winter months many Kuwaitis often set up camps in the desert, which are equipped with electric generators that are used to power stoves, heaters, televisions, and other electronic appliances. This type of camp is called a *mukhayyam*. During the cool winter months, it is common practice for friends that gather in *diwaniya* to meet up in a *mukhayyam* instead.

watch Hollywood films in *diwaniya* settings they often engage in discussions concerning the films they watch. These discussions often raise self-reflection issues regarding their concerns, and the actions that need to be taken.

Participant 1 (FGD 2) also had a similar response to the statement mentioned earlier and, when he was asked if he did not like the cinema atmosphere, he made the following statement:

> No, it's not that I don't like to go [to cinemas]. It's just that I have my own private atmosphere if I watch a film at home or in the *diwaniya*. However, in cinemas you have to abide by the rules, like being silent and the like. On the other hand, sometimes there are people who are noisy, and that also annoys me. That's basically it.

Although he makes a valid point, other participants felt that cinemas' rules and regulations were the reason they preferred watching films in cinemas. Most of the participants considered cinemas' quiet and disruption-free atmosphere a positive attribute. One participant emphasized this by stating that:

> There isn't anything that will distract you. Even if your phone rings, you would not pick it up. You would put it on silent to respect the other members of the audience. There's nothing that can distract you; you won't go anywhere, and no one can enter the room half way through to disturb you as they would at home.

(Participant 3: FGD 1)

The second type of participants are avid cinema moviegoers. They, however, are forced to watch particular films on DVDs because the Ministry of Information (MOI) has banned them from being shown in cinemas. As mentioned earlier, the strict censoring regulations that films go through is one of the main reasons why bootlegged DVDs are so popular in Kuwait. Even those that would prefer watching films in cinemas are often forced to watch DVD versions of

a film if the MOI has banned it from being shown in cinemas. The following passage is a participant's explanation of this scenario.

> What's happening in Kuwait is that many films are not even being shown in cinemas. So what do people do? They often go to buy bootleg DVDs, many of which are unclear copies because they are often recorded by hand-held cameras inside cinemas. Since the film is not available they're forced to watch it in that format. For example, if I was unable to see the last screening of a certain film I want to watch, I would be forced to search online for a website that shows it in a high quality because in the '*souq*' [blackmarket] the quality is not that good.
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> (Participant 8: FGD 2)

As mentioned previously, films banned by the MOI can easily be purchased in the blackmarket in Kuwait. However, the quality of bootleg DVDs varies, and relies heavily on when a film is released in cinemas. For instance, DVDs of films recently released in cinemas will often be of lower quality than those of films that have been released for a few weeks. The reason for this, as participant 8 (FGD 2) highlights above, is that bootleg DVDs of recently released films are often recorded by hand-held cameras. Nevertheless, people that are eager to watch a certain film are willing to buy them as soon as they are available in the blackmarket, regardless of their quality.

6.3 CENSORSHIP IN KUWAIT

In order to understand how young Kuwaiti audiences interpret and understand films, one must explore how Hollywood films reach film audiences in Kuwait. Chapter two (Kuwait Cinema Terrain) provided an in-depth background explanation as to how films are chosen, imported, and censored before being distributed for commercial viewing. This section however, is

dedicated to revealing how much Kuwaiti audiences are aware of the censorship processes that all films must go through. Participants were given the opportunity to articulate their thoughts and opinions on an array of censorship-related topics such as: their awareness of the criteria used when censoring films, their attitude towards the current way films are censored in Kuwait, and solutions for a better censorship process.

Results show that 93% of the survey respondents and all 48 participants that took part in the FGDs were aware of the fact that all films shown in Kuwait undergo a censorship process. Participants were aware of the active role the Ministry of Information's (MOI) Censorship Department plays in the censoring of "any artistic material such as, videos, books, magazines, games, and the like" (Participant 5: FGD 3). The reason why participants appear to be knowledgeable on the issue of censorship is because they have all experienced the results of censorship first hand.

As mentioned earlier in the Results chapter, the majority of the survey respondents (62%) believed that the censoring of films shown in cinemas is too strict, whereas 21% think it is suitable, and 17% claimed that it did not matter to them. When discussing the topic of Western films, Arab audiences, and censorship, it becomes evident that issues related to culture, tradition, and religion act as a foundation on which a discussion is developed. The next section will investigate why some participants support the way films are censored in Kuwait, while others oppose to the censorship processes.

6.3.1 CENSORSHIP: SUPPORTERS AND THE OPPOSITION

During the discussions, participants were asked if they believed audiences should have the right to watch films the way filmmakers intended the film to be watched. In other words,

whether they were in favour of or against films being shown to audiences the way filmmakers initially created them, without censorship. This question split the groups into two opposing sides. On the one hand, there were some participants that believed audiences should have the right to be able to watch films in their original unaltered form. On the other hand, there were some participants that strongly rejected this idea, and claimed that "the Censorship Department does a good job in censoring indecent scenes, and scenes that do not comply with our society's culture" (Participant 3: FGD 3). The issue of the typically conservative 'Kuwaiti culture' and a society in which religious traditions are deeply rooted was repeatedly brought up as a justification for why films must be censored before being shown to the public. Participant 1 (FGD 3) was opposed to the idea of showing films without censorship because she claimed "we are not supposed to be watching things that contradict our religious teachings. Our religion, culture and traditions do not allow us to watch certain things". While some participants agreed with the statements made above, there were other participants that believed individuals should have the choice to be able to watch content that the Censorship Department might deem 'inappropriate'.

Participants identified a long list of what they thought the Censorship Department focused on censoring out of films. The most prominent of these items included: the depiction of God and the prophets, blasphemy, content that criticizes and/or challenges religious beliefs, sexual content, foul language, and excessive horror and violence. Participants were then asked to discuss what they personally believed should be censored in films. Participants gave emphasis to the fact that Arab societies are very different to Western ones, and since Hollywood films are produced in America, much of the content may not be unsuitable to be discussed in conservative Arab countries such as Kuwait. It was emphasized by some of the participants that although they may not agree entirely to the way films are censored before being shown in

cinemas, they did recognize the important role of the Censorship Department. As one participant stressed, "the Arab world needs censorship" (Participant 2: FGD 2).

Hegab (1987) describes films as cultural mirrors that reflect societies' cultural identities. He stressed that films have the ability to represent a society, to criticize it, and even to influence change. "With the advent of globalisation, and with the mass influx of film production coming from all over the world, censorship in the Arab region has become a tool to balance cultural relativism" (Mansour, 2012: 2). Although some participants were opposed to the way films were censored in Kuwait, all 48 FGD participants agreed that explicit sexual scenes must be censored in all films shown in cinemas. They provided two main reasons that were both linked to the teachings of Islam and to the 'Kuwaiti mentality', which is shaped by the society's culture and traditions. Participants asserted that what is shown in cinemas represents Kuwaiti society as a whole. They feared that if cinemas showed uncensored films that contained sexual content then it would desensitize audiences regarding certain behaviours that are considered taboo in public. "People would begin to think that such behaviours are accepted in Kuwait when in fact it is not" (Participant 7: FGD 1).

It was also highlighted that scenes of a sexual nature, such as kissing and sex, would make them feel uncomfortable in cinemas because of the fact that such displays of affection are considered unacceptable in public. Interestingly, participants that did not favour censorship regulations claimed that conservative traditions that are a prominent characteristic of Kuwaiti society would categorize those that preferred to watch uncensored films as indecent and/or immoral individuals. It must be noted here that perhaps the reason why they too agreed to what the majority of the FGD participants said in regard to the censorship of all explicit sexual scenes was because they did not want to be singled out as '*ma yestahee*' [someone that has no sense of shame].

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Throughout the discussion of censorship the terms '*ayb*' [shameful] and '*tarbeya*' [the way someone is brought up and raised] were repeatedly mentioned. The meaning of the term *ayb* can vary depending on emotional contexts. Nader Al Jallad (2010) set out to define the word *ayb* in an article entitled, 'The concept of "shame" in Arabic: bilingual dictionaries and the challenge of defining culture-based emotions'. According to Al Jallad, "the word '*ayb* roughly denotes 'shame,' 'disgrace' and 'dishonor'" (*ibid*: 41). He states further that "a person is expected to feel '*ayb*', if he/she violates any social or religious rules. More specifically, it is typically associated with breaking rules of decorum and proper behavior" (*ibid*: 42).

The term *ayb* is often taught to children in Arab communities from a very young age. This word is used to inform children that what they are doing is wrong and should be stopped immediately. For instance, a young toddler reaching out to take food from a guest's plate would quickly be reprimanded by an older relative with the word "*ayb*" before being carried away. The notion of *ayb* develops more complexly as an individual grows older where the term *ayb* is often then linked to behaviours frowned upon according to society's standards. For example, "it is *ayb* not to visit your relatives on *Eid Al-Fitir*" (*ibid*).[40] In the case of films, participants considered some film content *ayb* [content that projects behaviours that do not comply with social norms], and thus felt strongly that certain scenes should not be shown to audiences in public.

Films were sometimes viewed as a threat to Kuwaiti values. Some participants claimed that censorship helps protect the Kuwaiti society, its culture and traditions from being tainted by Western ideology. They were concerned that audiences in Kuwait could be affected by what they saw in cinemas, and that Kuwaiti traditions would gradually fade away. These claims

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[40] *Eid Al-Fitir* is an Islamic celebration that marks the end of the holy month of *Ramadan*.

initiated a heated discussion whereby some participants responded by asserting that this was an unconvincing argument since people in Kuwait could watch films via the internet, cable TV, and pirated DVDs. Other participants challenged the claim further by emphasizing that traditions in Kuwait are not all the same. For example, they highlighted that *Hadhar* families [people that moved from the desert to live by the sea – and therefore "civilized"] are known for being more Westernized and liberal, whereas *Bedouin* families [desert dwellers in the past] are known for being more traditional and conservative. Moreover, some Kuwaitis are originally Persians, and as such have different traditions. Therefore the idea that films shown in cinemas have the ability to damage 'Kuwaiti society' by challenging traditions was not considered a valid argument since Kuwaiti society is already diverse in nature.

Furthermore, some participants emphasized that cinema audiences in Kuwait were not limited to all-Kuwaiti audiences. Therefore, they felt that non-Arab, and non-Muslim audiences should also be considered. The fact that most of the people living in Kuwait are not Kuwaiti, and as such do not share the same traditions was also highlighted. In fact, Kuwaitis are considered a minority in their country. According to the International Religious Freedom Report conducted by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2012) there are 1.2 million Kuwaitis (approximately 200 of whom are Christian), and 2.6 million foreigners living in Kuwait (approximately 600,000 Hindus, 450,000 Christians, 100,000 Buddhists, 10,000 Sikhs, and 400 Bahais).

Cinescape officials assert that firm censorship regulations have led to the banning of many films. Consequently, illegal download activities and the sales of pirated DVDs are on the rise. When survey participants were asked whether they bought original or pirated DVDs, 67% claimed that they bought pirated versions. '*Kul mamno'a margob*' is a famous Arab proverb, which means all that is forbidden is desired. This proverb perfectly describes the situation

when certain films are banned from cinemas in Kuwait. The curiosity of Kuwaiti audiences as to why a particular film has been banned only motivates them to seek out the film. An example of this would be the film *The Kingdom* (2007), which revolved around a terrorist group in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Although the film was banned from cinemas in Kuwait, all 48 FGD participants admitted that they watched the film online, or that they purchased a pirated DVD version of the film.

6.3.2 THE CENSORSHIP COMMITTEE

As mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Information (MOI) have in place a censorship committee that is responsible for the viewing and censoring of all films imported to Kuwait, whether they are in VHS, DVD, reel, or electronic versions. Two main criticisms were developed upon analyzing the raw data collected from the various methods employed in this study. The first revolves around the censoring guidelines used by the censorship committee; and the second looks into who are the individuals that make up the censorship committee.

As highlighted in the 'Kuwait Cinema Terrain' chapter, the way films are censored in Kuwait is not consistent. Cinema companies blame the MOI for lack of clear guidelines used by the censorship committee. On the other hand, members of the committee accuse the local political scene for the way they censor films, claiming that the makeup of the *Maljis AlUma* [the Parliament] influences the way they censor films. For instance, they are often more lenient in their censoring when the majority of the members of parliament are liberals, and more strict when the majority of the members of parliament are conservative. This is because they do not want a conflict to occur between members of the parliament and the Ministry of Information.

As a result of the inconsistent way films are shown in cinemas in Kuwait, participants have come to believe that the criteria and guidelines used by the Censorship Department to censor films are too vague. During an interview conducted with employees working in the MOI's Censorship Department it was admitted that they were given general guidelines as to what can never be tolerated. As mentioned previously, images depicting God and the prophets, blasphemy, sexual scenes, and the representation of the ruler of Kuwait and rulers of other neighbouring countries in a negative light are the four main subject matters that members of the committee insist on censoring. However, it was explained by the head of the censorship committee that members of the committee were often given more freedom to individually decide on what content they should censor outside the four topics mentioned above.

Naturally, one then begins to question how every member of the committee justifies what should or should not be censored, and on what basis? While the majority of the participants in the FGDs were well informed of the fact that all films went through a censorship process, only 8 out of 48 participants used the term 'censorship committee' to describe how censoring decisions are made. Once the process of how films were censored by the committee was explained to them, it was apparent that the participants split into two groups. Some participants are submissive to the decisions made by the censoring committee, claiming, "they [members of the censorship committee] are like judges. What's the point of having a judge if you don't trust their decisions?" (Participant 5: FGD 3). However, some participants were sceptical, and asked the following questions: Who are the members of the committee? What makes them knowledgeable enough to decide what we can and cannot see? How can they be trusted to take on such a responsibility? Do they really represent us?

Participants that were unhappy with the way films were censored in Kuwait complained that they felt cheated when they paid to watch a film in a cinema, only to find out that significant

portions of the film were cut out. One participant expressed her frustration by stating, "I pay 3.5 KD [£7] to watch a film but I end up leaving disappointed. I'm sure I'm not the only one!" (Participant 6: FGD 3). Those that supported the censorship that takes place suggested that those that were unhappy with the way films shown in cinemas were censored should watch them at home. Participant 6 (FGD 3) declared that "this is already what most film lovers do now anyways, they watch them at home because the films are being ruined in cinemas here due to censorship!" It was clear that the cinema experience most moviegoers expect from cinemas is negatively affected by censorship regulations.

In order to clarify inconsistency concerns in the way films are censored in Kuwait, two films with sequels were chosen as examples: *Taken* (2008), *Taken 2* (2012), *The Hangover* (2009), and *The Hangover Part II* (2011). The original films *Taken* and *The Hangover* were both banned from being shown in Kuwait due to reasons varying in nature. *Taken* was banned because the film contained negative representations of Arabs, such as an Arab sheikh buying the American protagonist's (Liam Neeson) daughter in an underground sex-slave market. *The Hangover* was banned due to its title, which implied the act of alcohol consumption. Moreover, many of the behaviours projected in the film contradicted cultural norms in Kuwait. Nevertheless, the sequels of both films were passed by the censoring committee and were shown in cinemas throughout Kuwait. Interestingly, according to Cinescape sales records, the sequels *The Hangover Part II* and *Taken 2* were among the top 5 films shown in Kuwait in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

The most logical question is then asked: What happened? One begins to wonder what the reasons were behind the censorship committee's decision. Did the content of the films change? Or did the members of the censorship committee change? The answer to the first question, regarding whether the content on the basis of which the films were initially banned

changed in the sequel is as follows. In regard to the *Hangover* sequels, the title that is linked with the act of consuming alcohol has not been altered in *The Hangover Part II* (2011), nor has the general content of the film, which is still contradictory to Kuwaiti social values. On the other hand, significant changes have been made to the villains in *Taken 2* (2012), in which the main 'villains' are no longer Arab-Muslims, but Albanian-Muslims instead. By banning the first version whilst allowing the sequel raises questions regarding how exactly do the censorship committee make censoring decisions? *Taken* was banned due to the projection of negative Arab portrayals, yet the negative depictions of Muslims that are not Arabs in *Taken 2* is tolerated. This raises the question of whether Arab nationalism is more important than religion? If so, then why is so much emphasis placed on religion when censoring films?

6.3.3 BANNED FILMS: YOU CANNOT WATCH THIS – OR CAN YOU?

As with the discussion on the process of cutting scenes from films, FGD participants were asked to list the criteria which they believed the censorship committee uses when banning films. The results show that three main issues were identified as reasons for film bans. The first concerns films with excessive scenes of indecent behaviours that contradict local culture and traditions. This generally refers to sexually explicit content. The second category comprises films that are considered to have political agendas and biases, which includes distorted depictions of Arab countries and their rulers. The third revolves around horror films that contain extreme scenes of violence and blood. Two films from two very different genres have been chosen as examples. *The Dictator* (2012) and *Saw* (2004) are two films that have been banned in Kuwait. The reasons for why they have been banned are discussed below.

The comedy film *The Dictator* (2012) was banned from Kuwait due to the sexually explicit scenes that appear frequently throughout the film. It was also banned because of its offensive stereotypical political representation of Arabs and Arab leaders. The film revolves around an imaginary oil-rich country named the Republic of Wadiya and their dictator Hafez Aladeen, which translated to Arabic, means the Maintainer of the Religion, who is played by Sacha Baron Cohen. The UN summons Hafez Aladeen to America to address concerns they have regarding his nuclear weapons program. However, things do not go according to plan when the is abducted, and stripped of his identity, "including his precious beard" (Jeffries, 2012). It becomes quite obvious from the very beginning that the film is full of stereotypical references and exaggerated depictions of Arabs. This particular film was banned in Kuwait because it ticked two of the three banning criteria mentioned above: scenes of a sexual nature, and disrespectful portrayals of Arabs, which were apparent throughout the entire film.

As with most films banned in Kuwait, participants were still able to purchase pirated DVD versions of the film. One participant described the film as a "catastrophe" (Participant 2: FGD 2). Overall, participants found the film rude and disrespectful. One participant claimed that she could not bear to continue watching the film, and that she had to stop the film even though she was watching it alone at home. "I couldn't continue because many of the scenes were *ayb* [shameful]" (Participant 1: FGD 3). The majority of the participants agreed that it was sensible to ban the film due to the sexually explicit scenes. However, there was a divide in the opinion concerning banning films that depicted Arabs in a negative light. Some participants stood firmly behind their opinion concerning the banning of films that portray Arabs negatively, claiming that even if the portrayals were projected in a comic context that is "meant to be funny, you're basically laughing at yourself" (Participant 5: FGD 3). These participants felt that no matter the context, films that disrespected Arabs should be banned from being shown or sold in Kuwait. They claimed that this suggestion regarding the banning

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of prejudiced films is meant to act as a message to let filmmakers know that such misrepresentations are not appreciated and will not be tolerated.

On the other hand, some participants believed that banning films that misrepresent Arabs was an ineffective solution to the problem of stereotypical representations, for primarily two reasons. The first is linked to the fact that although films may be banned from being shown in cinemas in Kuwait, people can easily buy these films from DVD shops that sell them illegally. In theory, films banned by the Censorship Department are supposed to be banned on all formats. However, as mentioned in the 'Kuwait Cinema Terrain' chapter, uncensored and banned films can easily be bought in the blackmarket.

It is acknowledged that films have an undeniable power to influence people, and that information and messages disseminated through film are easily accepted by audiences. The second reason why participants feel that banning is not an effective solution is because even though films may be banned in Kuwait, audiences worldwide will still be able to watch the films, and see the Arab misrepresentations contained in those films.

According to Cinescape officials, horror films are one of the most popular genres in Kuwait, and come second only to action films. However, due to the violent nature of the horror genre, horror films have the highest likelihood of being banned in Kuwait. Although *Saw* (2004) was banned in Kuwait, a total of 31 participants have seen the film. When asked how they had watched the film even though the MOI had banned it, the majority of the participants confessed that they watched a pirated DVD version or that they saw it online. The banning of overt horror films caused a dispute among FGD participants. While some participants supported the MOI's decision of banning horror films, the majority claimed that it was not rational to ban a film based on the nature of the genre. Those that supported the banning of horror films claimed that films with excessive violence had a negative impact on society.

They believed that the depiction and glorification of violent acts desensitizes people, and in time could promote violent behaviours.

On the other hand, those that were against the banning of violent horror films emphasized that this was the nature of the genre, and that violence was part of the experience. They also stressed on the point that what one person may consider 'too violent' could be seen as average to another. They acknowledge that members of an audience can perceive films very differently to one another, and stressed that it was unfair for the censorship committee to make film viewers conform to a collective idea of what it considered safe to watch. Moreover, they emphasized the fact that banning a film from being shown in cinemas would not stop people from watching the film through other means. They believed that banning films was an ineffective solution; instead they suggested the proper implementation of age restrictions that would prevent audiences from watching films that are not suitable for their age. This age-rating suggestion will be discussed further in the following section.

6.3.4 ALTERNATIVES TO HEAVY FILM CENSORSHIP IN KUWAIT

Upon analyzing the survey results, it became clear that some people supported the film censorship process in Kuwait while others did not. Participants that took part in the FGDs were just as divided in their opinion of the way films were censored in Kuwait. Initially there were three types of participants: those that supported the current censoring process, those that were opposed to it, and those that were unhappy with the censorship but were also wary of any substitutions. As a result, during the FGDs, participants were urged to provide suitable solutions that would please all parties. Two main solutions were put forward: the first recommendation was related to the correction and re-implementation of the current age-rating

system that exists in Kuwait. The second proposal was to allow cinemas to show two versions of a film: a censored (heavy censorship without age-ratings) and uncensored (light censorship with age-ratings) version.

As mentioned in chapter two, the first cinema in Kuwait was established in 1954. Since then films have always undergone a censorship process according to MOI guidelines. For the past five decades the MOI have attempted to censor films in such a way that makes them viewable by audiences of all age groups. However, the biggest lapse in this approach is that while sexual, violent, and blasphemous scenes may be removed, the overall plot and storyline cannot be made 'suitable' according to their standards, even after being censored.

The first age-rating system that monitored cinema audiences' ages was implemented on 21 February 2013 by the MOI, in which for the very first time in over 50 years cinema audiences across Kuwait were regulated according to their age. The development of the rating system used in cinemas falls under the ministerial decree number 21/2013. The most important points of the decree will be highlighted in this section. Four articles of the decree (2, 3, 4 and 11) concerning films for the purpose of cinema viewing are discussed below.

Article 2 of the decree affirms that all films shown in cinemas must be subjected to censorship in order to maintain spiritual values, and preserve local customs and the authentic traditions of Kuwaiti society. The purpose of censoring films is also to avoid the disruption of public order, morals, and/or national unity. Article 3 of the decree stipulates that films, and any other type of artwork, cannot be publicly displayed or advertised before being granted permission by the MOI. Article 4 of the decree is concerned with two tasks. It indicates that a committee of specialists from the MOI's Censorship Department, which controls cinema films, must (a) develop appropriate standards for allowing or preventing the display of certain films in cinemas in Kuwait, in accordance with the provisions of the law, public order, and public

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morals; and (b) develop technical evaluation of each film to determine the appropriate viewing age for audiences to be allowed to enter a cinema to watch the film. Article 11 states that managers and/or cinemas must display the age-rating assigned to every film in the same language used in the film's advertisements. The age-rating must also be prominently displayed throughout cinema premises.[41]

It must be noted that the film rating system used in Kuwait is different to those used in Britain and America. Unlike British and American film rating systems that consist of numerous classifications such as Parental Guidance (PG), 12, 15, and 18+, the film age-rating system in Kuwait is limited to general audiences (G), and 16+. According to the head of the censorship committee, the point of introducing an age-rating system was to make sure that those watching films are within the appropriate age.

With the introduction of the new age-rating system, audiences were hopeful that censorship on films would lessen due to the fact that younger audiences were restricted from watching films that were considered unsuitable for their age. However, instead of reconsidering the way film content is censored, the censoring process has remained the same whilst another step has been added to it, which is the application of the age-ratings. What this ultimately means is that age-ratings are simply applied to already heavily censored films. On the following page is a diagram that briefly illustrates how films were censored in the past, how they are currently censored, and how I propose films should be censored in Kuwait.

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[41] Please refer to Appendix 9 on page 308 to see the age-rating reminders displayed in cinemas in Kuwait.

Participants that were unhappy with the way films were censored in Kuwait but had their doubts about the success of age-ratings were wary of how effective the implementation of the ratings would be. Several concerns were flagged up: The first was that a rating system based on only two ratings PG and 16+ was not sufficient. The Censorship Department needs to develop a rating system that is more complex. Whilst implementing an age-rating system is a step in the right direction, it is effectively flawed since films are still heavily censored. Developing a rating system that is composed of more than two ratings would help the censorship committee in censoring films for each rating band more reasonably. Moreover, at the time the FGDs took place, and before a formal rating system was implemented, some participants feared that cinemas would not commit to the age-rating laws, and that audiences themselves would not abide by the film ratings. However, supporters of the rating system emphasized that, as with all laws, people will eventually learn to respect them. Participant 6 (FGD 3) pointed out that "new laws are often faced with resistance. However, with time, people will get used to them, and will begin to understand the importance of these age-ratings".

Participants that supported the implementation of a well-monitored age-rating system believed that preventing audiences from watching films considered unsuitable through censorship was not an effective solution. The internet provides endless opportunities that allow people to come into contact with materials they would have otherwise never been able

to see. No matter how hard the MOI's Censorship Department tries to control what people in Kuwait can and cannot see; they ultimately cannot stop people from watching films through various illegitimate mediums. Consequently, self-censorship, and parental awareness and supervision become more important than the MOI's censorship efforts that are often ineffective. One participant made the following statement on the issue of censorship, age-ratings, and the widespread use of the internet:

> The media today is spread everywhere; young toddlers walk with dummies in their mouths and an iPad in their hands. People can watch and read whatever they want on the internet. This is where I believe self-censorship plays a major role; you have to be your own supervisor. The role of the family is also just as important; families must ensure that their children are taught from a very young age what is acceptable to watch, and what is not. I believe that the rating system is the solution, and not censorship. From a very long time I have always wanted a rating system to be applied in Kuwait.

(Participant 3: FGD 3)

As highlighted earlier, the current film rating system used in Kuwait is limited to only two ratings (PG and 16+). Results show that the majority of the participants supported the idea of the implementation of an age-rating system. However, they had mixed feelings towards the way the existing age-rating system synchronized with the current censorship process.

The issue of cinema age-ratings was a popular topic among Kuwaiti blogs when they were first introduced in February 2013. One commentator from the BananaQ8 blog stated that this was the "[b]est freaking move EVER!!! FINALLY!! And yes! I do hope that the feature censorship will be a little less" (Darkwolf80s, 2013). Another commentator added, "[t]o be honest, the move is welcomed but at the same time there should be no censors in that matter. If it is rated 16+ what's the point in censoring it again?" (Sasa, 2013). The rating system was also criticized on the Five One blog where one commentator emphasized that cinemas in

Kuwait were already subjected to heavy censorship. "I would appreciate an age restriction law if the movies weren't censored, but what's the point really" (Laila, 2013b). Danderma is another popular blog in Kuwait that also discussed the issue of "How Effective is the Cinescape's New Movie Rating?" The following statement was left in the entry's comments section:

> I just hate the law and all that it represents to be quite honest, please don't get me wrong. I hate the under-age movie hecklers, people who bring toddlers to movies, and parents who are outright ignorant and oblivious to the movie they bought tickets to. But this is a government-enforced law, can't they think of a more creative way to raise awareness? Can't they work with Cinescape, and come up with a better solution? Having age restrictions on censored movies is like covering up an already covered image… what's the point?

(Laila, 2013a)

It is obvious that cinema audiences in Kuwait are unhappy with the current simple breakdown of film viewers: under 16 and over 16 years old. They were also frustrated by the fact that age-ratings were applied to already heavily censored films. Due to social and cultural differences, Western versions of cinema age-rating systems such as the ones used in American and Britain cannot be applied to more traditional societies found in the Middle East, and in Kuwait specifically. Pro-censorship participants emphasized the fact that Western societies are very different from Kuwaiti society, and that whilst film age regulations may work for them, it does not necessarily mean that it will be effective in Kuwait. Others emphasized that age was not a concern, and that culture was more important. As a result, a more sensitive film rating system that is more aware of Kuwaiti cultural and social norms needs to be developed. Although a film rating system is currently in place in Kuwait, it is however not an effective rating system for reasons mentioned earlier.

Censorship processes have not changed even though films are now subjected to age-ratings. As a result, a large section of the population have been excluded from watching certain films, while those within the appropriate age-rating still complain of the heavy censoring that continues to take place. Disappointed cinema audiences in Kuwait, along with the demand for an effective age-rating system, have motivated me to create a age-rating model that, in my view and in light of the responses collected from this research study is sensitive to and more in tune with the Kuwaiti society. Using the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) film rating systems for reference, I have developed an age-rating system that, I believe, incorporates both the suggestions and concerns of cinema viewers in Kuwait. Table 18 on the following page shows the cinema film age-rating system I propose, and the criteria in which films should be accordingly rated.

Table 18: Proposed Age-rating System for Cinemas in Kuwait

AGE-RATING/ THEMES	DRUGS/ ALCOHOL	LANGUAGE	VIOLENCE	EXPLICIT SEXUAL CONTENT
G	None.	Language beyond polite/ no profanity.	Cartoonish in nature and/or minimal in quantity.	None.
PG-13	Some scenes may contain infrequent use of drugs. However, the depictions are not given an emphasis nor do they provide instructional details.	Moderate language.	Minimal and/or has elements of fantasy. Weapons that can easily be accessible to 12 year olds (such as knives) cannot be given an emphasis. Some horror films may be passed in this category only if horror sequences are not too frequent and the overall nature is not disturbing. Moderate physical and psychological threat is allowed.	Censored.

Age-rating/ Themes	Drugs/ Alcohol	Language	Violence	Explicit sexual Content
R	Drug taking may be shown but the work as a whole must not promote or encourage drug misuse. The depictions are not given an emphasis nor do they provide instructional detail.	Racist, homophobic or other discriminatory language may be present. However, the work as a whole must not endorse discriminatory language or behaviour.	May contain rough and/or persistent scenes of violence.

Violence may be strong. However, it should not dwell on the infliction of pain or injury.

There can be strong threat and horror as long as there is no sustained focus on sadistic or sexualised threat. | Censored. |
| 18+ | No censorship - May contain drug and alcohol abuse and overdose. | No censorship - May contain strong language. | No censorship - May contain extreme and/or exaggerated scenes of violence and horror. | Censored. Brief kissing scenes that are not sexual in nature may be permitted. |

As can be seen on Table 18 on pages 188 and 189, the age-rating system I propose is more complex than the rating system currently utilized in Kuwait. Unlike the present two-age group rating system (PG and 16+) used in Kuwait, the rating system I put forward consists of four categories: General Audiences 'G', 'PG-13', Restricted 'R', and '18+'. Films rated 'G' welcome audiences of all ages. Although it is impossible to forecast what may or may not upset any particular child, the content of films in this rating should generally not be upsetting to young children. A rating of 'PG-13' indicates to parents that some of the film's content may not be appropriate for children under the age of 13. Films in this rating are recommended for audiences over 13 years old. Nevertheless, parents can choose to admit children under the advised age. It must be emphasized that parents of young or sensitive children should consider whether or not the content of a 'PG-13' film would upset their children. Films rated 'R' require an accompanying adult guardian for any individual less than 17 years of age. Finally, a film rating of '18+' means that only those over the age of 18 can be admitted.

In the proposed age-rating system, films are allocated a rating based on four key themes: drug and alcohol use, language, violence, and explicit sexual content. Although the film rating systems used in America and Britain has been used as a source of inspiration, the difference is that this model takes into consideration Kuwaiti cultural and social norms and taboos, especially with regard to explicit sexual content. For instance, sexual content of an erotic nature, which includes kissing scenes and sexual intercourse, must be censored before being shown to the Kuwaiti public regardless of a film's rating. The reason for this is that Kuwait in general remains a conservative Islamic country that is guided by Islamic teachings, which considers sexual relations as sacred acts that should not be publicized. Therefore in order to maintain societal norms, erotic scenes are removed from all films shown in cinemas.

It must be emphasized that sexual content is an issue that rating systems both in the United States and United Kingdom consider intensively. However, due to cultural and religious discrepancies there is a vast difference in the way Western and Muslim-Arab societies approach the issue of sex. As mentioned earlier, participants were concerned that by showing uncensored films that contain sexual content audiences would gradually become desensitized to acts considered taboo in a conservative country such as Kuwait. A film rating of '18+' is the only rating that permits brief kissing scenes that are not sexual in nature. The reason why this is the only rating that allows such depictions is that audiences of '18+' rated films are not young impressionable children. They are young adults that have already established a sense of social norms.

In addition to the implementation of age-ratings, the other proposal that FGD participants had was the screening of both a heavily-censored and a less-censored version of films in cinemas. Heavily censored films would allow the admission of audiences of all age groups. However, films with less censorship would be subjected to age-ratings that would restrict younger audiences from indiscriminate watching. This suggestion received both positive and negative feedback. Participants that supported the idea believed it was an ideal solution because it gave audiences the opportunity to choose what version they wanted to see. They also suggested that this proposal could be implemented in specific venues, or that certain times could be allocated where no one under a certain age was allowed in cinemas. In addition, they highlighted that with this suggestion younger audiences that would have been initially banned from watching the films in cinemas would be able to still watch the censored version, thus they would not feel completely left out.

Some participants who took the other side of the 'spectrum' strongly disagreed with this suggestion, and often linked their disapproval to religious and cultural morals. One participant even compared cinemas to nightclubs and bars stating, "soon they'll open up bars and clubs, and they'll say 'oh well there's an age restriction'. This cannot happen! It's not acceptable" (Participant 2: FGD 3). Another participant emphasized that even if people do immoral things, they would not do it in public, and stressed that if people wanted to watch uncensored films then they should watch it in the privacy of their own homes. "We are Muslims", she emphasized "*itha baleetom fa estatero*" [if you do a shameful act then do not boast about it]; "many people do wrong things, but they don't do it in front of people" (Participant 5: FGD 3).

6.4   ARAB PORTRAYALS IN FILM

As with the individuals that took part in the survey, FGD participants were also asked a number of questions regarding the way Arabs are represented in Hollywood films. However, unlike the survey, the FGDs produced more detailed account. Participants that took part in the FGDs were able to express their opinions more flexibly and openly. The following four subsections include the participants' perspective of how Arabs are represented in Hollywood films, the way they feel towards these portrayals, their opinions as to why Arabs are portrayed in that manner, and their input on how to correct the distorted image of Arabs in film.

6.4.1 ARAB REPRESENTATIONS IN HOLLYWOOD FILMS

The issue of how Arabs are portrayed in Hollywood films created a lively debate among members of the FGDs. The vast majority agreed that the representations of Arabs in films were generally negative. However, a number of participants argued that although most films projected Arabs in a negative light, there were some films that projected Arabs in a positive manner. Moreover, the majority of the participants believed that representations of Arabs in films changed significantly after the 9/11 attacks on America.

However, some participants believed that the representations of Arabs and Muslims have become more negative, while others believed that filmmakers were taking positive steps to show Arabs and Muslims with a more informed approach. One participant mentioned the film *Mooz-lum* (2010), to highlight the way in which some post 9/11 films have attempted to show a more fair representation of Muslims.

> The story revolves around a Muslim African American family. The film reflects how non-Muslims look at Muslims, and the struggle for co-existence in a society. Issues of racism are also presented. Although the main characters in the film were American Muslims, it was still a very good film that shows the struggles of Muslim students studying in non-Muslim countries. The film was very positive, which can make us consider that they [American filmmakers] are not always against us.
>
> (Participant 3: FGD 3)

Another participant (Participant 1: FGD 3) agreed that, "there are films that show us in a positive way, but the majority of films project false and misinformed depictions of Arabs and Muslims. Very rarely will you find a film that represents us fairly". Whilst discussing the issue of Arab representations after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, one participant explained that it was their belief that post 9/11 films that represented Arabs and Muslims in a fairer manner

were often attempts by filmmakers to bridge the understanding gap that exists between America and Muslims worldwide. Participant 5 (FGD 3) expressed that:

> When you are always represented in the wrong way, you [Arabs and Muslims] will turn around and say that they [Americans] are my enemy. However, if represented in a respectable and fair manner you will respect them in return. In the film *The Kingdom of Heaven,* a Muslim Syrian was hired to play the role of Salah Al-Din, who is a strong lead character in the film. The film was incredible! Why? They are trying to represent us [Muslims] positively.

In the survey and during the FGDs, participants were asked to describe Arab characters in Hollywood films. The descriptions can be sorted into three categories: Arab men, Arab women, and 'Arabia' as a place. Upon analyzing the FGD transcripts it was evident that the participants in all six FGDs repeatedly used a number of keywords to describe each category. Terms that were often used to describe Arab men in films were: 'stupid', 'rich', 'Bedouins', 'villains', and 'terrorists'.

Participants also noted that Arab men were often depicted as being sex-obsessed and desiring Western women. Participant 6 (FGD 3) pointed out that the "image that they [Hollywood films] always show is the image of Arab men always wanting to abduct Western women". Films that incorporate the theme of Arab sheikhs abducting Western fair maidens include: Brook Shields in *Sahara* (1983), Goldie Hawn in *Protocol* (1984), and Kim Basinger in the James Bond film *Never Say Never Again* (1986). Another participant agreed and added that, "they [Hollywood films] generalize Arabs as being 'traffickers' … People that specialize in abducting, selling and buying girls as sex slaves" (Participant 4: FGD 3). Participants also agreed that Hollywood films often relied on exaggerated stereotypical Arab features such as dark piercing eyes, long beards, and crooked noses. As with stereotypical facial features,

Arabs are also almost always shown wearing the traditional '*dishdasha*' [white dress] and headgear for men, and black '*abayas*' for women.

Discussing the images of Arabs in Hollywood films in the FGDs generated responses similar to those collected from the survey. FGD participants described Arab women as being irrelevant characters in films. They felt that they were almost always given minimal roles, and that their function in films was limited to being silent extras or emotional women screaming and wailing in the background. The majority of the participants pointed out that Arab women were generally portrayed as either as sexual objects whose main purpose was to please men, or faceless, voiceless, and oppressed women, or brainwashed terrorists. There is an obvious absence of educated, successful, and professional Middle Eastern women in films. The lack of diverse portrayals disappointed participants who collectively agreed that they have never come across a Hollywood film that projects positive and proactive representations of Arab women. Moreover, according to Andrews (2014):

> How attractive- by Western standards- a female character from the Middle East is in a Hollywood film determines how Western audiences perceive her ... women are generally either unveiled and attractive or veiled and hostile. The 'attractive' ones are often played by Westerners to make them more accessible to the Hollywood audience, such as Claudette Colbert playing Cleopatra in "Cleopatra" or Marthe Keller playing Dahlia in "Black Sunday". But if they are not Westerners, they are often 'Westernised'.

The third category that participants describe is what I call 'Arabia', the land in which Arabs in Hollywood films inhabit. Arabia is a location that is both real and imaginary. Studies show (Eisele, 2002; Fries, 2005; Khatib, 2006) that whenever Arabs are shown in films, the images of harsh dry deserts appear. The desert has become a cinematic code that is directly linked to Arabs. An analysis of the FGDs confirms this idea. Participants from all FGDs agreed that,

"they [Hollywood films] always represent us [Arabs] in the desert" (Participant 2: FGD 1). It has become a custom for films to "always show scenes of the desert whenever they want to represent us [Arabs] in the film. Every time they show a desert, you automatically know that images of Arabs will follow" (Participant 7: FGD 2). The concern that participants had was not that Hollywood was projecting Arabs in deserts, but with the way the desert itself was depicted. Arabs have always had an intimate relationship with the desert. Many Arab tribes consider the desert to be their home, since their livelihood depends on it. It is also the source of inspiration, and a topic that many Arabian poets take pride in writing about. However, instead of projecting the beauty that lies in the desert, it seems that Hollywood representations of the desert are limited to an uninhabitable, arid, and thief-infested wilderness. Participant 5 (FGD 1) claimed that, "they always portray Arabs as uncivilized and backward; the image of camels and the desert is always present". Hollywood has transformed the desert into a symbol for a place that is void of any culture, a one-dimensional, barren place.

It must be emphasized that while, historically, some Arabs lived in the desert, others lived in towns. Nevertheless, throughout history Arabs who lived in towns had a tradition of sending their young children to the desert to be brought up with Bedouins. Even the prophet Mohammed was sent to live in the desert as an infant over 1400 years ago.

> The Arabs used to send their young children to the desert because it was considered healthier, and the language of the Bedouins was purer and their schooling in the proper manners and values of the Arabs was considered essential for the upbringing of children. So the children were sent for *Tarbiyyat* (training & upbringing) to the tribes of the desert. The Arabs were very particular about their language and traditions and took care to see that these were taught to their children by people considered to be expert in them.

> (Baig, 2010: 158)

For centuries the desert was considered a healthier place for children to grow up in because unlike towns, it was not contaminated or polluted. There were also fewer chances of catching diseases. Furthermore, because towns often attracted foreigners for trade, Arabs were concerned that non-Arabs would influence their children. Therefore they would send their children to live with Bedouins that would raise them on 'proper' Arab principles.

In addition to its dry harsh deserts the Arab world is also home to forests, mountains, rivers, and beaches. However, when watching Hollywood films that depict Arabia, one would never truly appreciate its diverse geographical composition. Furthermore, the robust metropolitan cities, business bays, and skyscrapers that exist in most Arab countries today are often given the blind eye when modern Arab countries are depicted. Instead, it seems that Hollywood prefers to "continuously project us [Arabs] as uncivilized people living in tents in the middle of the desert" (Participant 7: FGD 1).

Hollywood's portrayals were narrowed down to three depictions: the terrorist set on destroying America, the rich Arab that aims to buy up America, and the drunken Arab. In the first depiction, both Arab men and women are shown plotting terrorist acts. Conservative Arab Muslims are often depicted as fanatic terrorists. Some films that project such scenarios include, *Black Sunday* (1977), *Bulletproof* (1988), *True Lies* (1994), *Executive Decision* (1996), The Siege (1998), and *Fatwa* (2006). In the second depiction, Arab men are frequently shown to be in a position of power due to their wealth. Participant 3 (FGD 2) describes that, "they show an Arab coming to buy a hotel, or investing in something in their country". However, these Arabs are often projected as being ignorant and arrogant. Participant 7 (FGD 2) stated that, "American films show Arabs as not having any brains, but have a lot of money in their pockets. The same goes for oil, they show us having it but not

knowing what to do with it". Such films include *Rollover* (1981), *The Boost* (1988), and *Father of the Bride Part II* (1995). The third depiction, which is of the drunken Arab, is believed by participants to be one of the most popular portrayals of Arab tourists. Participants pointed point that Arabs are often projected as uncivilized hooligans whenever they are shown outside their native homelands. It appears that Arabs in Hollywood films "drop all their morals and act shamefully" the moment they reach a Western country (Participant 6: FGD 1). Another participant agrees that when films present Arabs travelling to Western countries Hollywood often "shows them as abandoning their cultural and traditional morals" (Participant 2: FGD 1), and "suddenly jumping from the far right (conservative Muslims) to the far left (liberal individuals) as soon as they travel outside their home country" (Participant 3: FGD 1). Depictions of Arab men travelling to America or other Western countries will repeatedly show Arab men as drunkards that seek Western women's company. Films that depict Arab drunkards, and Arab womanizers include *The Belles of St. Trinian's* (1954), *Cabaret* (1972), *Ilsa, Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks* (1976), and *Basic Training* (1985).

Participants also believed that Arabs were often projected as being stuck in the wrong time period. Participant 6 (FGD 2) believed that, "the majority of films that perpetuate the image of Arabs will often show present Arabs as being stupid, lazy Bedouins that are not aware of the world around them". During the discussion regarding how Arabs were portrayed in Hollywood films one participant made the following statement:

> Hollywood films always purposely show Arabs, and third world countries in general, as being uneducated, and that they don't know what's good for them. They show them as being backward, etc. These images along with many other negative ones are the representations that are often linked with Arabs in Hollywood films.

> (Participant 2: FGD 2)

Results show that participants believed that one reason for such depictions was to convince Western audiences, and American audiences in particular, that Arabs do not know what is good for them, and thus they [America] must interfere in order to help them [the Arabs]. This observation, along with other contemplations as to why Hollywood films represent Arabs in such a way, will be discussed further in section 6.6.

Studies show (Arti, 2007; Elouardaoui, 2011), that the representations of Arabs have changed significantly since the very first depictions of Arabs in film. Therefore, as a researcher I was interested in investigating how aware Kuwaiti audiences were of the gradual change in Arab portrayals. Participants were asked to recall depictions of Arabs in old Hollywood films. Most participants raised the issue of scenes with endless deserts and barbaric Bedouin tribes. One participant eagerly voiced that "these representations are still used today, only the Bedouin is now also a terrorist!" However, when they were asked if they could remember the title of an old Hollywood film that represented Arabs, only one out of 48 participants was able to provide a name of old Hollywood film. That individual mentioned the films *Casablanca* (1942) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Although only one participant was able to provide film titles of old Hollywood films, others participants remembered film plots and began describing the old films they had watched. This indicates that although Arab audiences may not remember film titles, the representation of Arabs they saw in those films remained embedded in their minds.

Participants were then asked whether they thought the image of Arabs in Hollywood films has changed since the very first films were produced in the late nineteenth century, and whether they believed these images have changed over time. Most of the participants believed that the representations of Arabs have indeed changed with time. The majority of participants believed

that Arab characters in Western films had not only changed, but have also evolved. For instance, one participant stated that "the representation of Arabs evolved; I don't think it changed. It's only evolving" (Participant 3: FGD 3).

Participants were then asked whether they believed these representations evolved in a positive or negative manner. The majority did not hesitate to claim that Arab representations were developing negatively. This is to say that if Arabs in early films were depicted as stupid Bedouins, the same Arabs were later depicted as rich Bedouins that remain stupid. Nevertheless, some participants claimed that the way Arabs were depicted "depends on the political events taking place" (Participant 5: FGD 3). Most participants believed that there has been an increased focus on Arabs in Hollywood films since the 9/11 attacks on America. Others, however, were aware that the change in the way Arabs were portrayed in Hollywood films took place much earlier in time.

The issues of generalization and repetition were two recurring themes in all the FGDs. While the majority of the participants thought the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films were negative, they were aware of the fact that there is some truth to the representations that are shown in films. However, their concern was that Arabs were being generalized, and were constantly being projected in a stereotypical manner. Participant 2 (FGD 1) emphasized, "we don't deny that some terrorists are Arabs, but it's not fair to generalize that all Arabs are terrorists, and to present the minority of a minority as a majority."

When participants were asked to discuss how accurate Arabs representations in films were, the keyword that was repeated in every FGD was the term 'exaggerated'. As with all stereotypes, certain prominent elements are selected and amplified. Nearly all participants agreed that the images of Arabs in film were an embellished version of real Arabs. This,

however, did not mean that participants completely refused to acknowledge the images of Arabs they saw in films. While participants recognized that Arab representations were misguided, they also agreed that there was some truth being told. For instance, Participant 3 (FGD 1) declared that, "I believe there is truth to it [the representation of Arabs], but this truth is representative to a very small minority of Arabs, which do not represent all Arabs. But there is some element of truth". It was also noted that Hollywood films preferred to "show the negative behaviours conducted by some Arabs while ignoring the good aspects of Arabs" (Participant 3: FGD 1).

One frustrated participant linked the issue of human rights to the way Arabs were being projected in Hollywood films. Participant 6 (FGD 3) claimed that, "even though they [Westerners] are always talking about human rights, they themselves are contradicting themselves by the way they are always alienating Arabs and Muslims". Another participant emphasized that "they [Hollywood films] often present American Muslims as struggling black African Americans… there is a lack of successful Arabs and Muslims [representations] in America" (Participant 6: FGD 3). Generally all of the FGD participants agreed that were was a lack of alternative Arab representations.

In 1980 Edward Said noted that:

> So far the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.

Even though over three decades have passed since the statement above was made, Said's account of Arab and Muslim representations is as relevant today as it was in 1980. Said emphasized that the ability to represent was influential in strengthening the constructed differences between 'the West' and 'Others'. These representations also "translated into a sense of superiority and justified various political interventions that underpinned imperialism" (McEwan, 2009: 65).

During the FGDs participants also pointed out that Hollywood films have a tendency to show off American superiority and supremacy. America's technological advancements and state-of-the-art warfare and weapons are often displayed in action films. Participants believed that these images send a message to worldwide audiences that they are a force not to mess with. One participant made the following comment:

> If it's an American film they will focus on their army's power. The Americans always portray themselves as having the strongest army. American films in general always give that impression. For example, in Kuwait when you see an American and you know he's in the army, you just don't want to mess with him.

(Participant 1: FGD 3)

The statement above indicates that Kuwaiti audiences are influenced by the ideological standpoint set forth in the films they watch, and are influenced in such a way that shapes the way they behave and react towards the American troops in Kuwait. Whilst this is one example, there are many other examples that highlight this high-status relationship.

Technological advancements that America's Department of Defense apparently possesses are often flaunted in films. The images of the American military forces in many action-packed Hollywood films are used to disseminate the idea that America's military forces are superior

to any other military force elsewhere in the world. The magnitude of America's military bodies is often presented to audiences in a spectacle of top-of-the-line weapons and warfare demonstrations. Representations of American military personnel usually consist of sharp, highly trained, good-natured (unless provoked) individuals who are prepared to die for their country. These characteristics along with most modern military machinery make for an unbeatable force. Recent films with such features include: *Jarhead* (2005), *Green Zone* (2010), *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), and *American Sniper* (2014).

6.4.2 THEIR [WESTERNERS'] VIEW OF US [ARABS]

According to Stuart Hall (1996) the use of generalized terms such as 'West' and 'western' are inevitable. However, he emphasizes that such words have multiple and complex meanings, and should not be understood purely in a geographical context. 'The West' and 'western' can also be used to "refer to a type of society, a level of development, and so on" (*ibid*: 185). He goes further to say that "'the West' is a *historical,* not a geographical, construct. By 'western' we mean the type of society … that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern" (*ibid*: 186). Although Hall points out that "any society which shares these characteristics, wherever it exists on a geographical map, can be said to belong to 'the West'" (*ibid*), the terms 'West' and 'westerners' used by the participants in this study are used specifically to give reference to Europe, Europeans, America, and Americans.

During the FGDs, participants were encouraged to discuss how they believed Westerners viewed Arabs. This topic pushed participants to share some of their experiences with Westerners. Many participants claimed that when they interacted with Westerners they found

that most Westerners would be surprised to find out that they were very different from what they had initially expected them to be like. For instance, Participant 2 (FGD 2) made the following statement:

> There was a time when I used to chat frequently on an international online chat-room. I used to chat with *ajanib* [foreigners from the West] and Americans; they used to be shocked when I told them that I was from Kuwait, and that Iraq was our neighbour. They used to tell me "we would never have expected you to be this educated and open-minded". I think this is because Hollywood films always purposely show Arabs, and Third World countries in general, as being uneducated, and that we don't know what's good for us. They show us as being backward, etc. These images, along with many other negative ones, are the representations that are often linked with Arabs in Hollywood films. It's not in our hands; there's nothing we can do about it.

Although the sense of despair in statement above is apparent, other participants made numerous suggestions concerning how the representation of Arabs in Hollywood films can be corrected. These suggestions are addressed at length in section 6.8 of this chapter. Furthermore, in addition to the statement mentioned above, another participant also spoke about his experience with Westerners that shared the same online gaming passion he had. The following excerpt was taking from a statement he made regarding the way Westerners were surprised at his English speaking skills.

> It's true that Americans and some of the advanced European countries count us as being very backward. I play a game online, and when other online gamers ask me where I'm from and I tell them Kuwait, they ask, "where is that?" I tell them it's near Iraq, and they immediately know! They know Iraq, but they don't know us. Then they're shocked even more that I'm from that part of the world and they begin questioning how I learned to play this game, and why my English is so good. I mean they're shocked that we're well educated.

<div align="right">(Participant 6: FGD 2)</div>

<div align="center">204</div>

Participants agreed that most of what Westerners know about Arabs is what they have seen in the media. Throughout the discussion it seemed as though the participants excused Westerners for their ignorance, and blamed the media for feeding them misleading information. Participant 8 (FGD 2) stated: "I prefer that foreigners don't hear and know about us from the media". Instead, participants agreed that they would rather have Westerners learn about Arabs through direct Arab interaction. One participant made the following statement regarding how and what Westerners learn about Arabs:

> What people in the West know about Arabs is only a mental image of what they have seen in the media and films. They have been trained to think and believe that Arabs are like this [the way they are represented in films]. However, Westerners that come here to the Arab world and have seen Arabs will not be affected by what they see in films. This is because they know that what they are being shown in the media is not real, because they have experienced real Arabs and their way of life. However, Westerners that have never been here or have never experienced knowing an Arab person will be influenced by what they see in films. This is exactly the same for Arabs who have never been to America. For example, if an Arab has never been to America and they watch Arabic films that portray distorted images of America, they will believe what they see in those films, and they will believe those representations. Therefore, don't blame them [Western audiences]. All they have experienced about Arabs comes from the films they see about Arabs.

(Participant 7: FGD 2)

Upon analyzing the FGDs it was apparent that the participants had a tendency to give justifications as to why Western audiences believed the representations of Arabs they see in films. As the discussion progressed, the participants shared their stories of how non-Arabs were surprised when they realized how different real Arabs were from the Arabs often projected in films. One participant pointed out that:

A small percentage of the entire American population actually has passports. Very few of them travel abroad; the people there are ignorant … There are some people who are aware, and some that are ignorant. Unfortunately, the majority is ignorant.

(Participant 4: FGD 3)

Statistics show that the total U.S. population in 2014 was an estimated 320,087,963 (United States Census Bureau, 2014). According to U.S. Department of State (2014) there are 121,512,341 valid U.S. passports. This shows that only 38% of the American population has valid passports that allow them to travel abroad. People that have not travelled abroad, and have not experienced first-hand other peoples' cultures and traditions are more likely to believe what they see in the media. This applies to non-Arabs learning about Arabs. Those that have never had any experiences with Arabs are more likely to believe the representations of Arabs they see in films. Individuals that have visited the Middle East, or have Arab friends are more likely to refute the representation they see in films because they are able to compare the images shown in Hollywood films to their personal experiences. Likewise, Arabs that have never travelled abroad are bound to have a distorted view of the West and other places in the world. Participant 8 (FGD 2) emphasizes this point by stating that:

My mother has never been to America, and she does not know anyone from America either. When it was time for me to go to university, I wanted to study in America. I was applying to universities there, and my mother insisted that she did not want me to go there because people there were 'immoral'. She would often say that issues forbidden in our religion and society, such as casual sexual intercourse was a norm there. Look at the way she has been taught to think about America; this is the image she has of America. They are nothing but mere ideas, but they are deeply ingrained in the way people think and look at the world. I know some things are true, but a person has to make his/her own judgments. Kuwaitis and Arabs have to make their own judgments of America, and Americans should make their own judgments about Arabs.

This is especially true if they have pre-existing ideas about the other before even having any personal experiences with the one another.

6.4.3 *KHALEEJI* REPRESENTATIONS IN ARABIC PRODUCTIONS

When discussing the issue of stereotypical images of Arabs in Hollywood films, some participants argued that Hollywood films were not the only perpetrators. They claimed that Arabic productions, especially Egyptian films, are also guilty of portraying *Khaleejis* [Arabs from the Gulf] in stereotypical representations.[42] Participants explained that Egyptian productions show very shallow representations of *Khaleejis* in the same manner that Hollywood disseminates limited and stereotypical representations of Arabs. They emphasized that Egyptian productions would almost always associate *Khaleejis* with money. Participants stressed that *Khaleejis* were often shown as rich, arrogant drunkards that think they can do anything they want using their money. The following excerpt was taken from a participant that was comparing Egyptian films with Hollywood productions.

> Let's make a comparison between Hollywood films and Egyptian films. As Arabs we get upset when we see the way Westerners depict us unfairly in their films because we know we are not like that. However, in an Egyptian film when we see images of *Khaleejis* [people from countries of the Gulf] drinking in bars and throwing money at the dancers, I laugh and say: "that's true, there are many *Khaleejis* that do that when they travel abroad". What I mean to say is that I don't get upset because this reality.

> (Participant 6: FGD 3)

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[42] As mentioned in other chapters in the thesis, the term *Khaleeji* is used to identify individuals from the six Gulf countries (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman).

Although some participants agreed to the statement made above, the vast majority did not appreciate such stereotypes coming from either Hollywood or Arab productions. Participant 3 (FGD 3) had this to say in response:

> It is still generalizing. Okay, we're not going to escape reality, there are some wealthy people or even regular people that do things like that when they travel abroad. But you can't generalize this image to all *Khaleejis*. I mean not all *Khaleejis* do such things when they travel abroad whether in Arab or non-Arab countries, so why always present them in that manner?

Apparently, participants were aware that some Arabs behave very differently when they travelled. They acknowledged that some of the depictions shown in Egyptian films about *Khaleejis* were true. However, they were keen to emphasize that the majority of *Khaleejis* that travel would behave decently while abroad. Participants felt that the tradition of projecting *Khaleeji* travellers in limited negative stereotypical depictions was unjust. More about the way Arabs from non-Gulf states treat *Khaleejis* is discussed in the 'participant experiences' (6.9) section of this chapter.

6.5 PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TOWARDS ARAB REPRESENTATIONS

As with the survey participants, the FGD participants were also asked to express how they felt when they watched a film that represented Arabs in a manner that offended them. It was evident that there were four types of participants that reacted very differently when they watched Hollywood representations of Arabs. Some participants felt that the way Arabs were portrayed was becoming boring, and outdated. One participant, who appeared to have given up on the way Hollywood continues to misrepresent Arabs in films, had this to say:

I became tired from how much they've been showing us in a negative vapid way and people are silent about it. It has become a norm for them to keep showing Arabs in whatever way they wish because the Arabs are not doing anything about it. Arabs don't challenge Hollywood or talk back because we don't have a higher power that supports us. Our opinions are not heard.

(Participant 1: FGD 1)

Others were annoyed by the representations, and would feel upset, and at times even distressed. "Of course, we get upset and irritated, because we are not like that", explained Participant 6 (FGD 1). Some participants that were aggravated reacted more intensely to the representations. The representations would anger and frustrate them so much that they questioned: "Why don't films show the positive traits of Arabs? Why must they always perpetuate negative representations of Arabs?" (Participant 2: FGD 3). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one participant (Participant 1: FGD 3) even admitted she could not continue watching a film that persists on showing distorted representations of Arabs.

Other participants took a more relaxed approach to the issue and would rather ignore the negative representations or simply try not to think about them when watching the film. Participant 3 (FGD 3) made the following statement regarding this issue:

From my point of view, I believe that I do get aggravated but I try not to let it get to me. I try not to think of it; I try not to let any negative vibes get to me. I try my best not to think about it. Even if they've spoken about me in a certain way, I am confident of who I am. I know who I am, and like my colleagues said, it's a business. I have reached a certain level of education and academia that enables me to think and choose correctly; I am able to ignore their opinions no matter what they do.

It is obvious that participants react very differently to one another when exposed to negative or offensive representations of Arabs in the films they watch. Some participants are more

sensitive to these representations and deliberately choose not to see them while others are less concerned. For instance, Participant 3 above is clearly more composed when faced with issues of misrepresentation. Although negative representations irritate him, he makes a conscious effort to ignore them.

Finally, some participants claimed that they watched films critically in order to understand how Westerners perceived Arabs. Participant 5 (FGD 3) claimed that he watched films that depicted Arabs because he observed "the way they [Westerners] perceive us [Arabs] through their representations of us" and declared, "this is something I find very important".

Upon discussing the participants' feelings towards the way in which Arabs were portrayed in Hollywood films, some participants felt that Arabs were to blame for the way they were represented. Participants believed that the lack of Kuwaiti film productions has given Western film productions the ability to represent Arabs in a one-dimensional manner. "The problem lies within us; we have to fix ourselves first. We should blame ourselves for the way we are portrayed in films" (Participant 5: FGD 3). The ways in which the participants address this issue is discussed further in this chapter.

Some participants felt that Hollywood is so successful in perpetuating certain images about people that even they themselves start to believe them. For example, Participant 1 (FGD 1) declared, "we view them as being 'top', and we're nothing. I don't know, I guess it's a result of how they constantly represent us in a negative and inferior manner". Through constant repetition of American 'good-guys' bashing Arab 'bad-guys', Arab audiences have developed a sense that Westerners are better in terms of power, order, and technology, and are overall more advanced than they are.

6.6   REASONS BEHIND NARROW PORTRAYALS

When participants were asked what they believed were the reasons behind the misrepresentation of Arabs in Hollywood films, it was apparent that there were some points that they clearly collectively agreed on. However, other points that were raised by members of the focus group discussions generated conflicting opinions. Many reasons were given as to why the participants believed Hollywood chooses to perpetuate misinformed depictions of Arab in their productions. This section highlights the opinions of young Kuwaiti film viewers on this issue.

6.6.1 JEWISH INFLUENCE IN HOLLYWOOD

The American film industry today is known for being a melting pot of individuals from various ethnicities, religions, and backgrounds. From actors to directors, cameramen to producers, individuals from almost every minority can be found taking part in Hollywood productions. However, it can be argued that Jews are among the most prominent groups in Hollywood. In the book entitled *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (1988), Neal Gabler a Jewish author writes about how immigrant Jews developed the American film industry. He points out that world-renown major Hollywood studios such as Universal Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Film Fox Cooperation, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and Warner Brothers were all established by Jews of Eastern European origins. According to Cantor (1994: 390), the American film industry was "almost completely dominated in the first 50 years of its existence by immigrant Jews and is still dominated at its top level by Jews".

During the FGDs some participants put forward the idea that the misrepresentation of Muslims in films was an attempt by filmmakers to taint Islam's reputation for worldwide audiences, "so that it [Islam] does not spread; they do not want people to become Muslims" (Participant 1: FGD 3). Whilst some participants agreed on this religious factor, others believed that political implications have a more direct link to the way Muslims and Arabs are represented in films. As soon as the topic of political factors that have a role in film representations was discussed, the issue of the prominent presence of Jews in Hollywood and in American politics was raised. The issue of strong Jewish influence in American politics was discussed in every focus group discussion. One participant made the following statement:

> Jews are very prominent in the political scene in America; their rabbis are very influential and can even influence the president himself. As a pressure, the Jews are very strong there. Jews run the majority of companies, business, and the economy. Their [Jewish] businesses are found everywhere around the world, and even in the Middle East. At the end of the day, they are able to control cinemas, and the economy. In short, they are the ones that control and determine the way we are represented.

(Participant 6: FGD 3)

It was evident that when the issue of why Arabs were constantly misrepresented in films was mentioned, most participants raised the topic of Jews and the power that they apparently had in Western media and over Hollywood films in particular. Statements about Jews controlling major Hollywood studios and their productions were raised repeatedly in every focus group discussion. Participants claimed that Jewish control over the media enables them to promote the Israeli cause by representing Arabs and Muslims in an unfavourable manner. The matter of Jews versus Muslims was evident throughout the discussion about the prominence of Jews in the filmmaking industry. Participant 1 (FGD 1) claimed that "most of those in control in Hollywood are Jewish. Jews hate Muslims, and no one can deny that. Therefore they want to

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portray Muslims in a negative light". Most FGD participants supported this strong statement, and similar statements were made throughout the focus group discussions. For instance, participant 4 (FGD 1) questioned, "they [Jews] hate Muslims, and Christians as well. But why don't they do the same to Christians? Why [do they misrepresent] only the Muslims?" Other participants responded by clarifying that Jews needed the support of Christians to ensure the ongoing occupation of Palestine, especially since it is primarily America that allegedly ensures Israel's protection.

This issue raised the question of whether or not these young Kuwaiti Muslims genuinely believed that Jews hate Muslims. When participants were asked if they really believed Jews hate Muslims, the majority of the responses suggested that they believed that Jews were hostile towards Muslims. "The majority of those in control of Hollywood film studios are Jews; and Jews do not like Muslims. That's basically the essence of the issue" suggested Participant 4 (FGD 3).

However, some participants believed that it had less to do with religions (Judaism and Islam), and more to do with Arab-Israeli politics. The following excerpt is taken from a statement made by one of the participants:

> First of all, most of the production companies and studios in America are run by Jews; Fox, Paramount, and the rest. Jews run the major studios, and it's known that there is a major conflict between Jews and Arabs because of Israel. That's why they always try to bash the Arabs.

> (Participant 7: FGD 2)

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was a turning point for Jews all over the world. In an interview conducted by Gabler (1988: 350), film producer Robert Blumofe

described what the founding of Israel meant to Jews. He emphasized that, "suddenly Israel, even to the least Jewish of us, represented status of some sort. It meant that we did have a homeland. It meant that we did have an identity". It was apparent that participants were aware of the importance of Israel to Jews. One participant insisted that Jews "don't hate Muslims; they hate Arab nationalists and Arab nationalism because they threaten the existence of Israel. An example would be Jamal Abdul-Nasser, and those that are opposed to the State of Israel" (Participant 3: FGD 1). Similar statements were made throughout the focus group discussions. While many participants believed that religious factors played a crucial role in the distorted representations of Muslims and Arabs, the majority agreed that political factors, which included the Israeli conflict, played a key role in propagating these negative representations.

6.6.2 THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on America were also flagged as an important reason for the negative depictions of Arabs in films. In every FGD at least two participants claimed that the events of 9/11 were a reason for the misrepresentation of Arabs. However, other participants made a counter-claim to this suggestion by emphasizing that distorted images of Arabs have existed prior to the 9/11 attacks. This shows that some of the participants were more aware than others that the misrepresentation of Arabs has been apparent in film for a very long time.

6.6.3 THE SILENCE OF ARABS

As mentioned in chapter three, it is acknowledged that Arabs are not the only group that is alienated and stereotyped in Hollywood. Like Arabs, Native American, Hispanic or Black people, many constituencies have been victims of Hollywood's stereotypical lens. However, it is apparent that Hollywood filmmakers have reconsidered the way in which they have previously represented these people. According to Blauvelt (2008):

> We can trace shifts in patterns in media stereotyping. Now, while discerning viewers may shudder at the idea of African American actors relegated to playing main servants in Hollywood films through the 1950s, condemn Westerns for glorifying genocide of Native Americans, and loathe a frequently appearing Jewish pawnbroker stereotype … viewers easily accept as justifiable that Jack Bauer hang the Muslim terrorist who nuked Los Angeles in Season 6 of *24* or marvel at the lush visuals, catchy show tunes, and indeed casual racism of Disney's *Aladdin*.

The change in the way certain groups are represented in Hollywood productions is primarily due to the collective effort that people from within those groups have made. The organization of pressure groups, lobbies, awareness campaigns, and educational movements has been utilized in order to voice their opinions openly in regard to their representations in films. Although most alienated minority groups in Hollywood films have been vocal about their distorted images, Arabs, on the other hand, have remained to some extent timid in refuting these representations. As mentioned earlier, such resigned attitudes that nothing can be done were mentioned on several occasions by young Kuwaiti students that attended the FGDs. According to them, this hesitant attitude towards their image is the main reason why Arabs are still constantly stereotyped in films. In an interview conducted by Richard Curtiss and Delinda Hanley (2001), Jack Shaheen made the following statement:

The Arab-American community is to blame for remaining apathetic and silent and for not supporting ADC [American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee], which is committed to contesting hurtful stereotypes. Although the community is wealthy and well-educated, it has failed to lobby the entertainment industry. There should be an office in LA, near the makers of our myths, just as we have an office near the makers of our policy in Washington, DC.

FGD participants pointed out that Arab governments have not stepped up in a bid to curb the way their countries and people were being represented in Hollywood films. Participants were not shy in voicing their opinions about the weaknesses of their governments and their policies. They pointed out that they could not expect film studios to re-evaluate the way they represent Arabs in their film productions if Arabs did not let them know that they were unhappy with regard to such misrepresentations. Moreover, they emphasized that there were no effective movements to challenge the misinformed images that were being disseminated about Arabs, and as a result filmmakers do not feel pressured to correct them.

6.6.4 THE FILMMAKERS' AGENDA

Participants offered multiple reasons for why they believed filmmakers choose to make films that project Arabs in a certain stereotypical manner. Some participants suggested that filmmakers project Arabs and Muslims in an offensive and overtly negative way in order to shock people from Arab and Muslims countries. They mentioned the film *Innocence of Muslims* (2012), and they believed that the filmmaker simply wanted to be noticed, which he

ultimately was. Overnight, the entire Muslim world was aware of the film's director Mark Basseley Youssef.[43]

Participants also mentioned that since 9/11, terrorism has been a popular topic in the media, therefore it was no surprise that terrorist-themed films would be on the rise. They also explained that stereotypical images of Arabs were 'profitable', and as such were continuously used. Nearly all films revolve around 'good' versus 'bad' forces. Villains are needed to occupy the 'bad forces', and as Shaheen (2001) points out, Arabs have become convenient villains, and easy scapegoats.

Participants believed that the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films were driven by political objectives. They claimed that films were created with American audiences in mind, and that these films were made especially for them. While some messages may be directed towards Arabs, or to the rest of the world, the majority of the embedded messages that are sent out in films are directed at American audiences. "The media mediates, cultivating perceptions that have a profound and direct real-world impact" (Tehranian, 2008: 104). Participants maintained that the way Hollywood films represent Arabs is directly linked to American foreign affairs in the Middle East region. They believed that propagating images of Arabs and Muslims associated with extremism and terrorism would persuade audiences to be supportive of the real political actions that America takes in the Middle East.

It was apparent that participants were highly aware of Arab representations, and were keen on discussing their opinions regarding the matter. However, it must be emphasized that not all participants felt the same way. There were a few participants that took a different approach when negotiating the issue of Arab representations in Hollywood films. They thought that

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[43] Mark Basseley Youssef was formerly known as Nakoula Basseley Nakoula.

Arab depictions in films are not meant to be racist or prejudiced in nature. They believed that filmmakers were merely putting forward images that were already being circulated in the media, which were drawn from real-life events that have taken place.

The same participants also accused other participants of being too sensitive, and that the only reason they felt Arabs were being marginalized was because they themselves were Arabs. They stressed that most films consisted of villains and heroes, and that villains could be individuals from any country and racial background. The following excerpt was taken from a participant discussing this issue.

> I don't think the case is that they're only attacking Arabs specifically. I think in America it doesn't matter which group you attack [in the media]. Even Christians attack Jews, and other religions. I've seen films where they bash Buddhists; they don't only pick on Arabs. However, it's either that they have a specific goal in mind, or that they want to attract a certain group within society. It's not easy to specify what their objectives are. If their objectives were based specifically on demonizing one group, or worked in that direction, then their objectives would be clear. However, they bash on all religions, even on their own religion at the same time. I'm talking here from a religious aspect. From a political aspect, they bash on the policies of countries all over the world. However, we always see that they only direct such images at Arabs only.

(Participant 1: FGD 2)

Upon analyzing the FGDs it was obvious that the majority of the participants felt that the Western media purposely victimizes Arabs. Nevertheless, there were participants who tackled the issue of negative film depictions differently. Some participants, as can be seen from the excerpt, above were aware that Arabs were in fact not the only group to be marginalized and alienated in Hollywood films.

6.7 IMPORTANCE OF THE ARAB MARKET TO HOLLYWOOD

The issue of whether or not the Arab world is an important market for Hollywood films stirred a fruitful discussion. There were three main outcomes to this question. Some declared that it was an important market. Others dismissed this idea. While the remainder believed that it sometimes was an important market and at times was not.

Some participants believed that the Arab world was in fact an important target market for film revenues. Participant 1 (FGD 2) confirms this by stating that "we are important, very important; if we were not then they wouldn't keep portraying Arab characters in their films". However, others participants disagreed. One participant declared that "they don't portray us because we are important. They show us in their films to be a butt of their jokes. They portray Arabs as stupid, evil terrorists; that's all" (Participant 8: FGD 2).

Other participants believed that the Arab market is not always seen as an important target market for film sales. For instance, although the Arab market has strong film consumption levels, it is not strong enough to influence Hollywood films. Participants questioned why Hollywood did not consider Arab audiences when making films. Since many films are banned or heavily censored in Kuwait and the Middle East region due to sexual content, Participant 4: (FGD 3) pointed out that "if we were important to them [Hollywood studios] then they would consider our culture in order to ensure that films are shown in cinemas across Arab countries". In other words, if the Arab world were considered an important market for Hollywood productions, then it would only be logical for Hollywood studios to be considerate of regional norms and taboos to ensure that their productions are not banned from being shown in that region.

Participants were also asked why they believed Hollywood productions depict Arabs in shallow representations that lack diversity if in fact the Arab world was an important market for Hollywood film sales. They highlighted that people in the Gulf, and in Kuwait particularly, love watching films. As mentioned previously, Arab and Muslim countries constitute up to ten percent of Hollywood's total overseas profits (Shaheen, 2008). However, it was clear that the majority of the FGD participants were aware that the market was not strong enough to influence the way Hollywood represented Arabs in films. For instance, if the Arab world was a vital market for Hollywood productions, then Hollywood studios would be cautious not to upset Arabs because the banning of films considered offensive in the Arab world would mean significant losses for their producers. Another reason participants believed why Hollywood films do not reconsider the way they represent Arabs is because they know people in the Arab world will continue to buy and watch these films regardless of their representations.

Participants claimed that no one really cares about the way Arabs are represented in films except Arabs themselves, and even they are not vocal about their opinions towards these representations. Arab audiences are silent towards misguided representations and as a result filmmakers continue to recycle old Arab stereotypes in their films. In fact, some participants believed that Hollywood filmmakers choose to represent Arabs in a certain way on purpose. When participants were asked if they thought films containing Arab depictions were produced with Arab audiences in mind, one participant made the following statement:

> You have to know that filmmakers have their audiences in mind when making films. They know what they can get away with, and they know what their limits are. In the case of Arab representations they know that Arab audiences don't respond to these representations. We have to fix the problem from the beginning in order to see the

changes that we expect. When filmmakers see that there is a high demand for their films, and that there are no backlashes to the distorted representations in them, then why would they stop?

<div align="right">(Participant 5: FGD 3)</div>

The box office success of Arab terrorist-themed films, teamed with the silence of Arabs towards distorted representations, do not help to re-evaluate the way Hollywood depicts Arabs. Participants pointed out that Hollywood films continue to disseminate distorted representations of Arabs because very little is being done to effectively challenge the existing representations. They also mentioned that this was a way in which "they [the West] are controlling us [Arabs]" (Participant 5: FGD 3).

A diverse set of responses were given by participants when they were asked why they thought directors choose to show Arabs in a certain way. According to Participant 3 (FGD 3), "every director has his or her own agenda that serves to advance that agenda". Some participants believed that scriptwriters are paid by certain organizations to write in a certain way, or "are paid to depict certain things about Muslims, or Arabs" (Participant 1: FGD 3). However, others believed that directors had a more powerful role than scriptwriters when it came to the way certain people or groups were being represented. "The media has the power to show audiences what they want them to see. Regardless of what scriptwriters have written, at the end of the day it's the director that has the power to choose what they want audiences to see" (Participant 3: FGD 3).

Participants also highlighted that throughout history governments have been known to influence film directors and producers regarding the content of their productions. They believed that the US government has the power to shape public opinion by utilizing popular culture such as Hollywood films. Moreover, directors and producers themselves, like any

other individual, can be part of a group or organization that supports certain ideology. Thus they are able to disseminate their ideology through the films they make. Participants believed that directors were affected by many factors. One participant shared his personal experience of being a director for a local radio show.

> Directors are affected by many factors. I am a director of a radio show in Kuwait Radio, and I have to admit that management affects the work I present. They tell me, we want you to do this, this, and this. I am forced to work within the frame they have set for me. I'm talking about myself, which is very insignificant to the large-scale productions that they make. Their [film studios] policies work in the same way, so it's not surprising that they too are affected by what they have been told to do.

(Participant 5: FGD 3)

While many participants believed that the reason why Arabs were portrayed negatively in films was directly linked to political factors, some participants believed that there were other equally as important factors that encouraged the projection of Arabs in this way. Participants claimed that social and commercial reasons were also an important aspect behind the continuous distorted depictions. They believed that people had become accustomed to the misinformed representations of Arabs in films. These stereotypical representations are repeated so much that audiences often accept them as true Arab traits. For instance, because American audiences are so used to Arabs being represented in a certain way, audiences are less likely to accept a change in the representations or the introduction of new representations. Consequently, directors are not willing to take the risk of introducing new representations that audiences may not like, thus resulting in low-ticket sales. The film *Jinnah* (1998), which was mentioned earlier in chapter one, can be used as an example for how film distribution companies in America felt that films that projected positive depictions of Muslims were considered unsuitable for American audiences that were not accustomed to such

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representations. As a result, filmmakers opt to repeat stereotypical representations that audiences are accustomed to especially since film audiences have not confronted them regarding these depictions. In short, so long as these representations continue to make money, then filmmakers will continue to use them.

In general, the participants had a somewhat bleak perspective about the future of Arab representations in film. They suggested that if work began now on correcting the image of Arabs then "it will take us [Arabs] 10-15 years to barely be able to change our image in their [Westerners'] minds". The ways in which the portrayal of Arabs could be corrected will be discussed in the following section, which provides solutions for how Arabs governments can help negotiate with Hollywood studios regarding the way they depict Arabs in their films.

6.8   APPEALING FOR ACCURATE REPRESENTATIONS

This section is dedicated to discussing the participants' suggestions on how Hollywood representations of Arabs in films can be revised to project a fairer depiction of real Arabs. The participants' proposals varied from organizing protests, boycotting Hollywood productions, and developing the Kuwaiti film industry.

6.8.1 GOVERNMENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Participants believed that Arab governments should be more involved in taking a stand against films that promote negative stereotypical Arab representations. Arab foreign affairs departments need to be more involved in issues regarding the misrepresentations of Arabs.

Participants felt that Arab foreign affairs ministers needed to address these issues. They also felt that it was their duty as foreign affairs ministers to inform the American ambassador in their country that they were not pleased with the way Arab and/or Muslims were depicted in a particular film. It was apparent that participants were disappointed with local and regional Arab government bodies for not commenting on issues concerning the depictions of Arabs in Western media, and in Hollywood films in particular. As a result, participants believed that the silence of Arab governments only motivated people to protest in the streets against films that depict Arabs and Muslims negatively. Participants discussed various ways that they believed were suitable for Arabs to accomplish efficient protests against misleading and misinformed representations. Participants agreed that Arabs needed to respond in a well-organized manner to get their point across.

During the FGDs, participants spoke about several instances where Muslims and Arab-Muslims took to the streets in protest against controversial books (Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988), cartoons (the controversy over the Muhammad cartoons in the Danish newspaper in 2005), and films (*Innocence of Muslims* in 2012) that they considered offensive. One participant made the following statement:

> I think that the people that went to protest outside the embassies did so as a reaction only. It was definitely a reaction because they wanted the world to hear their message; that they were not going to be quiet. I support peaceful protests, but I don't support rallies where people end up being killed.
>
> (Participant 3: FGD 3)

The excerpt above illustrates that even though participants were unhappy with the negative representations of Muslims, they felt that the issue needed to be addressed in a well-organized manner in order to promote change. The way Arabs and Muslims react to representations that

upset or offend them must change for their message to be successfully heard. They felt that angry reactions towards distorted representations would cause more damage rather than good, especially since media outlets are more likely to report on the injuries and chaos that have been caused as a result of protests rather than the reasons behind them.

Participants also believed that one way to counter the attacks made towards Arabs and Muslims in films was to educate Western non-Muslims about Islam. They concluded that the way Arabs respond to their misrepresentation was important to correcting their image. They suggested that Arabs needed to respond to these distorted representations respectfully, even if filmmakers themselves did not treat them with the same respect. Furthermore, it was highlighted that finding solutions to Arab misrepresentations must be conducted in a peaceful manner in order not to validate the violent images that are often used to depict Arabs. Participant 6 (FGD 3) explained this point further by highlighting that "when you [Arabs] become violent and protest in that manner, you are simply proving them [the Westerner depictions of Arabs] right. We need to find a civilized way to find solutions to this issue".

6.8.2 DEVELOPING OUR OWN FILMS

It was acknowledged that the Kuwaiti film industry was trailing far behind many film industries around the world. "Our [Kuwaiti] cinema is weak; when you think of Arabic productions you only think of Egyptian productions" (Participant 1: FGD 3). For over 90 years, the most active film industry in the Arab world has been the Egyptian cinema (Farid, 1999). Participants pointed out that Kuwait did not have the same film production history that

Egypt and India have, and that it would take time, investment, and governmental support to raise Kuwait's cinema portfolio.

Participants believed that one way to fix the way Arabs are represented in films was to produce their own films, whereby they are able to create their own representations. Although this is one way to tackle the current problem, there are various limitations and obstacles that may hinder the success of this proposal. The first is the fact that the Kuwaiti film industry is not as experienced as other film industries around the world. However, this does not mean that Kuwait should not start to develop its film industry; it only means that the push for a change in the way Arabs are represented through the development of the Arabic film industry will take longer.

The development of the Kuwaiti film industry will lessen the reliance on Egyptian productions, which also tend to disseminate stereotypical images of Kuwaitis and other members of the GCC. During the FGDs, participants were asked why they believed Kuwait did not have a thriving film industry. Limitations linked to the lack of Kuwaiti film professionals, the lack in the government's role of supporting the local film industry, and the inappropriate filming conditions in Kuwait were some of the issues raised by the participants. Some participants claimed that there weren't many Kuwaiti directors that could produce world-class films, while others asserted that "we [Kuwaitis] lack initiative" (Participant 6: FGD 3).

Participant 2 (FGD 3) claimed that "the answer is very obvious…they [American filmmakers] are supported by the government. However, Kuwaiti filmmakers are not supported here [in Kuwait]". This statement was especially interesting in that a similar response was given to me by two of the most well-known names in the local film production scene in Kuwait: Naif Al-

Mutawa and Wald Al-Awadi. During the individual interviews I conducted with them, they both emphasized that the Kuwaiti government provided them very little support in their film production endeavours. They claimed that their work was underestimated, and that they were sometimes even attacked as a result of their productions. For instance, Naif Al-Mutawa was criticized by many Islamic clerics regarding his fictional Islamic superheroes. Many people in Kuwait did not receive well the Islamic connotations used as the framework for his comic. In fact, the film version of the comic entitled *The 99: Unbound* (2011) was only shown in a private screening under the patronage of the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah.

Another obstacle that faces Kuwaiti filmmakers is Kuwait's narrow geographical and metropolitan nature. Kuwait is not very well suited for film productions due to its very limited geographical terrain, which makes it difficult for filmmakers to show the diverse set of scenes that are often needed in film productions.

> India has a history of film production, and the same goes for Egyptian productions. Kuwait is very far behind because we don't have the same kind of history that they have in the filmmaking industry. Bollywood has a history in filmmaking; they have invested in money, time, and effort. They also have the suitable setting to make films. India as a country is geographically suitable for film productions. In contrast, what do we have here in Kuwait? Where will you shoot the scenes, in Mubarkiya [an old bazaar in Kuwait (*sarcasm*)]?

> (Participant 5: FGD 3)

According to some participants, Kuwait's film industry is weak due to the lack of investment in the local film industry. Unlike India and Egypt, that have invested large sums towards the development of their film industries, Kuwait has very few production houses that specialize in creating full feature films. As mentioned in chapter two, which looks into the background of

cinema terrain in Kuwait, the majority of the media production houses in Kuwait are more focused on producing Kuwaiti soap operas that are very popular in the GCC region.

It is obvious that developing a thriving local film industry will take time. However, it is important to emphasize that the outcomes of investing in the local film industry will eventually prove to be beneficial in correcting the misinformed representations of Arabs that have been disseminated in Hollywood films for over a century. The work of local Kuwaiti filmmakers would offer worldwide audiences a refreshing, more authentic portrayal of Arabs, which would challenge those projected in Western productions.

6.8.3 BOYCOTTING HOLLYWOOD PRODUCTIONS

Another way participants believed could put pressure on Hollywood filmmakers to reconsider the way they represent Arabs in films is by banning films, and boycotting Hollywood studios that produce and disseminate misleading images of Arabs. This suggestion was raised in every FGD. However, most participants agreed that while this was one way to approach the problem, it was not the most efficient solution.

Some participants suggested that films that depict Arabs negatively should be banned from being shown in cinemas in Kuwait. Others, however, had a stricter approach, whereby they suggested that film studios as a whole should be boycotted if they produced films that misrepresented Arabs. During the discussions, a number of participants pointed out that boycotting Hollywood studios would result in a loss of profit for the already very few Kuwaiti businessmen involved in the cinema scene in Kuwait. However, others members of the FGD were quick to emphasize that the representation of Arabs was more important than the profits

that were to be made by cinema investors. When discussing this point Participant 4 (FGD 3) stressed that "we shouldn't care about them [Kuwaiti cinema businessmen]", and that they as Arab businessmen must realize that standing up to Arab misrepresentations is more important than making profits. Nevertheless, it must also be highlighted that it is not possible to boycott films, due to contractual obligations and agreements that cinema companies have with major studios.

On the whole, the majority suggested that banning films that specifically depicted Arabs negatively was a more reasonable action than boycotting entire film studios.

> There are many solutions, and as my colleagues highlighted, boycott is one of them. However, I don't think that boycotting certain Hollywood studios will impact them very much because they care more about Western markets. It's true that they distribute their films to the entire world. However, their main targets are the Western audiences. What we can do as Arabs is simply ban films that depict us negatively.
>
> (Participant 3: FGD 3)

Throughout the discussions it was evident that participants felt that Hollywood productions were created with Western audiences in mind. As highlighted by Participant 3 in the statement above, boycotting film studios that produce tainted images of Arabs is not an effective solution because Arab audiences are not their main target audience. Therefore, even if Arab countries cut all ties with certain film studios that have a tendency to produce misleading films, audiences from around the world will still be able to see the distorted representations of Arabs that those film productions contain.

Moreover, participants stressed that boycotting Hollywood productions was an unrealistic solution because of how easy it was for people in Kuwait to obtain and watch films through other means besides cinemas. Simply ignoring films is not possible. Kuwaiti film viewers

would seek to watch these productions by buying pirated versions of films that are easily available in DVD shops around Kuwait. The demand for Hollywood productions is so widespread within the Kuwaiti population, and especially with younger people, that one participant compared the banning of Hollywood films to cigarettes, stating that is was "like placing a ban on cigarettes; cigarette addicts will always find a way to get a hold of them" (Participant 8: FGD 3).

6.9   PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

This section explores how Kuwaiti audiences believe Hollywood representations of Arabs have had an affect on their lives. Added attention is given to the participants' travel experiences, because results show that participants often felt that they were more likely to be discriminated against when travelling to Western countries. Issues regarding the extent to which participants feel they have personally been affected by the images of Arabs in films, and the ways in which participants feel the representations affect them are investigated.

Results from both surveys and focus group discussions indicate that the majority of participants did not think that the images of Arabs in films had a direct effect on their everyday lives. However, they believed that it affected them in various other ways. Overall, female participants were more likely to response with 'yes' to the following three questions – Q28 – Do you think that the images of Arabs in films have had an effect on your life personally?; Q30 – Do you ever feel that your treatment abroad is linked to your Arab origin?; Q31 – Do you think your treatment while abroad is in anyway related to the representation of

Arabs in films? Tables 19, 20, and 21 below show a breakdown of the responses given by both male and female participants to the three questions mentioned above.

Table 19: Do you think that the images of Arabs in films have had an effect on your life personally?

RESPONSE %	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Yes	8	14	22
No	31	37	68
Not Sure	4	5	10
Total	44	56	100

Table 20: Do you ever feel that your treatment abroad is linked to your Arab origin?

RESPONSE %	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Yes	16	23	39
No	9	8	17
Not Sure	19	25	44
Total	44	56	100

Table 21: Do you think your treatment while abroad is in anyway related to the representation of Arabs in films?

RESPONSE %	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Yes	16	21	37
No	9	13	22
Sometimes	4	5	9
Maybe	15	17	32
Total	44	56	100

As can be seen from the results above, female participants were more likely to notice a difference in treatment whenever they travelled abroad.

The same questions were raised in the focus group discussions in order to gather more details on how participants felt they were treated differently in non-Arab countries. There were two very contradicting responses that were given when participants were asked if they ever felt that their treatment abroad was linked to their Arab origin. The majority of the male participants claimed that they did not sense a difference in treatment because of their origins.

However, female participants claimed that they did indeed feel they were treated differently because of their *hijabs* [religious headscarves used to cover hair], which they believed triggered an immediate signal that they were foreigners. One participant claimed, "we wear *hijabs*; they know we are Arabs, it's more obvious" (Participant 7: FGD 1). In response to this statement, one male participant said, "Yes, you're right. I see your point. The *hijab* is a giveaway; when I'm with my family I do notice a change in their behaviour towards us" (Participant 4: FGD 1).

Unlike Muslim Arab women who cover their hair for religious reasons no matter where they travel in the world, most Arab men do not wear their traditional attire when travelling to non-Arab countries. It is difficult for people to detect whether or not someone is an Arab without the very basic and obvious characteristics of Arab men that most people are accustomed to seeing in the media, such as the long beard and the traditional clothing and headgear. It is common for Arab men to swap their long white *dishdashas* [traditional garment worn by Arab men] for a more Western, casual look during their visits to Western countries. This is the most likely reason why most male participants did not feel like they were treated differently when abroad.

Although not all Kuwaiti Muslim women wear the *hijab*, the majority however does. Out of the 24 female participants that took part in the FGDs, only 3 did not wear the *hijab*. Most of the female participants mentioned their *hijabs* as being one of the main reasons for being identified as a Muslim Arab. They believed that this connection often led to the difference in their treatment. However, it must be emphasized that the issue of the *hijab* was linked to both positive and negative experiences. Some of the negative experiences that female participants shared were related to exploitation. Participants claimed that because of their headscarves it

was obvious for others to assume that they were Arabs, and consequently people would automatically assume that they were rich. The following excerpt was taken from a participant that shared her experience with a French taxi driver in Paris:

> We once took a taxi from our hotel to Champs-Élysées. Upon our arrival we noticed that the asking price was not the usually price we paid every day. We were shocked at how much more he had charged us, and we asked him how he had come up with that price! We explained to him that we always paid this amount of money. He turned to us and said: "You have petrol and you're sitting here arguing with me about the price!"

(Participant 6: FGD1)

It was evident that participants believed that most Westerners had the impression that Arabs were wealthy. "They think we have oil under our homes!" (Participant 5: FGD 1). Nearly all of the participants agreed that most Westerners had this impression of Arabs. However, they also acknowledged that it was not only Westerners that had this idea about Arabs. One participant shared her experience in Turkey where the locals would often stop to ask her and her sisters where they were from. "When we informed them that we were from Kuwait they would respond by saying, 'Oh Kuwait, oil, rich, money!'" (Participant 2: FGD 1). A recurring pattern highlighted by participants was that non-Arabs would often assume they were rich as soon as they realized that they were Arabs. Consequently, one of their concerns was that people would often try to take advantage of them. It must be noted, that participants were also vocal in pointing out that they often feel exploited when visiting other non-Gulf Arab countries too. Participants explained that Arabs, for example, from Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt also had the impression that *Khaleejis* are rich, and would often try to take advantage of them.

During a discussion participant 6 (FGD 3) shared a shocking story about her aunt who used to live in America, and how a Mexican shop assistant pointed a gun at her when she walked into

the supermarket. Since then her aunt has moved to the United Kingdom where she now works in criminal law medicine. She asserted that:

> The treatment of people who look Arab, or those that wear the *hijab* is very different in the United Kingdom than in America. What is the difference between the two? The media in America is basically used as a propaganda tool that is driven by very strong political powers … However, in Britain the situation is more diluted. You can say that there has been an intensive cultural exchange. There are also many Arabs who live in Britain.

According to a research study conducted by Ipsos MORI, only 1% of America's population is Muslim, whereas 5% of Britain's population is Muslim (Nardelli and Arnett, 2014). Consequently, it is more likely for a British person to have personally met and come across Muslims than an American. This is important because as mentioned earlier, those who have no experience with Arabs or Muslims are more likely to be influenced by the distorted representations perpetuated in the media. It is also worth highlighting that Britain is a popular holiday destination for many Middle Easterners, to due to the fact that Britain is closer to the Middle East than America. Statistics show that in 2013, approximately 641,000 visits were made to the UK from the Middle East (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Overall, 42% of inbound visitors to the UK from the Middle East were on holiday (VisitBritain, 2013).

On the other hand, participants also shared some of their more positive encounters regarding non-Arab-Muslims and their *hijabs*. Female participants claimed that when travelling abroad some people would approach them and ask them questions regarding their *hijabs*. "They ask us about the *hijab*, and why we wear it. Many times people would compliment us on it … so sometimes the experience is positive" (Participant 5: FGD 1). Another participant shared her experience when she and her friends were approached by a group of Chinese tourists in France who wanted to take a photo with them.

We asked them why they wanted to take a photograph with us, and they said that they wanted to show their family back home. Personally, I think it was because we looked so strange to them. My friends and I found the situation hilarious; we agreed to take some photos with them, and we started to talk. They were fascinated with our headscarves, and wanted to know more about it. So it's true, it's not always a negative thing, and at times can be positive.

(Participant 6: FGD 1)

Similar to the female participants, male participants would link the effects of how Arabs are represented in films to the way they were treated when travelling to non-Arab countries. Participant 8 (FGD 3) describes the treatment of Arabs in airports as "very annoying". Participants claimed that the thought of travelling to Western countries, and going through the airport-check experience, would make them anxious even though they had nothing to hide.

The way Arabs are represented in films affects us the most when we travel … when I travel, I think about how I have to represent myself on behalf of all Arabs. I think about how I need to communicate with them. I want to be the exact opposite of the images of Arabs that they have seen in the media.

(Participant 3: FGD 3)

The statement mentioned above demonstrates how conscious young Kuwaitis are towards their image in the minds of Westerners. This awareness prompts a sense of responsibility whereby they feel obligated to prove the misrepresentations wrong.

Participants associated travelling to Western countries with intensive questioning, rigorous searches, and preconceived judgments. Results show that the male participants that claimed that they felt they were treated differently when travelling abroad often linked their encounters to airport security experiences. Participant 1 (FGD 2) shared a story of how he and his brothers were frisk-checked and held for six hours in a secluded questioning room inside

the airport upon their arrival in America. He claimed that they were not questioned, and that the airport security only told them to wait in the room while they checked their bags. "I think they do that all the time, especially if the passenger was an Arab". Participant 6 (FGD 2) added, "even if you don't look Arab - I mean some Kuwaitis don't look like they're Kuwaitis but as soon as they [airport security] see the Kuwaiti passport [clicks his fingers]". The rest of the sentence was continued by another participant that said, "they would immediately have a preconceived judgment of you" (Participant 2: FGD 2).

Although Participant 1 (FGD 2) had an unpleasant experience in the airport, he emphasized that he did not feel Americans treated him differently once he was in America. He rationalized his experience in the airport and stated that:

> I don't think it's a problem within the American society itself. If these things occur in the airport then they are most likely happening because of certain protocols. For instance, security personnel are given orders to thoroughly check Arab-looking passengers in the airport. It's simply an order; it's not that the employee has any personal opinions against you. As I mentioned earlier, I stayed in America for an entire year, and I have never come across an American that has personally treated me in a certain way because I was an Arab.

During the discussions participants mentioned an American hidden camera television show called *Primetime: What Would You Do?* "Using hidden cameras, *What Would You Do?* establishes everyday scenarios and then captures people's reactions. Whether people are compelled to act or mind their own business, John Quiñones reports on their split-second and often surprising decision-making process" (ABC, 2014). The participants discussed one episode in particular where a Muslim woman wearing a *hijab* was trying to buy some pastries from a small-town bakery. However, the prejudiced shop owner refuses to serve her because of her *hijab*. Although the entire scenario is set up, customers in the store are not aware that

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the Muslim woman and the sales assistant are both actors. The aim was to see how other customers would react to the situation. It was clear that some customers supported the assistant's actions, while others were furious. "This show demonstrates how people in one community can think very differently from each other" (Participant 2: FGD 3).

After discussing the show briefly, Participant 3 (FGD 3) shared his story of how a British family stood up for him and his elderly father when a group of Americans laughed at his father's *dishdasha* [traditional garment worn by Arab men].

> My father was in London for medical treatment, and as you know London is well known for being a medical treatment hub for Arabs. We went to a very popular Arabic café, and standing inside was a group of young Americans. My father, being an older man, refuses to wear anything but his *dishdasha*, and as we passed them they pointed at him and said 'Oh Arabs, Arabs, Arabs', and then they started to laugh. We laughed back at them; even my father laughed. But what happened next surprised us all. A British family that was sitting inside went over to the Americans and scolded them for laughing at my father. They angrily told them to show some respect!

In brief, participants did not feel that the images of Arabs perpetuated in Hollywood films had a direct affect on their personal day-to-day lives. As Participant 4 (FGD 3) highlighted, "it does not affect our everyday lives, but it affects us in various other ways" often concerned with travelling, and meeting new people. Participants claim that they prefer to meet people that were not familiar with Arabs, because they feel that what they would know about Arabs would often be the media's distorted version of Arabs. Participants also feel a responsibility to present themselves decently on behalf of all Arabs by proving to non-Arabs that they are very different from the negative images that are often linked to Arab characters in films.

6.10 Summary

Primarily, this chapter has presented a detailed analysis of the data that was collected from all three methods of data collection used in this study: surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews. Key themes were extracted from the raw data accumulated by the researcher and were developed further. This chapter offered a detailed examination of the participants' film viewing habits, which looked into the tradition of going to cinemas in Kuwait. Issues regarding how film audiences in Kuwait purchase, watch, and enjoy films were also covered. The chapter also offers a rich insight into the way Kuwaiti film viewers observe and negotiate the image of Arabs in film. Their interpretations of Arab representations in Hollywood films, along with the rationale they provide for such representations, are discussed extensively throughout the chapter. The issue of film censorship in the State of Kuwait, and the ways in which film viewers overcome strict censorship protocol are also investigated in depth. The information in this chapter contributes to the generally neglected body of knowledge regarding film-viewing habits in the Middle East, and in Kuwait specifically.

It is anticipated that the research conducted in this study and the data collected for the purpose of illuminating the topic of Arab representations and stereotypes in Western media will pave the way for more research to be carried out on the topic in future. Taking the findings made in this study and moving forward in the debate will draw a more authentic critique of the Arab perspective on issues related to their representation in Hollywood films. While it is not realistic to expect immediate major changes to be made in the way Arabs are portrayed in film, it is however, necessary to continue working towards challenging these representations in order for change to be achieved. Keeping in mind early Hollywood depictions of Native Americans as 'barbaric savages', and Black people as being 'naïve' and 'primitive', history

has proven that only by educating audiences and drawing attention to the prejudices projected bluntly in many Hollywood films can we expect filmmakers to reconsider the representations of the people they project in their films. While this study answers many questions on the topic, many more questions are raised. It is hoped that this study will be used as a springboard for future studies. Suggestions and recommendations for further research are provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief summary of the study. This is followed by a consideration of the study's limitations, and then a section containing recommendations for future research.

7.1   RESEARCH SUMMARY

There are many studies that have been conducted which explore the nature of Arab representations in Western media, and in Hollywood films in particular. However, unlike other studies, this thesis looks into the issue of representation from the perspective of young Kuwaitis. While some scholars have explored how distorted representations of Arabs have affected Arabs living in America, very little is known about how Arab audiences in Arab nations receive such depictions. This study has attempted to investigate the way in which Kuwaiti film viewers observe and interpret Hollywood's representation of Arabs. Using surveys and focus group discussions, information regarding Arab portrayals in films, and in-depth discussions of Arab representations were collected.

Upon analyzing survey responses, it is clear that Kuwaiti audiences are fond of Hollywood films. According to the results collected, 95% of all participants chose Hollywood films as their favourite productions. Nevertheless, when asked if they thought the images of Arabs in Hollywood films were generally accurate, 72% believed that the representations of Arabs were inaccurate. Moreover, the vast majority of participants (82%) believed that the image of Arabs in Hollywood films was generally negative. Even though the majority of the participants were aware of the injustice in these representations of Arabs, they still loved watching Hollywood films due to the quality of the productions, and because their favourite film stars. It was clear that Kuwaiti audiences are aware of the representations perpetuated by Hollywood films. They provided various reasons for why they believe such depictions exist. The strong Jewish presence in America's film industry, along with American interests in the Middle East were among the two most debated topics within the focus group discussions. In order to know more about the way Arabs living in Arab nations view their image in Hollywood films, it is hoped that this study is used as a template for other researchers to replicate in various other Arab countries.

Furthermore, it was necessary to address the topic of how Kuwaiti audiences come into contact with Hollywood films in order to discuss issues related to Arab representations. For the sake of this study, primary research in the form of interviews was conducted to gather information regarding Kuwait's film and cinema terrain. Since there is very limited documented data about the Kuwaiti film industry, it is hoped that this study serves as a source of knowledge for those interested in the way films are imported and processed in Kuwait, and in the Gulf countries.

7.2 STUDY LIMITATIONS

As with all research studies, this study was not conducted without certain limitations. The main limitations identified in this research are directly related to the particular nature of the participants that took part in the study. In view of the fact that the participants that took part in the study were limited only to Arabs from a certain country (Kuwait), and of a specific age group (18-24), it is acknowledged that a large portion of the Arab population that was neither Kuwaiti nor between the ages of 18 and 24 was excluded from taking part in the study. Nevertheless, it was with deep thought that such restrictions were placed on the participants. A detailed rationale for the criteria used for the participant target sample is provided in the methodology chapter (chapter four).

While a study that includes Arab participants from various Arab nations, and of all age groups would have provided fruitful data for analysis, it would however not have been possible due to time constraints that would have restricted the researcher's ability to conduct the research in various Arab countries. Acknowledging these limitations leads to suggestions that pave the way for future research, which will be discussed in the following section.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As mentioned earlier, this study focuses specifically on how films are imported and shown to audiences in Kuwait. Furthermore, the study concentrates exclusively on the perspective of young educated Kuwaitis regarding the way they view and interpret Arab representations in the Hollywood films they watch. While this study does not promise to investigate how non-

Kuwaitis negotiate their image in Hollywood films, it does offer suggestions for further research. Two main recommendations for further research are discussed below.

7.3.1 AGE GROUP COMPARISONS

Although it was not within the scope of this study, it would be interesting to research the same topic but with various age groups. For instance, the opinions of participants from an older target group (Arab men and women in their 40s and 50s) would probably produce different results from those collected from 18-24 year old university students. Arab participants from older age groups that were present throughout various key historic events that took place in the Arab world are likely to produce insightful information regarding how they negotiate Arab representations in Western media, and in Hollywood films in particular.

The Arab world witnessed many geographical, economic, religious, and political developments between 1970 and 1990. Older age groups (40-60) have witnessed the independence of many Arab countries (Syria, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain) during the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, this age group is more aware of a number of wars and conflicts that have occurred in the region. Memorable events include the 1973 to 1974 oil embargo on nations that supported Israel, the six-day war between Israel, Egypt, Syria and Jordan in 1967, the rise of Iran's new government under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 1982, the Iranian-Iraqi war from 1980 to 1987, the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and even the Arab Spring in 2011.

The ways in which these events, along with many others, may have an influence on the manner this age group views the West, and how the West represents Arabs in their films

would be interesting to explore. A study that investigates how participants from older Arab generations negotiate and interpret Arab representations in Hollywood films would prove to be a valuable source of information that can be analyzed and contrasted with the opinions of younger generations that may have not been subjected to as many wars and conflicts as their older counterparts.

7.3.2 COUNTRY COMPARISONS

In addition to different age groups, conducting a study that includes participants from various other countries within the Middle East would also be an interesting step to take. Contrary to Hollywood films' homogeneous approach in representing the Middle East, the Arab world is diverse on multiple levels. Countries in the Arab-world have very different political, economic, historical, religious, and cultural differences. As such, conducting a pan-Arab study that not only includes oil-wealthy GCC states, but also other Arab countries such as Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq would serve as a foundation for which data could be used as a source of comparison.

Participant results collected from different Arab countries regarding how their citizens negotiate the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films could be analyzed according to various contexts. For instance, from a political and historical perspective it would be interesting to investigate how the opinions of individuals from countries that have had direct conflicts and wars would differ from the opinions of those that have not been subjected to conflicts. An example would be Palestine and Iraq in contrast to Oman and Qatar respectively.

Furthermore, the ways in which Hollywood films are imported and censored in the Middle East differ from one country to another. For instance, as mentioned earlier, there are no cinemas in Saudi Arabia. However, Saudis are able to watch Hollywood films via satellite channels for free, or on pay-TV channels. On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates has the largest chain of cinema theatres in the Middle East (Grand Cinemas). Film censorship processes in the United Arab Emirates are known to be more lenient in comparison to other countries in the Middle East. This is due to various factors, such as the correct implementation of film ratings, strict laws against piracy, and a more relaxed censorship approach. Therefore, an in-depth investigation of how films are imported and censored in countries across the Middle East would benefit the very limited research available on the topics of film viewing, and censorship in the Arab world.

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24 (dir. Bryan Spicer, USA, 2007)

A Café in Cairo (dir. Chester Withey, USA, 1924)

Air Marshal (dir. Alain Jakubowicz, USA, 2003)

Al-Dinjwana (dir. Faisal Shams, Kuwait, 2009)

Aladdin (dir. Ron Clements and John Musker, USA, 1992)

American Sniper (dir. Clint Eastwood, USA, 2014)

Babel (dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu, USA, 2006)

Bas Ya Bahar (dir. Khalid Al- Sadeeg, Kuwait, 1971)

Basic Training (dir. Andrew Sugerman, USA, 1985)

Black Hawk Down (dir. Ridley Scott, USA, 2001)

Black Sunday (dir. John Frankenheimer, USA, 1977)

Bulletproof (dir. Steve Carver, USA, 1988)

Cabaret (dir. Bob Fosse, USA, 1972)

Captured by Bedouins (dir. Sidney Olcott, USA, 1912)

Casablanca (dir. Michael Curtiz, USA, 1942)

Cast a Giant Shadow (dir. Melville Shavelson, USA, 1966)

Clash of the Titans (dir. Louis Leterrier, USA, 2010)

Cute (dir. Hasan Ibrahim, Kuwait, 2008)

Death Before Dishonor (dir. Terry Leonard, USA, 1987)

District B13 (dir. Pierre Morel, France, 2004)

Eagles Attack at Dawn (dir. Menahem Golan, Israel, 1970)

East of Sudan (dir. Nathan Juran, UK, 1964)

Executive Decision (dir. Stuart Baird, USA, 1996)

Exodus (dir. Otto Preminger, USA, 1960)

Fast Five (dir. Justin Lin, USA, 2011)

Father of the Bride Part II (dir. Charles Shyer, USA, 1995)

Fatwa (dir. John Carter, USA, 2006)

Full Disclosure (dir. John Bradshaw, Canada, 2001)

Green Zone (dir. Paul Greengrass, France, USA, Spain, UK, 2010)

Hello Cairo (dir. Ayman Makram, Kuwait, 2011)

Hercules (dir. Ron Clements and John Musker, USA, 1997)

Ilsa, Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks (dir. Don Edmonds, Canada and USA, 1976)

Innocence of Muslims (dir. Mark Basseley Youssef, USA, 2012)

Jarhead (dir. Sam Mendes, Germany and USA, 2005)

Jinnah (dir. Jamil Dehlavi, UK and Pakistan, 1998)

Johnny English Reborn (dir. Oliver Parker, USA, France, UK, 2011)

Kingdom of Heaven (dir. Ridley Scott, USA, UK, Spain, Germany, Morocco, 2005)

Lawrence of Arabia (dir. David Lean, UK, 1962)

Legion of Missing Men (dir. Hamilton MacFadden, USA, 1937)

Losing Ahmad (dir. Abdullah Boushahri, Kuwait, 2006)

Ma'atoog fee Bangkok (dir. Mazen Al- Jabeeli, Kuwait, 2010)

Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol (dir. Brad Bird, USA, United Arab Emirates, Czech

> Republic, 2011)

Mooz-lum (dir. Qasim Basir, USA, 2010)

Navy Seals (dir. Lewis Teague, USA, 1990)

Network (dir. Sidney Lumet, USA, 1976)

Never Say Never Again (dir. Irvin Kershner, UK and USA, 1986)

Noah (dir. Darren Aronofsky, USA, 2014)

Paradise Now (dir. Hany Abu-Assad, Palestine, France, Germany, Netherlands, Israel, 2005)

Protocol (dir. Herbert Ross, USA, 1984)

Raid on Entabbe (dir. Irvin Kershner, USA, 1977)

Red Mercury (dir. Roy Batterby, UK, 2005)

Rollover (dir. Alan J. Pakula, USA, 1981)

Rosebud (dir. Otto Preminger, USA, 1975)

Rules of Engagement (dir. William Friedkin, USA, 2000)

Sahara (dir. Andrew V. McLaglen, UK and USA, 1983)

Saw (dir. James Wan, USA and Australia, 2004)

Saw 3D (dir. Kevin Greutert, USA and Canada, 2010)

Saw II (dir. Darrn Lynn Bousman, USA and Canada, 2005)

Saw III (dir. Darrn Lynn Bousman, USA and Canada, 2006)

Saw IV (dir. Darrn Lynn Bousman, USA and Canada, 2008)

Saw VI (dir. Kevin Greutert, Canada, USA, UK, Australia, 2009)

Shabab Cool (dir. Mohammed Dahaam Al- Shammeri, Kuwait, 2007)

Skyfall (dir. Sam Mendes, UK and USA, 2012)

Syriana (dir. Stephen Gaghan, USA and United Arab Emirates, 2005)

Taken (dir. Pierre Morel, France, USA, UK, 2008)

Taken 2 (dir. Olivier Megaton, France, 2012)

Team America: World Police (dir. Trey Parker, USA and Germany, 2004)

The 99: Unbound (dir. Dave Osborne, Kuwait and UK, 2011)

The Belles of St. Trinian's (dir. Frank Launder, UK, 1954)

The Boost (dir. Harold Becker, USA, 1988)

The Crusades (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, USA, 1935)

The Delta Force (dir. Menahem Golan, USA and Israel, 1986)

The Dictator (dir. Larry Charles, USA, 2012)

The Exorcist (dir. William Friedkin, USA, 1973)

The Finest Hour (dir. Shimon Dotan, USA, 1992)

The Four Feathers (dir. Shekhar Kapur, USA and UK, 2002)

The Garden of Allah (dir. Richard Boleslawski, USA, 1936)

The Hangover (dir. Todd Phillips, USA and Germany, 2009)

The Hangover Part II (dir, Todd Phillips, USA, 2011)

The Help (dir. Tate Taylor, USA, India, United Arab Emirates, 2012)

The Kingdom (dir. Peter Berg, USA and Germany, 2007)

The Lad and the Lion (dir. Alfred E. Green, USA, 1917)

The Network (dir. Sidney Lumet, USA, 1976)

The Passion of the Christ (dir. Mel Gibson, USA, 2004)

The Point Men (dir. John Glen, USA, France, Luxembourg, 2001)

The Princess and the Frog (dir. Ron Clements and John Musker, USA, 2009)

The Queen (dir. Stephen Frears, UK, USA, France, Italy, 2006)

The Sheik (dir. George Melford, USA, 1921)

The Siege (dir. Edward Zwick, USA, 1998)

The Son of Tarzan (dir. Arthur J. Flaven and Harry Revier, USA, 1920)

The Son of the Sheik (dir. George Fitzmaurice, USA, 1926)

The Stone Merchant (dir. Renzo Martinelli, Italy and UK, 2006)

The Sum of All Fears (dir. Phil Alden Robinson, USA and Germany, 2002)

The Thief of Baghdad (dir. Raoul Walsh, USA, 1924)

Three Kings (dir. David O. Russell, USA, 1999)

Tora Bora (dir. Walid Al-Awadi, Kuwait, 2011)

Tripoli (dir. Will Price, USA, 1950)

True Lies (dir. James Cameron, USA, 1994)

Victory at Entabbe (dir. Marvin J. Chomsky, USA, 1976)

Warhead A.K.A. *Prisoner in the Middle* (dir. John O'Connor, USA, 1977)

X-Large (dir. Sherif Arafa, Egypt, 2011)

Zero Dark Thirty (dir. Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 2012)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: KUWAIT NATIONAL CINEMA COMPANY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- ٤ -

أعضـاء مجلس الادارة

الرئيس	السيد يوسف عبد العزيز الفليج
نائب الرئيس	السيد بدر السالم العبد الوهاب
عضو	السيد نصف اليوسف النصف
عضو	السيد حمـود الزيـد الخـالد
عضو	السيد يعقوب يوسف الحمد
عضو	السيد خالد سليمان العدساني
عضو	السيد محمد عبد الرحمن البحر
عضو	السيد فهـد المرزوق
عضو	السيد يوسف ابراهيم الغانم
عضو	السيد خليفة خالد الغنيم

الادارة العـامة

المدير العام	السيد يوسف حمـد المير
نائب المدير العام	السيد حسين محمد منيب
مدير الحسابات	السيد ايمن عبد الاله الملوحي

مدققي الحسابات
سابا وشركاهم — الكويت

This page was taken from Kuwait National Cinema Company's first annual report (1954-1955). It lists names of the cinema company's board of directors and general managers.

APPENDIX 2: KUWAIT NATIONAL CINEMA COMPANY EXHIBIT PICTURES

The pictures above are an overall view of the Cinescape display in 360 Mall.

1950's 11/08/2013 17:47

1960's 11/08/2013 17:45

1990's 11/08/2013 17:43

2002 11/08/2013 17:42

The above pictures were taken from the types of seats display, which showcased the development of Cinescape's seats.

Above is a poster of the development of Kuwait National Cinema Company's logo.
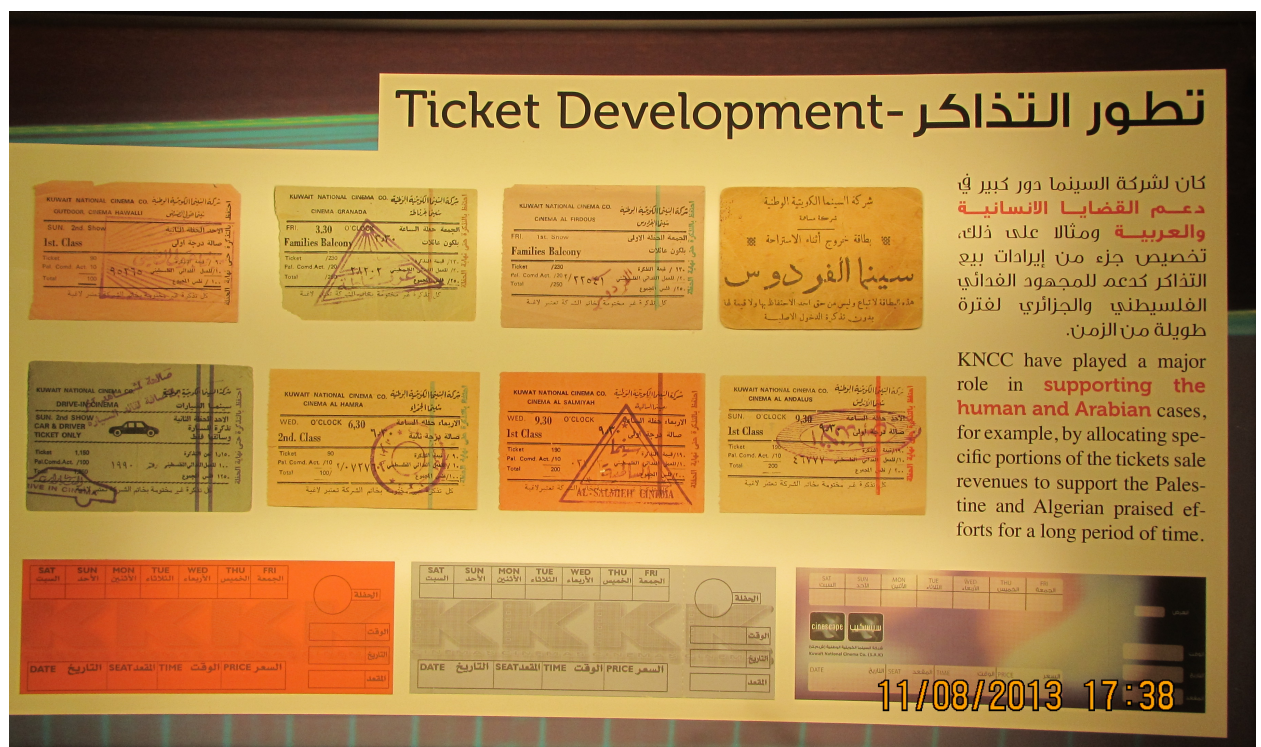
Above is a poster of the development of the cinema company's tickets.

Photos of old documents, including the cinema company's exclusivity contract that was given to the businessmen by the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah.

The pictures above and those presented on pages 278-283 show the chronological display of the cinema company's development over the years.

The Renaissance - النهضة 1961

افتتاح اشهر واكبر سينما بالكويت وهي سينما **الأندلس**. وقد اكتسبت أهميتها بسبب موقعها الجغرافي وسط الكويت وكأكبر سينما في عدد المقاعد حيث كانت تسع لعدد 2000 مقعد.

كـانت سينما **الأندلــس** الوجهـة الرئيسية لاستقطاب أهم الأعمال الفنية والمسرحية والاحتفالات الوطنية.

The most famous and biggest theatre in Kuwait **Al Andalus** was opened. It gained its reputation from being located in the heart of Kuwait city and from having the largest seats number, which used to fit 2000 seats.

Al Andalus theatre was the main destination to attract the most famous performances and national celebrations.

11/08/2013 15:58

The Renaissance - النهضة 1963-77

ومن الأسماء التي غنت على خشبة مسرح **الاندلس** كوكب الشرق أم كلثوم في عام 1963 حيث كانت أولى حفلاتها خارج مصر وعادت أيضا في عام 1968. كما غنى سيد مكاوي والملحن بليغ حمدي حيث كانت التجربة الاولى له في الغناء على خشبة مسرح. وفي العام 1963 غنى على خشبتها ناظم الغزالي للكويت وأميرها. في عام 1966 زارت السيدة فيروز الكويت وغنت لها مع نصري شمس الدين وغيره.وفي العام 1971 تم عرض فيلم "بس يا بحر" للمخرج القدير خالد الصديق في سينما الاندلس. وكما زار الكويت لاول مرة فرقة بوني إم في عام 1977. وقدموا عرضهم الشهيرة على مسرح هذه السينما بالاضافة الى عدد كبير من عمالقة الفن.

Some of the famous names who performed on **Al Andalus** stage are Um Kalthoum in 1963, it was her first concert outside Egypt before she came back in 1968. Sayed Mackawi and the composer Baleegh Hamdi who was singing for the only time in public also performed on this stage.
Also the Iraqi legend Nathem Al Ghazali who performed a song for Shk. Abdulla Al Salem AL Sabah in 1963. in 1966 Fayrouz visited Kuwait and performed along with Nasri Shams Aldeen and others. In 1971 the premiere of the Kuwaiti movie "BasYa Bahar" by the director Khaled Sidik was played in Al Andalus theater. The famous band Boney M visited Kuwait for the first time in 1977 and performed their famous show on the stage of that theatre in addition to a great number of music icons.
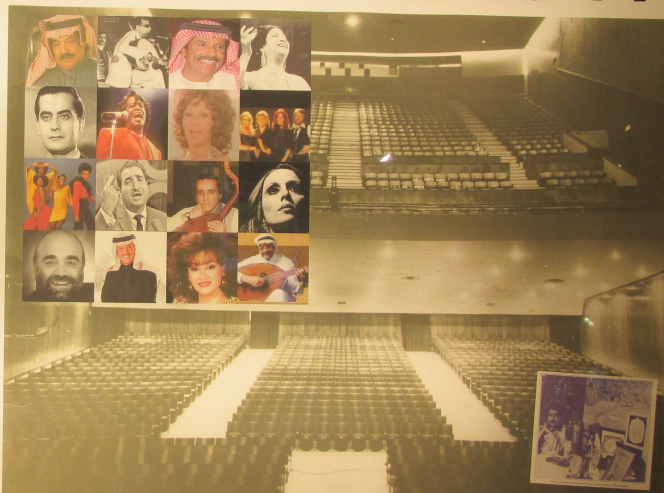
11/08/2013 15:59

The pictures above and those presented on pages 278-283 show the chronological display of the cinema company's development over the years.

The pictures above and those presented on pages 278-283 show the chronological display of the cinema company's development over the years.

The Development - التطور 1973-74

الة العرض المتنقلة:
ساهمت شركة السينما من خلال هذا الجهاز بأنشطة الترويج السياحي آنذاك، عن طريق عرض الأفلام بالحدائق العامة مثل حديقة وهران في منطقة الشامية.وحديقة جمال عبد الناصر بمنطقة الروضة وحديقة الحزام الاخضر وغيرها.

The Portable Projector
KNCC have contributed to a large number of entertainment activities in this area by playing movies in the outdoor parks like "Wahran Park" in Shameya area, "Jamal Abdul Nasser" in Al-Rawda area, the "Green Belt" and others.
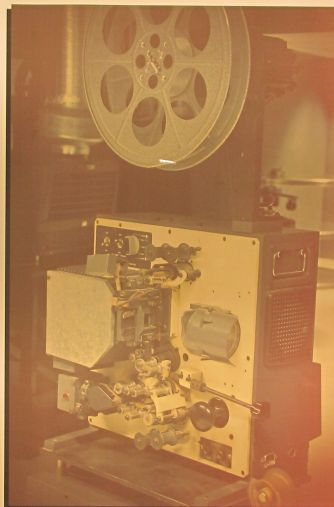
11/08/2013 16:00

The Development - التطور 1980-90

في عام 1980 تم افتتاح سينما **الجليب** بسعة 633 مقعد، وسينما **السيارات** بالأحمدى بسعة 228 سيارة.

و في عام 1990 كان لجميع دور السينما نصيبا كبيراً من الدمار الذي حل بدولة الكويت اثناء الغزو العراقي الغاشم.

Al Jaleeb theatre was opened with a capacity of 633 seats and **Al Ahmadi** theatre with a capacity of 228 seats were both opened in 1980.

In 1990, with the Iraqi invasion to Kuwait, the cinema company have had a great deal of damages.

One of the cinema after invasion

11/08/2013 16:01

The pictures above and those presented on pages 278-283 show the chronological display of the cinema company's development over the years.

The pictures above and those presented on pages 278-283 show the chronological display of the cinema company's development over the years.

The pictures above and those presented on pages 278-283 show the chronological display of the cinema company's development over the years.

Display of old tickets and stamps used in the cinema company over the years.

Display of the 3D glasses used in the cinema company.

APPENDIX 3: TWITTER USE IN THE MIDDLE EAST
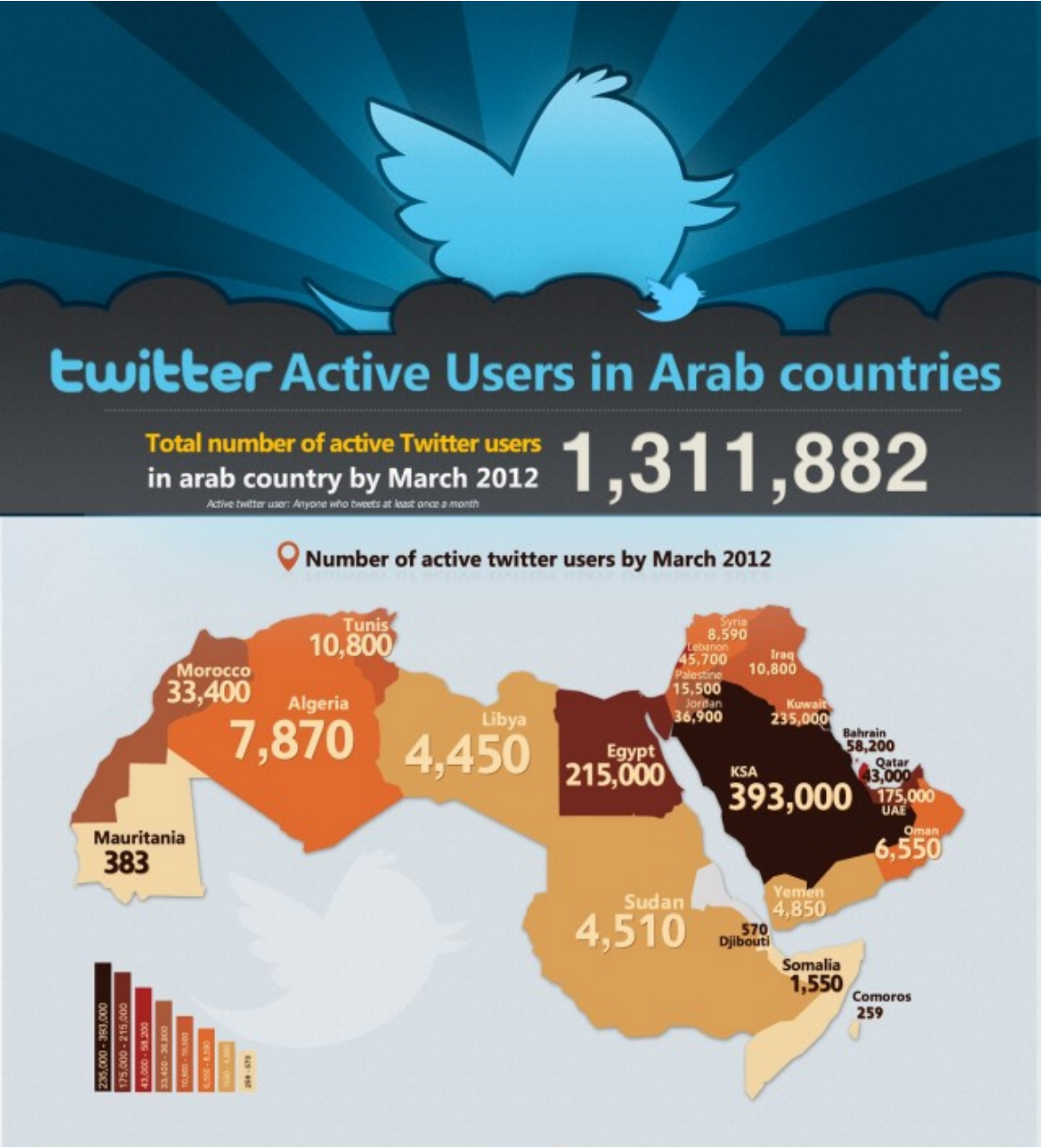
(Arab Social Media Report, 2012)

Appendix 3: Twitter Use in the Middle East

APPENDIX 4: FILMS BANNED IN KUWAIT (2011-2015)

Below is list of all the films that were banned by the Ministry of Information in Kuwait from 2011 to April 2015. The information in the table below was gathered from Cinescape's official website: http://webserver2.kncc.com/bannedmovies.php.

2011		
A Dangerous Man	Kanchana (Tamil)	Straw Dogs
Arthur	Last Night	Sucker Punch
Bad Teacher	Letters to Juliet	Super
Bhaktha Janangalude Sradhakku (Malayalam)	London Boulevard	Take Me Home Tonight
Bintain Min Masr (Arabic)	Love Ka the End (Hindi)	That's What I Am
Blood creek	My Soul to Take (3D)	The Adjustment Bureau
Bridesmaids	No Strings Attached	The Debt
Carlos	One Day	The Killer Inside Me
Crazy, Stupid, Love	Paul	The Rite
Fading of the Cries	Priest 3D	The Roommate
Foot Loose	Rascals	The Thing
Fright Night	Rathinirvedam (Malayalam)	We Are The Night
Hall Pass	Shark Night 3D	What's Your Number
Hereafter	Solitary Man	Whatever Works
Honey 2	Something Borrowed	Winx Club: The Secret of the Lost Kingdom
Just Go With It	Splinter	

2012		
11.11.11	Girl in Progress	Ruby Sparks
21 Jump Street	Hit and Run	Savages
A Few Best Men	Hope Springs	Special Forces

A Very Harold & Kumar Christmas	Ishaqzaade	Step Up 4
Act of Valor	Jodi Breakers (Hindi)	Student of the Year – Hindi
Agent Vinod (Hindi)	Katy Perry: Part of Me	Tactical Force
Argo	Killing Them Softly	TED
Beauty and the Beast	King & The Commissioner (Malayalam)	Thattathin Marayathu (Malayalam)
Brake	Like Crazy	The Cabin in the Woods
Chain Letter	Machine Gun Preacher	The Campaign
Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away	Moonrise Kingdom	The Collection
Code Name: Geronimo	My Week With Merilyn	The Five Year Engagement
Dangerous Ishq	Nine Dead	The Hidden Face
Denikaina Ready (Telugu)	One for the Money	The Perks of Being a Wallflower
End of Watch	Paranorman	The Watch
Flypaper	Piranha 3DD	Think Like a Man
For Greater Glory	Pitch Perfect	This is 40
Frankenweenie	Project X	This Means War
Freelancers	Pusher	Trust
Fun Size	Raaz 3: The Third Dimension	Vamps
Gangs Of Wasseypur (Hindi)	Rampart	We Need to Talk to Kevin
Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance	Rock of Ages	What to Expect When You're Expecting

2013		
3096 Days	Intersections	Straight A's
A Haunted House	Kick-Ass 2	StreetDance 2
Aftershock	Murder 3 (Hindi)	Texas Killing Fields

Byzantium	Netru Indru (Tamil)	The Attacks of 26/11
Cockneys vs Zombies	Pain & Gain	The Baytown Outlaws
Comedown	Peace, Love, & Misunderstanding	The Big Wedding
D-Day	Peeples	The Bling Ring
Ek Thi Daayan (Hindi)	Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters	The Heat
Evil Dead	RIPD	The Internship
Friends with Kids	Romans	The Last Exorcism Part II
Go Goa Gone (Hindi)	Romans (Malayalam)	The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones
Hunt to Kill	Scary Movie 5	The World's End
I Give It a Year	Shortcut Romeo	Two Mothers (Perfect Mothers)
Identity Thief	Stand Up Guys	Vishwaroopam (Tamil)
Inkar (Hindi)	Standing Ovation	Zero Dark 30

2014		
3 Essha Al Bol Bol	Haider (Hindi)	Thanks for Sharing
About Last Night	Halaweet Roh	That Awkward Moment
Anchorman 2	Hasalina al Ro3b	The Baby Makers
As Above, So Below	Horns	The Book Thief
Belle	I, Frankenstein	The Devil's Hand
Boyhood	Jesus	The Drop
Cabin Fever: Patient Zero	Kite	The Riot Club
Dallas Buyers Club	Left Behind	The Rover
Deliver Us from Evil	Let's Be Cops	The Shaukeens
Devil's Due	Lord of Salem	The Starving Games
Dom Hemingway	Love, Rosie	Tusk

Dracula Untold	Mardaani	Villa 69
Drive Hard	Noah	Walk of Shame
Dying of The Light	O Teri - Hindi	What if
Endless Love	Omar wa Salwa	Yaariyan (Hindi)
Exists	Ouija	
Gone Girl	Step Up: All in	

2015		
Baby (Hindi)	Fading Gigolo	The Lazarus Effect
Bird Man	Get Hard	The Wedding Ringer
Black Sea	Mylanchi Monchulla Veedu	Top Five
Book of Life	Playing It Cool	Vitamin (Lebanese)
Clown	Project Almanac	We'll Never Have Paris
Darker Than Night	The Boy Next Door	Wild Card
Everly	The Dead Lands	

Photo source: http://filmratings.com/downloads/130207_mpaa_rating-poster.pdf.

Appendix 6: British Board of Film Classification – Ratings and Categories

The information in the table below was copied from the British Board of Film Classification's official website (http://www.bbfc.co.uk). The website presents this information in a series of pages, but for the sake of readability I have gathered all the data and placed them in one table that clearly identifies the criteria for each rating.

RATING	U - UNIVERSAL
Description	Films rated 'U' should be suitable for all audiences It is impossible to predict what might upset any particular child. But a 'U' film should be suitable for audiences aged four years and over. 'U' films should be set within a positive moral framework and should offer reassuring counterbalances to any violence, threat or horror. If a work is particularly suitable for a pre-school child to view alone, this will be indicated in the Consumer Advice.
Discrimination	No discriminatory language or behaviour unless clearly disapproved of.
Drugs	No references to illegal drugs or drug misuse unless they are infrequent and innocuous, or there is a clear educational purpose or anti-drug message suitable for young children.
Horror	Scary sequences should be mild, brief and unlikely to cause undue anxiety to young children. The outcome should be reassuring.
Imitable Behaviour	No potentially dangerous behaviour which young children are likely to copy. No emphasis on realistic or easily accessible weapons.
Language	Infrequent use only of very mild bad language.
Nudity	Occasional natural nudity, with no sexual context.
Sex	Mild sexual behaviour (for example, kissing) and references only (for example, to 'making love').
Theme	While problematic themes may be present, their treatment must be sensitive and appropriate for young children.
Violence	Mild violence only. Occasional mild threat or menace only

RATING: PG - PARENTAL GUIDANCE	
Description	General viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for young children Unaccompanied children of any age may watch. A 'PG' film should not disturb a child aged around eight or older. However, parents are advised to consider whether the content may upset younger or more sensitive children.
Discrimination	Discriminatory language or behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable unless clearly disapproved of or in an educational or historical context. Discrimination by a character with which children can readily identify is unlikely to be acceptable.
Drugs	References to illegal drugs or drug misuse must be innocuous or carry a suitable anti-drug message.
Horror	Frightening sequences should not be prolonged or intense. Fantasy settings may be a mitigating factor.
Imitable Behaviour	No detail of potentially dangerous behaviour which young children are likely to copy. No glamorisation of realistic or easily accessible weapons.
Language	Mild bad language only.
Nudity	Natural nudity, with no sexual context.
Sex	Sexual activity may be implied, but should be discreet and infrequent. Mild sex references and innuendo only.
Theme	Where more serious issues are featured (for example, domestic violence) nothing in their treatment should condone unacceptable behaviour.
Violence	Moderate violence, without detail, may be allowed, if justified by its context (for example, history, comedy or fantasy).
RATING: 12 - SUITABLE FOR 12 YEARS AND OVER	
Description	Exactly the same criteria are used to classify works at '12A' and '12'. These categories are awarded where the material is suitable, in general, only for those aged 12 and over. Works classified at these categories may upset children under 12 or contain material which many parents will find unsuitable for them.

	The '12A' category exists only for cinema films. No one younger than 12 may see a '12A' film in a cinema unless accompanied by an adult, and films classified '12A' are not recommended for a child below 12. An adult may take a younger child if, in their judgement, the film is suitable for that particular child. In such circumstances, responsibility for allowing a child under 12 to view lies with the accompanying adult. The '12' category exists only for video works. No one younger than 12 may rent or buy a '12' rated video work.
Discrimination	Discriminatory language or behaviour must not be endorsed by the work as a whole. Aggressive discriminatory language or behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable unless clearly condemned.
Drugs	Any misuse of drugs must be infrequent and should not be glamorised or give instructional detail.
Horror	Moderate physical and psychological threat may be permitted, provided disturbing sequences are not frequent or sustained.
Imitable Behaviour	Dangerous behaviour (for example, hanging, suicide and self-harming) should not dwell on detail which could be copied, or appear pain or harm free. Easily accessible weapons should not be glamorised.
Language	Moderate language is allowed. The use of strong language (for example, 'fuck') must be infrequent.
Nudity	Nudity is allowed, but in a sexual context must be brief and discreet.
Sex	Sexual activity may be briefly and discreetly portrayed. Sex references should not go beyond what is suitable for young teenagers. Frequent crude references are unlikely to be acceptable.
Theme	Mature themes are acceptable, but their treatment must be suitable for young teenagers.
Violence	Moderate violence is allowed but should not dwell on detail. There should be no emphasis on injuries or blood, but occasional gory moments may be permitted if justified by the context. Sexual violence may only be implied or briefly and discreetly indicated, and must have a strong contextual justification.

RATING: 15 - SUITABLE ONLY FOR 15 YEARS AND OVER	
Description	No one younger than 15 may see a '15' film in a cinema. No one younger than 15 may rent or buy a '15' rated video work.
Discrimination	The work as a whole must not endorse discriminatory language or behaviour.
Drugs	Drug taking may be shown but the film as a whole must not promote or encourage drug misuse. The misuse of easily accessible and highly dangerous substances (for example, aerosols or solvents) is unlikely to be acceptable.
Horror	Strong threat and menace are permitted unless sadistic or sexualised.
Imitable Behaviour	Dangerous behaviour (for example, hanging, suicide and self-harming) should not dwell on detail which could be copied. Easily accessible weapons should not be glamorised.
Language	There may be frequent use of strong language (for example, 'fuck'). The strongest terms (for example, 'cunt') may be acceptable if justified by the context. Aggressive or repeated use of the strongest language is unlikely to be acceptable.
Nudity	Nudity may be allowed in a sexual context but without strong detail. No constraints on nudity if in a non-sexual or educational context.
Sex	Sexual activity may be portrayed without strong detail. There may be strong verbal references to sexual behaviour, but the strongest references are unlikely to be acceptable unless justified by context. Works whose primary purpose is sexual arousal or stimulation are unlikely to be acceptable.
Theme	No theme is prohibited, provided it is appropriate for 15 year olds.
Violence	Violence may be strong but should not dwell on the infliction of pain or injury. The strongest gory images are unlikely to be acceptable. Strong sadistic or sexualised violence is also unlikely to be acceptable. There may be detailed verbal references to sexual violence but any portrayal of sexual violence must be discreet and have a strong contextual justification.

RATING: 18 - SUITABLE ONLY FOR ADULTS	
Description	No-one younger than 18 may see an '18' film in a cinema.

No-one younger than 18 may rent or buy an '18' rated video.

In line with the consistent findings of the BBFC's public consultations and The Human Rights Act 1998, at '18' the BBFC's guideline concerns will not normally override the principle that adults should be free to choose their own entertainment. Exceptions are most likely in the following areas:

- Where the material is in breach of the criminal law, or has been created through the commission of a criminal offence
- Where material or treatment appears to the BBFC to risk harm to individuals or, through their behaviour, to society – for example, any detailed portrayal of violent or dangerous acts, or of illegal drug use, which may cause harm to public health or morals. This may include portrayals of sexual or sexualised violence which might, for example, eroticise or endorse sexual assault
- Where there are more explicit images of sexual activity which cannot be justified by context. Such images may be appropriate in 'R18' works, and in 'sex works' (see below) would normally be confined to that category.

In the case of video works (including video games), which may be more accessible to younger viewers, intervention may be more frequent than for cinema films.

Sex education at '18'
Where sex material genuinely seeks to inform and educate in matters such as human sexuality, safer sex and health, explicit images of sexual activity may be permitted. |

Sex works at '18'

Sex works are works whose primary purpose is sexual arousal or stimulation. Sex works containing only material which may be simulated are generally passed '18'. Sex works containing clear images of real sex, strong fetish material, sexually explicit animated images, or other very strong sexual images will be confined to the 'R18' category. Material which is unacceptable in a sex work at 'R18' is also unacceptable in a sex work at '18'.

RATING: R18 - TO BE SHOWN ONLY IN SPECIALLY LICENSED CINEMAS, OR SUPPLIED ONLY IN LICENSED SEX SHOPS, AND TO ADULTS OF NOT LESS THAN 18 YEARS

Description	The 'R18' category is a special and legally restricted classification primarily for explicit works of consenting sex or strong fetish material involving adults. Films may only be shown to adults in specially licensed cinemas, and video works may be supplied to adults only in licensed sex shops. 'R18' video works may not be supplied by mail order. The following content is not acceptable:

- Any material which is in breach of the criminal law, including material judged to be obscene under the current interpretation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959
- Material (including dialogue) likely to encourage an interest in sexually abusive activity (for example, paedophilia, incest or rape) which may include adults role-playing as non-adults
- The portrayal of any sexual activity which involves lack of consent (whether real or simulated). Any form of physical restraint which prevents participants from indicating a withdrawal of consent
- The infliction of pain or acts which may cause lasting physical harm, whether real or (in a sexual context) simulated. Some allowance may be made for moderate, non-abusive, consensual activity

	• Penetration by any object associated with violence or likely to cause physical harm
	• Any sexual threats, humiliation or abuse which does not form part of a clearly consenting role-playing game. Strong physical or verbal abuse, even if consensual, is unlikely to be acceptable.
	These Guidelines will be applied to the same standard regardless of sexual orientation.

Arab Representations in Hollywood Films

This survey is part of a student research study that aims to investigate how young people from the State of Kuwait perceive the representations of Arabs in Hollywood films. Your participation in this survey is highly appreciated, and is vital for the success of this study. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be fully protected. Please answer questions that apply to you, and ignore those that do not. If you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions you may leave it blank. The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. If you agree to participate in this study, simply complete the survey below.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at sxa990@bham.ac.uk

1. Nationality: الجنسية

◯ Kuwaiti كويتي

◯ Other (please specify) أخرى يرجى التحديد

2. Gender: الجنس

◯ Male ذكر

◯ Female أنثى

3. Age: العمر

◯ Under 18 تحت

◯ 18 – 24

◯ 25 – 30

◯ Over 30 فوق

4. Marital Status: الحالة الاجتماعية

◯ Single أعزب

◯ Married متزوج

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○ Divorced مطلق

○ Widowed أرمل

5. Current Occupation: الوظيفة الحالية

○ Student طالب

○ Unemployed غير موظف

○ Self-Employed تعمل لحسابك الخاص

○ Public Sector Employee موظف بالقطاع العام

○ Private Sector Employee موظف بالقطاع الخاص

○ Other غير ذلك

6. Did you study in a private or public school?
هل درست في مدرسة خاصة أو حكومية؟

○ Private خاصة

○ Public حكومية

7. Did/Do you study in a private or public university?
هل درست أو تدرس في جامعة خاصة أو حكومية؟

○ Private خاصة

○ Public حكومية

8. College / Academic Divisions: كلية / الأقسام الأكاديمية

[⇕]

Other (please specify) أخرى برجى التحديد

[   ]

9. What film genre (type) do you prefer to watch?
ما أنواع الأفلام التي تفضل مشاهدتها؟

☐ Horror رعب   ☐ Comedy كوميديا   ☐ Animated رسوم متحركة

☐ Action أكشن   ☐ Adventure مغامرات   ☐ Thriller إثارة

☐ Science Fiction خيالية   ☐ Drama دراما   ☐ Romance غرامية

Other (please specify) أخرى برجى التحديد

[   ]

10. What attracts you to a particular film?
ما الذي يجذبك لفيلم معين؟

☐ Genre النوع   ☐ Directors المخرجين

☐ Actors الممثلين   ☐ Story القصة

Other (please specify) أخرى يرجى التحديد

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11. Which film productions do you prefer the most?
أي انتاج أفلام تفضل أكثر؟

☐ Hollywood هوليوود   ☐ Arabic عربية   ☐ Asian (Japanese/ Chinese/ Korean) آسيوية /يابانية/صينية/كورية

☐ Bollywood بوليوود   ☐ South American جنوب أمريكا

☐ European أوروبية   ☐ Russian روسيا   ☐ Other أخرى

Please explain your preference. يرجى ذكر سبب تفضيلك لها

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12. How many movies do you usually watch in a week?
كم عدد الأفلام التي تشاهدها عادة في الأسبوع؟

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ More than 3 أكثر من 3

13. How do you watch movies the most?
غالبا كيف تشاهد أكثر الأفلام؟

○ Cable TV ستلايت

○ Cinema سينما

○ DVDs سي ديهات دي في دي

○ Online أون لاين بالانترنت

14. When buying a DVD, which do you usually buy:
عند شراء دي في دي، أيتهما عادة تشتريها:

○ Copied DVDs دي في دي منسوخ

○ Original DVDs دي في دي أصلي

15. How often do you watch films in the cinema?
كم مرة تذهب للسينما لمشاهدة الأفلام؟

○ Once a month مره بالشهر

○ Twice a month مرتين بالشهر

○ 3 times a month ثلاث مرات بالشهر

More than 4 times a month أكثر من أربع مرات بالشهر

16. Are you aware that all films in Kuwait undergo a censorship process?
هل أنت على علم بأن جميع الأفلام في الكويت تخضع لعملية الرقابة؟

◯ Yes نعم

◯ No لا

17. What is your opinion on the censoring (cutting scenes) of films shown in the cinema? Censoring is:
ما رأيك في الرقابة (قطع مشاهد) من الأفلام المعروضة في السينما؟

◯ suitable مناسبة

◯ too strict صارمة جدا

◯ of no relevance to me لا يهمني

Other (please specify) أخرى يرجى التحديد

18. Have you ever watched a Hollywood film that presents Arabs?
هل شاهدت فيلم من انتاج هوليوود يطرح مشاهد عن العرب؟

◯ Yes نعم

◯ No لا

19. From your experience, which of the characteristics/ attributes have been given to Arab women in Hollywood films? (You can tick more than one option)
من تجربتك، أي من صفات أعطيت للمرأة العربية في أفلام هوليوود؟ يمكنك وضع علامة لعدة خيارات

☐ Educated متعلمة   ☐ Mysterious غامضة   ☐ Fashionable أنيقات

☐ Exotic غريبة   ☐ Successful ناجحة   ☐ Oppressed مظلومة

☐ Dangerous خطيرة   ☐ Belly dancers راقصات   ☐ Promiscuous غير أخلاقية

☐ Independent مستقلة   ☐ Terrorists ارهابيات

Other (please specify) أخرى يرجى التحديد

20. From your experience, which of the characteristics/ attributes have been given to Arab men in Hollywood films? (You can tick more than one option)
من تجربتك، أي من صفات أعطيت للرجل العربي في أفلام هوليوود؟ يمكنك وضع علامة لعدة خيارات

☐ Rich غني   ☐ Angry غاضب   ☐ Brave شجاع

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☐ Poor فقير	☐ Friendly ودود	☐ Lascivious فاسق
☐ Bedouin بدوي	☐ Stupid غبي	☐ Noble نبيل
☐ Terrorists ارهابيين	☐ Smart ذكي	

Other (please specify) أخرى يرجى التحديد

☐

21. Do you think that the images of Arabs in Hollywood films are generally an accurate portrayal of Arabs?
هل تعتقد أن أفلام هوليوود تقدم العرب بصورة دقيقة؟

○ Yes نعم

○ No لا

○ Sometimes بعض الأحيان

○ Not sure لست متأكد

22. Do you think that the image of Arabs in Hollywood films is generally:
هل تعتقد أن صورة العرب في أفلام هوليوود عموما:

○ Positive ايجابية

○ Negative سلبية

○ Neutral محايدة

○ Not sure لست متأكد

23. Have you ever watched a film that presented Arabs in a manner that offended you?
هل شاهدت فيلم قدم العرب بطريقة أساءت لك؟

○ Yes نعم

○ No لا

If you answered 'Yes', can you remember any films to illustrate your answer? إذا كانت الإجابة "نعم"، يمكنك ذكر أسماء أفلام لتوضيح إجابتك؟

☐

24. How do these images make you feel as an Arab?
كعربي كيف تشعر عند مشاهدتك لهذه الصور؟

☐ Angry غاضب

☐ Upset حزين

☐ Embarrassed منحرج

☐ It does not bother me انه لا يزعجني

25. What do you think determines Arab representations in Hollywood productions?

برأيك ما الذي يحدد صور العرب في إنتاج أفلام هوليوود؟

☐ Economic factors أسباب اقتصادية

☐ Political factors أسباب سياسية

☐ Historical factors أسباب تاريخية

☐ Religious factors أسباب دينية

☐ Cultural factors أسباب ثقافية

Other (please specify) أخرى يرجى التحديد

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26. Do you think that Hollywood's image of Arabs has changed over the 140 years of the existence of cinema?

هل تعتقد ان صور العرب في أفلام هوليوود قد تغيرت على مدى 140 عاما من وجود السينما؟

○ Yes نعم

○ No لا

○ I don't know لا أعرف

27. Do you think that the general image of Arabs in films has become better or worse?

هل تعتقد أن الصورة العامة للعرب في الأفلام أصبحت أفضل أو أسوأ؟

○ Better أفضل

○ Worse أسوأ

28. Do you think that the images of Arabs in films have had an effect on your life personally?

هل تعتقد أن صور العرب في الأفلام كان لها تأثير على حياتك شخصيا؟

○ Yes نعم

○ No لا

○ Not sure لست متأكد

If you answered 'Yes', how has it affected you? إذا كانت الإجابة "نعم"، كيف أثرت على حياتك الشخصية

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29. Have you ever traveled to a non-Arab country?

هل سافرت إلى دولة غير عربية؟

○ Yes نعم

○ No لا

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30. Do you ever feel that your treatment abroad is linked to your Arabic origin?
هل شعرت يوما أن معاملتك في الخارج مرتبط بأصلك العربي؟

○ Yes نعم

○ No لا

○ Sometimes بعض الأحيان

31. Do you think your treatment while abroad is in anyway related to the representation of Arabs in films?
هل تعتقد معاملتك في الخارج على أية حال متعلق بصور العرب في الأفلام؟

○ Yes نعم

○ No لا

○ Sometimes بعض الأحيان

○ Maybe ربما

32. Is there anything you would like to add on the issue of Arab representations in Hollywood that has not been mentioned in this questionnaire?
هل لديك أي تعليق تود أن تضيفه عن صور العرب في أفلام هوليوود لم يرد ذكرها في هذا الاستبيان؟

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│                                 │
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└─────────────────────────────────┘
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[Done]

Appendix 8: Participant Consent Form

<u>Consent for Participation in the Study</u>

I _____ (Participant*'s name*) agree to be interviewed for the research study 'Hollywood Representations of Arabs', conducted by Sara Al-Ajmi from the University of Birmingham. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about the representation of Arabs in Hollywood films.

1. The purpose of the study has been verbally made clear to me by the researcher.

2. I _____ (*agree / disagree*) that the interview may be recorded electronically.

3. All the questions I have asked about the nature of the interview and the study have been answered to my satisfaction.

4. Please tick **<u>one</u>** of the options below:

   ☐ I understand that this study may be published, and I agree that my name may be used in the output of the research.

   ☐ I wish to keep my identity confidential.

5. My participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I understand that I will not be paid for my participation.

6. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study anytime during and after my initial participation.

7. I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, I have the right to refuse to answer any question or to end the interview.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

I have read the information above. By signing below and returning this form, I am consenting to participate in this study.

Name of interviewee_____

Signature of interviewee_____

Date_____

I _____ have explained the study to the interviewee, and I am confident that the consent is informed and that the interviewee understands the implications of participating in this study.

Name of interviewer_____

Signature of interviewer_____

Date_____

_____

If you have other questions regarding your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me at:

Via email: sxa990@bham.ac.uk

Or you can contact my supervisor **Dr. Gëzim Alpion**
Via email: g.i.alpion@bham.ac.uk

Thank you very much for your cooperation. Your participation is highly appreciated.

APPENDIX 9: AGE RATING REMINDERS

APPENDIX 10: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION INTERVIEW – CENSORING DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

1. When was this Ministry of Information's Censoring Department set up?
2. How many sections exist within the Censoring Department?
   a. What are they?
3. Describe briefly the process you receive the films:
   a. How are films brought to your department?
   b. Who delivers the films to you?
4. What process do films have to go through in your department?
5. How many members are there in the censoring committee?
   a. Who can be part of the committee?
6. How are members chosen? How were you chosen?
   a. How long do members stay in the committee?
   b. Do they change often? If yes, how often do they change?
   c. How long have you been in the committee?
7. What are the laws in Kuwait in regards to film content?
8. What are the criteria you use when censoring films?
9. How do you censor films?
   a. Do you physically cut out parts of the reels?
   b. What happens to the censored scenes (parts of the reels) that are cut out?
10. How do you decide that censoring is not enough, and that a film should be banned?
11. What happens to films that are banned?
12. Do all the members in the censoring committee attend every film screening? Or do you divide the films up so that each member has X amount of films to censor in a week?
13. Do members always agree on what to censor?
   a. What happens when members disagree on a particular scene/film?
   b. Have you ever censored a scene that you personally believed should not be censored?
14. What happens to the film after the censoring process?
15. Are members tolerant to the misrepresentations of the Arabs when viewing films?

a. How do you handle films that misrepresent Arabs or portray them in a negative light?

16. In 2013, a rating system has been implemented for first time in the history of cinema in Kuwait:

    a. Why has the rating system *(finally)* been implemented?

    b. When was it implemented?

    c. Who developed the rating system?

    d. How does the rating system work exactly?

    e. What are the criteria used to determine a film's age suitability rating?

    f. Does the rating system only apply to cinemas? Or does it include film rentals?

17. Does this rating system mean that the films will be subjected to less censorship?

    a. If yes, what kind of scenes or films will you now allow?

    b. If no, then how is this rating system helpful?

18. Does the National Assembly affect the way the censoring committee censors films in anyway?

19. Has there ever been a clash between the Ministry of Information and the National Assembly in regards to film content made public?

    a. If Yes, why? When? How? And by who? And in regards to what content?

20. When screening a film, do you use a guideline template that you write notes on?

    a. *If possible, ask for a copy of that guideline template.*

    b. *If possible, ask for the notes written by members of censorship committee on films that have been banned in Kuwait.*

Interview with Dr. Suliman Arti

Date: 22 July 2013

Location: Kuwait Higher Institutes for Theatre Arts and Music Arts – Salmiya, Kuwait.

History of the Censoring Department in Kuwait

1. When was this Ministry of Information's Censoring Department set up?

2. How many sections exist within the Censoring Department?

    a. What are they?

Membership of the Censoring Committee

3. How many members are there in the censoring committee?

    a. Who can be part of the committee?

4. How are members chosen? How were you chosen?

    a. How long do members stay in the committee?

    b. Do they change often? If yes, how often do they change?

    c. How long have you been in the committee?

Censorship Process

5. Describe briefly the process you receive the films:

    a. How are films brought to your department?

    b. Who delivers the films to you?

6. What process do films have to go through in your department?

7. What are the laws in Kuwait in regards to film content?

8. What are the criteria you use when censoring films?

9. How do you censor films?

    a. Do you physically cut out parts of the reels? Etc.

    b. What happens to the censored scenes (parts of the reels) that are cut out?

10. How do you decide that censoring is not enough, and that a film should be banned?

11. How often does the committee meet? (Daily, weekly, or monthly basis)

12. Do all the members in the censoring committee attend every film screening? Or do you divide the films up so that each member has X amount of films to censor in a week?

13. Do members always agree on what to censor?
    a. What happens when members disagree on a particular scene/film?
    b. Have you ever censored a scene that you personally believed should not be censored?

14. Does the National Assembly affect the way the censoring committee censors films in anyway?

15. Has there ever been a clash between the Ministry of Information and the National Assembly in regards to film content made public?
    a. If yes, please provide an example.

16. When screening a film, do you use a guideline template that you write notes on? *If possible, ask for a copy of that guideline template.*

After Censorship

17. What happens to the film after the censoring process?

18. What happens to films that are banned?

19. Do you write a report for why a particular film was banned? *If possible, ask for the notes written by members of censorship committee on films that have been banned in Kuwait.*
    a. Are the studios ever made aware that any of their films have been banned in Kuwait?

Representation of Arabs

20. Are members tolerant to the misrepresentations of the Arabs when viewing films?
    a. How do you handle films that misrepresent Arabs or portray them in a negative light?

The Rating System

21. In 2013, a rating system has been implemented for first time in the history of cinema in Kuwait:

    a. Why has the rating system *(finally)* been implemented?

    b. When was it implemented?

    c. Who developed the rating system?

    d. How does the rating system work exactly?

    e. What are the criteria used to determine a film's age suitability rating?

    f. Does the rating system only apply to cinemas? Or does it include film rentals?

22. Does this rating system mean that the films will be subjected to less censorship?

    a. If yes, what kind of scenes or films will you now allow?

    b. If no, then how is this rating system helpful?

23. Some people suggested that cinemas should screen two versions of a film, a censored version, and an uncensored version, giving people the freedom to choose which of the versions they would like to see. Do you think this will ever be possible in Kuwait?

Date: 13 December 2011

Location: Cinescape's main headquarters in 360 Mall – Al-Zahra, Kuwait.

Cinema in the past

1. Which was the first cinema in Kuwait?
   a. When was the first film shown/ screened in Kuwait?
   b. Who was involved in establishing the first cinema?
   c. Where did this happen?
   d. What was the title of the film?
   e. How was the idea first brought up?
      i. Who's idea was it?
      ii. Who were behind it?
   f. Who was in charge of the cinema company?
   g. Did it have an opening ceremony?
      i. Who attended the opening ceremony?
   h. What was the first movie to be shown?
   i. Who were the very first to watch a film in the cinema company?
2. Before cinemas, how did people watch films?
3. Who was the initial target market from the first cinema?
4. What are the first movies that ever screened in Kuwait?
5. What kinds of films were shown at the beginning?
   a. What foreign films were shown?
   b. In what language were the films? (English, Indian, French, Arabic)
   c. What criteria was followed to choose foreign films (i.e. language, national cinema, genre)
6. Where did the company bring their films from?
7. How often were their film screenings?
8. How many people would usually attend?
9. How much did they charge customers?
10. Who is responsible for film selection?

Cinema today

11. How many cinemas are there in Kuwait?

    a. Where are they located?

    b. Why are they located in those particular places?

12. Who is Cinescape's target market?

13. Why are they their target market?

14. How do they reach out to their market?

15. What kinds of films are shown?

16. Who is involved in the selection of the films that are to be shown?

17. What criteria are followed in the selection of films?

18. From where does the company get their films?

19. How exactly do these films enter Kuwait?

20. Approximately how much does one film cost?

    a. Do you become a permanent owner of the film or is it rented?

21. Which is more popular: Arab productions or Western productions? (Figures)

    a. Why do you think this is so?

    b. Was there a time when Arab productions were more popular than Western productions?

22. How often are there film screenings?

23. How many people usually attend?

24. When are cinemas busiest days and why?

25. What are cinemas peak hours and why?

26. How much do they charge customers?

27. Is their any type of censorship or restrictions on certain films?

    a. Political reasons?

    b. Religious reasons?

    c. Cultural reasons?

28. Who decides what can and cannot be shown?

29. Do ccinema use any kind of film rating system?

30. Who do you think is the cinema company's biggest competitor and why?

31. Does the KNCC participate in any film related events in Kuwait or abroad?

    a. Where? When? Why? How?

32. Does the KNCC offer any kind of support for local filmmakers?

    a. Where? When? Why? How?

KUWAITI FILM DIRECTOR – WALID AL-AWADI

Date: 26 December 2011

Location: C-Sky Pictures office – Kuwait City, Kuwait.

Personal Information

1. What is it that you do?

2. When did you start your filmmaking career?

3. How many films have you produced?

4. What are some of your films' titles?

5. What are some of the themes of your films?

   a. Reason behind choosing that particular theme?

6. When did you first submitting your films to international film festivals?

7. Which film festivals did you participate in?

8. In your opinion, why is it important to participate in international film festivals?

9. *Tora Bora*.. your latest production:

   a. What is the story about?

   b. Why did you decide to screen it at the Cannes Film Festival?

   c. Where else did you screen it?

   d. How did people react to it?

   e. What were some of their comments in regards to the film?

Personal View of the Local Film Industry

10. Do you think it is important for a country to produce local films? Why?

11. How do you find the film industry in Kuwait?

12. Why do you think Kuwait is more successful in making 'series' rather than feature films?

13. In your opinion, why are there very few films being produced in Kuwait?

14. What do you think are some of the barriers that keep filmmakers from creating films in Kuwait?

15. What would you like to see happening in Kuwait in regards to the local filmmaking scene?

16. What is your view of the censoring process in Kuwait?

17. What is your view of the rating system, or more specifically the non-existing rating system in Kuwait?

    a. Why do you think the Ministry of Information does not want to implement a rating system?

Arab Representation in Hollywood Films

18. What is your opinion on the images of Arabs in Hollywood films?

19. As a filmmaker and director, why do you think that Hollywood film directors choose to portray Arabs in the manner that they currently portraying them as?

20. Do you think that films have the power to influence political changes?

Date: 18 December 2012

Location: Teshkeel Media Group Office – Kuwait City, Kuwait

Personal Information

1. What is it that you do?

2. Was 99 the first project you ever worked on?

3. When did you start creating the 99?

4. What makes the 99 so unique?

      a. Reason behind choosing that particular theme?

5. Which film festivals did you participate in?

6. In your opinion, why is it important to participate in international film festivals?

7. The 99 film:

      a. What is the story about?

      b. Where else did you screen it?

      c. How did people react to it?

      d. What were some of their comments in regards to the film?

Personal View of the Local Film Industry

8. Do you think it is important for a country to produce local films? Why?

9. How do you find the film industry in Kuwait?

10. In your opinion, why are there very few films being produced in Kuwait?

11. What do you think are some of the barriers that keep filmmakers from creating films in Kuwait?

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