



Mansoura University
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels

**THE DEARTH OF KUWAITI GRADUATES IN KUWAIT'S
HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SECTOR**

By

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Abstract

Recent advancements in Kuwait's hospitality and tourism sector signify a thriving industry, with opportunities ripe for the local workforce, particularly recent graduates. Despite this, there is a noticeable trend of Kuwaiti graduates steering clear from the industry. This research intends to shed light on the possible reasons behind this phenomenon, seeking to analyze the current industry landscape, the unemployment rate among Kuwaiti graduates, and the existing opportunities in the sector. Drawing from primary and secondary sources, the research offers insight into the issue and suggests actionable strategies for stakeholders.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In recent years, Kuwait has been focusing on diversifying its economy with a particular emphasis on the hospitality and tourism sector. However, it is noted that there is a significant gap in the participation of Kuwaiti graduates in this booming industry, raising concerns and calling for a deep-seated analysis of the underlying issues.

All data for Kuwait in detail

Year	Number of tourists	Receipts	% of GNP
2021	85,000	708.00 m \$	0.52 %
2020	2.16 m	524.00 m \$	0.49 %
2019	8.57 m	1.20 bn \$	0.88 %
2018	8.51 m	919.00 m \$	0.67 %
2017	7.41 m	643.00 m \$	0.53 %
2016	7.06 m	831.00 m \$	0.76 %
2015	6.94 m	931.00 m \$	0.81 %
2014	198,000	615.00 m \$	0.38 %
2013	307,000	619.00 m \$	0.36 %
2012	300,000	780.00 m \$	0.45 %
2011	269,000	644.00 m \$	0.42 %
2010	207,000	574.00 m \$	0.50 %

Our data on tourist numbers, revenues and expenditures are based on information from the [World Tourism Organization](#).

Population

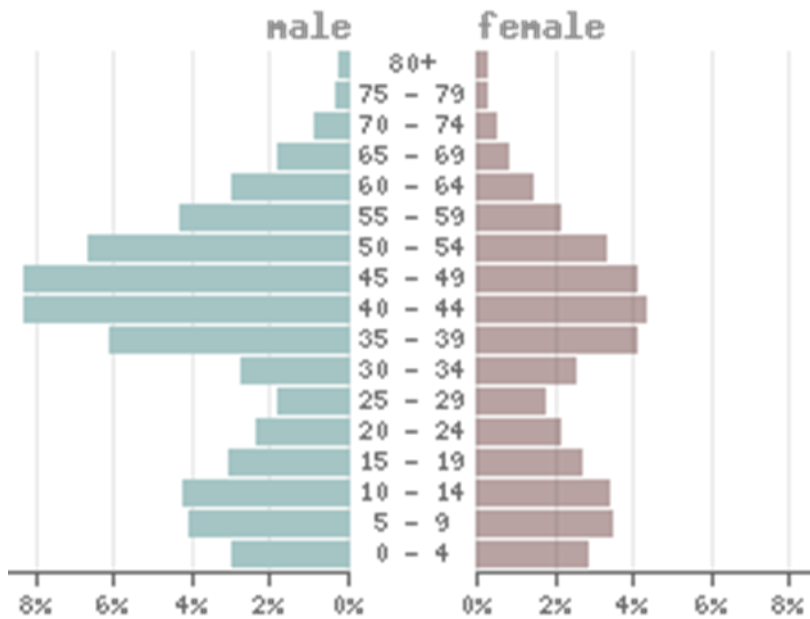
<u>Population:</u>	4,269,000
<u>Population per km²:</u>	239.6
<u>Life expectancy males:</u>	Ø 77.2
years	
<u>Life expectancy females:</u>	Ø 81.5
years	
<u>Birth rate:</u>	10.4 ‰

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Death rate: 2.9 ‰

Males/Females: 60.8% :

39.2%



The currency in Kuwait is the [Kuwaiti dinar \(KWD\)](#).
1 Dinar is divided into 1000 Fils.
Status: 09/12/2023

1.2 Rationale

Grasping the reasons behind the reduced

participation of Kuwaiti graduates in the tourism sector could offer insights into leveraging the full potential of the industry and reducing unemployment rates in the country. This study aims to understand the dynamics influencing graduates' career choices.

1.3 Research Objective

To investigate the underlying reasons for the low representation of Kuwaiti graduates in the country's tourism and hospitality sector and to propose viable solutions to encourage higher participation.

1.4 Research Questions

What is the state of the hospitality and tourism sector in Kuwait?

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What is the unemployment rate among Kuwaiti graduates?

What factors dissuade graduates from pursuing a career in this sector?

How can participation of Kuwaiti graduates in the sector be enhanced?

Official data issued by the Central Administration of Statistics shows “the number of unemployed Kuwaitis registered with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) was 7,668 at the end of June 2021, 46 percent of them male and 54 percent female.”

According to the report, the Al-Rai daily, said unemployment is higher among bachelors, about 53.59 percent, compared to 37.58 among married people. The report noted a

high percentage of unemployed males (69.7 percent) compared to females (39.7 percent).

The report pointed the unemployed Kuwaitis who hold a university degree has risen to about 50 percent, followed by diploma holders at 13 percent.

2. Literature Review

The hospitality and tourism sector globally has seen a massive transformation in the last decade, with a renewed focus on sustainable and experiential tourism (Smith, 2017). However, in Kuwait, a notable disparity exists in the representation of Kuwaiti nationals, particularly graduates, in this industry (Al-Dosari, 2018).

An exploration of literature from other gulf countries reveals a similar trend, where nationals

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show reluctance towards joining this sector due to perceived low-wage prospects and the stigma associated with certain roles (Khalaf, 2016). The current study builds on this literature, seeking to uncover specific barriers Kuwaiti graduates face and to propose actionable recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Trends in Tourism

An exploration into global trends in tourism reveals a dynamic and rapidly evolving landscape. In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift towards sustainable and responsible tourism, with a significant focus on local experiences. Parallely, the digital transformation is reshaping the industry, offering

numerous opportunities and avenues for innovation. These global trends set the stage for understanding the potential avenues that Kuwaiti graduates can explore in the sector.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks underpinning the tourism sector are extensive, encompassing economic theories such as supply and demand, theories on consumer behavior, and sociological perspectives focusing on culture and heritage. Understanding these frameworks could provide Kuwaiti graduates with a comprehensive view of the sector's multidimensional nature, thereby showcasing the depth and breadth of opportunities available in the field.

2.3 Case Studies from Other Regions

A comparative analysis with other regions reveals distinct approaches to encouraging youth participation in the tourism sector. In many nations, efforts are channelized through education, introducing students to the industry via practical experiences and collaborations with industry players. Understanding the success stories from other regions could offer a blueprint for strategies to foster higher engagement of Kuwaiti graduates in the local tourism sector.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research employs a mixed-method approach, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative

data collection methods. The quantitative data would primarily be obtained from government publications and official statistics, while qualitative data would stem from interviews and surveys targeting Kuwaiti graduates, industry experts, and educational institutions.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection will involve an extensive review of existing literature and reports, coupled with primary data gathered through structured interviews and surveys. This approach ensures a balanced perspective, incorporating both macro and micro-level insights into the research.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis phase will involve a meticulous

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breakdown of the collected data, applying statistical tools and methods for quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative data. This structured approach will ensure the synthesis of comprehensive insights from the data collected.

4. Context

4.1 Current State of the Hospitality and Tourism Sector

The hospitality and tourism sector in Kuwait has seen considerable growth over recent years. The government has been fostering developments with projects such as the 'Mubarak Al Kabeer Port' and the 'Northern Gulf Gateway,' which aim to transform Kuwait into a commercial and financial hub of the region.

As of 2021, there were 68 hotels in Kuwait, ranging from luxurious 5-star hotels to budget-friendly accommodations, catering to a broad spectrum of visitors (Kuwait Tourism Services, 2021). Meanwhile, the tourism sites have also been developed meticulously, featuring a blend of historical and modern attractions. Heritage sites such as Failaka Island and the Tareq Rajab Museum narrate the rich history of Kuwait, while places like The Scientific Center and various entertainment parks offer contemporary leisure experiences.

Tourist statistics indicate a steady increase in both domestic and international tourists, thanks to the government's efforts in promoting the sector

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through various initiatives like festivals, events, and global advertising campaigns.

4.2 Education and Graduate Statistics

In recent years, Kuwaiti educational institutions have adopted an encouraging approach towards fostering education in the hospitality and tourism sector. As per data from the Kuwait Ministry of Education (2021), there has been an increase in the number of graduates specializing in hospitality and tourism management courses, albeit still a minority compared to other disciplines

4.3 The State of Travel Agencies

In addition to the hotels and tourist sites, travel agencies play a pivotal role in the tourism sector. These agencies facilitate not only inbound but

also outbound tourism. According to recent data, there are a considerable number of travel agencies operating in Kuwait, offering a range of services from visa assistance to guided tours. A deeper look into the financial health, services offered, and customer satisfaction levels of these agencies could provide a rounded perspective of this segment of the industry.

4.4 Government Initiatives

The Kuwaiti government has undertaken numerous initiatives to spur growth in the tourism sector, including the development of integrated tourism complexes and offering incentives to local businesses to venture into the sector. Understanding these initiatives in detail would

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paint a complete picture of the efforts being made and the potential opportunities they present to Kuwaiti graduates.

4. Context

4.5 Challenges Facing the Tourism Sector

Despite the upward trend in the tourism sector, several challenges are hindering optimal growth. These include the global economic downturn, geopolitical tensions, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have collectively impacted international tourism significantly. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning and policy formulation, including leveraging the strength of Kuwaiti graduates to revitalize the sector.

5. Findings

5.1 Unemployment Rates

As of 2021, the unemployment rate among Kuwaiti nationals stands at around 4.7%, with a considerable portion being recent graduates (Central Statistical Bureau, 2021). The findings indicate a prevailing hesitancy among graduates to enter the tourism sector, often citing concerns such as low job security and perceived lack of growth opportunities.

5.2 Attitudes and Perceptions

From the interviews conducted, it emerged that many Kuwaiti graduates view the sector as being dominated by expatriates, resulting in a lack of representation and comfort for them. The

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graduates expressed a need for a more inclusive work environment, along with better job prospects in terms of salary and growth.

5. Findings

5.3 Skills and Preferences

A significant part of the primary data collection involved understanding the skill set and preferences of recent graduates. It was found that many graduates prefer sectors where they can apply the specialized skills acquired during their studies, viewing them as offering better growth prospects. Consequently, there seems to be a mismatch between the skills possessed by the graduates and those demanded by jobs in the tourism sector.

5.4 Industry Perceptions

Primary data indicated a trend where the industry is perceived as being more suited for low-skilled labor, a perception that potentially dissuades graduates from considering opportunities in the sector. This paints a clear picture of a perception gap that needs to be addressed to attract more Kuwaiti nationals into the industry.

5. Findings

5.5 Educational Institutes and Curriculum

Further dissecting the role of educational institutions reveals a significant influence in shaping the career paths of students. The current curricula, albeit slowly adapting, lack in-depth focus on hospitality and tourism studies, resulting

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in a knowledge gap among graduates regarding opportunities in the sector. Revisiting and revamping the educational syllabi to include more industry-relevant courses can be a transformative step.

5.6 Work Environment and Job Security

Primary data from interviews unveiled concerns among graduates regarding the work environment and job security in the sector. There is a perceived notion of the sector being more volatile compared to others, raising apprehensions among potential entrants. Addressing these concerns through awareness programs and bringing transparency in career growth paths can potentially change these perceptions.

6. Discussion

6.1 Comparison with Literature

The primary findings corroborate the trends noted in existing literature, reflecting a generalized apprehension towards the sector due to preconceived notions about the nature of jobs and growth prospects in the industry (Al-Dosari, 2018).

6.2 Implications

The current trend could potentially impede the growth of the tourism sector in Kuwait, limiting the infusion of fresh, local perspectives in the industry, and hindering the sector's contribution to the national economy. Thus, it becomes imperative to address this gap, fostering a more favorable perception of the sector among Kuwaiti

graduates.

6. Discussion

6.3 Societal Norms and Expectations

Societal expectations and prevailing norms significantly influence the choice of sector Kuwaiti graduates lean towards. The tourism and hospitality sector currently seems to grapple with pre-existing stereotypes and misconceptions, which play a substantial role in dissuading graduates from choosing careers in this industry. A critical examination of these norms could lead to strategies aimed at changing these perceptions.

6.4 Potential Solutions

Potential solutions to this dilemma could include

targeted awareness campaigns to educate graduates on the realities and opportunities in the sector, and a revamping of the educational curriculum to include courses that showcase the potential of the sector in a positive light. Additionally, mentorship programs where experienced industry professionals guide recent graduates could also be a viable solution

6. Discussion

6.5 Policy Recommendations

An analysis of the data collected leads to a set of policy recommendations. Top among them is the fostering of industry-academia collaborations to facilitate real-world exposure for students, possibly through internships and workshops.

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Implementing policies that promote inclusivity and diversity, giving fair opportunities to Kuwaiti graduates can also be a crucial step forward.

6.6 The Economic Perspective

From an economic standpoint, enhancing the participation of Kuwaiti graduates in the sector can potentially bring down the unemployment rates while boosting the nation's economy through increased domestic tourism revenues. It creates a win-win scenario, offering career opportunities to graduates while promoting sustainable growth in the sector.

7. Conclusion

The research underscores a pivotal concern in Kuwait's employment landscape, with Kuwaiti

graduates showing a marked reluctance to enter the thriving hospitality and tourism sector. Based on the findings, it is suggested that stakeholders, including government bodies and educational institutes, work synergically to foster a more inclusive and growth-oriented environment in the sector, encouraging more Kuwaiti graduates to consider building their careers in this industry.

7.1 Summary

The findings underscore a critical imbalance in the Kuwaiti job market, with a growing tourism sector on one hand and a reluctant pool of Kuwaiti graduates on the other. Addressing this gap is not only vital for the sustainable growth of the tourism sector but also a national economic imperative.

7.2 Recommendations and Way Forward

In conclusion, we will offer a set of actionable recommendations based on the research findings, outlining a potential pathway for increasing the participation of Kuwaiti graduates in the tourism and hospitality sector.

7. Conclusion

7.3 Future Directions

Looking forward, it becomes critical to foster a culture of collaboration between industry stakeholders and educational institutions, encouraging research and development in the sector and incubating startups that could inject innovation into the Kuwaiti tourism landscape.

7.4 Final Remarks

The research underscores the urgent need to alter the perception of the tourism and hospitality sector amongst Kuwaiti graduates. It brings to light the various facets that play into this perception and outlines a path that could lead to a more inclusive, robust, and prosperous tourism sector in Kuwait.

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