

## **CASE STUDIES OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CONCEPT ‘ARAB WORLD’ PRESENTED IN COMMUNICATION PATTERNS OF ARAB COUNTRIES OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION COMPANIES**

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### **RESUMEN**

El término “Mundo Árabe” es usado en la investigación occidental. El concepto de “Nación Árabe” es un concepto creado en los países árabes. Los estados árabes del Golfo Pérsico han sido influenciado por las culturas de India, Persia y África del Este. Esta es la característica que los diferencia de las culturas árabes del Norte de África y Mediterráneas. Este artículo introduce en los comportamientos típicos de la comunicación empresaria en estas regiones árabes un análisis crítico de las típicas descripciones culturales de estas culturas en la investigación y en las empresas de comunicación interculturales.

**Palabras clave:** Mundo Árabe, Nación Árabe, cultura, comunicación empresaria, empresas de comunicación interculturales

### **ABSTRACT**

The term ‘Arab World’ is used in Western research. The concept of the ‘Arab Nation’ is a concept created in the Arab countries. Arab states of the Persian Gulf have been influenced by the cultures of India, Persia, and East Africa. This is their distinct feature that distinguished them from the North-African and Mediterranean Arab cultures. This article will introduce into the typical business communication behaviors of these Arab regions in a critical analysis of the cultural descriptions of these cultures in research and cross-cultural business communication companies.

**Keywords:** Arab World, Arab Nation, culture, business communication, cross-cultural business communication companies

## **1. Business Communication in the Gulf Countries and Specific Features of Arab Countries:**

### **The Diverse Economic Situation in the Gulf Countries of the ‘Arab World’**

Hooker (2008) wrote in *Cultural Differences in Business Communication* that “there is no better arena for observing a culture in action than business. Cultures tend to reveal themselves in situations where much is at stake, because it is here that their resources are most needed. Marriage, family obligations, and such stressful experiences as illness and the death of a loved one bring out much of what is distinctive and fundamental in a culture. The same is true of business, because economic survival is at stake.” Recent political developments in the Arab world were described by Harrigan (2011), Woltering (2011), Ebdadawi (2011), Cavatorta (2011), and Gabiri (2011). In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about the diversity of political systems: “The political systems in force in the various Arab states also differ markedly. The governments range from monarchies to military dictatorships and from one-party democracies to nascent actual representative governments. Even the monarchies are highly diverse in how they are ruled.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) Two factors contribute to the establishment of the cognitive metaphor ‘Arab world’: On the one hand the relative discrepancy between the Western culture and the Arab culture, which is expressed in the cognitive metaphor used by the West and on the other hand the common features that connect Arabs with each other and distinguish them from other cultures. So the popularity of this metaphor can be explained by the acceptance of both societies. In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about the history of the expression ‘Arab world’ that it is “historical, as its members share certain common attributes of culture derived from a shared history. Most of the Arab World was united in a period ranging roughly from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries A.D. under an empire that at its height exceeded in size ancient Rome. The historic Arab Empire, however, included much of what is today no longer part of the Arab World.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) Besides the religion, the shared language is a feature of the consideration of Middle Eastern countries as a community described with the term ‘Arab World’. In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about the Arab language that it “is the foremost unifier of the nations of

the Arab World. It is the official language of all of the Arab nations, by definition. Arabic is also an official language of the United Nations; it is a greater unifier of the Arab World than any other characteristic joining together such ethnically and racially diverse groups of people (...). (*Encyclopedia of Business*) The rhetorical construct of the ‘Arab world’ continues in descriptions like in the following section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about environment and technology in the Arab world: “The Arab World is at once resource poor and resource rich. (...) Ten of the Arab nations rely on petroleum for over 50 percent of their export revenues: Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*)

In *Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabian Business Etiquette* is written in *Cyborlink*: “Large power distance and uncertainty avoidance are the predominant characteristics for this region. This indicates that it is expected and accepted that leaders separate themselves from the group and issue complete and specific directives. The Geert Hofstede analysis for the Arab World, that includes the countries of Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, demonstrates the Muslim faith plays a significant role in the people’s lives. Large ‘power distance’ (PDI) (80) and ‘uncertainty avoidance’ (UAI) (68) are predominant in Hofstede’s characteristics for the countries in this region. (...) The high ‘power distance’ (PDI) ranking is indicative of a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. (...) The high ‘uncertainty avoidance’ index (UAI) ranking of 68, indicates the society’s low level of tolerance for uncertainty. In an effort to minimize or reduce this level of uncertainty, strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations are adopted and implemented. (...) The ‘masculinity’ index (MAS), the third highest Hofstede dimension is 52, only slightly higher than the 50.2 average for all the countries included in the Hofstede MAS Dimension. (...) The lowest Hofstede Dimension for the Arab world is the ‘individualism’ (IDV) ranking at 38, compared to a world average ranking of 64.” (*Cyborlink*) In *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about the diversity of the economic situation in the Arab world: “The Arab nations have a wide range of economic performance. These range from the single commodity economies of great oil-producing nations of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to the highly diversified emerging market of Egypt.”

(*Encyclopedia of Business*) Halualani (2011) developed a critical intercultural framework. El Alaoui (2011:5) examined cultural trends and developments within the Arab and Muslim world and attested “that the cultural sphere in these nations informs the political sphere.” Cammett (2010) wrote *Globalization and Business Politics in Arab North Africa: A Comparative Perspective*. Jammal (2010) discussed German –Arab business relationships in *Trust and Culture. Conceptualization and Intercultural Training Implications in German-Arab Business Relationships*. Durant and Shepherd (2009) discussed culture and communication in intercultural communication as major influences on contemporary societies. Fraser and Schalley (2009) stated that many disciplines describe themselves as studying 'communication' as focused of the aspect of intercultural communication. In *Popular Culture and Political Identity in the Arab Gulf* Alcharekh and Springborg (2008: 9-10) mentioned the ambivalent perception of the area between a backwards region defined by tribalism and cosmopolitanism that has undermined traditional culture is described. Torstrick and Faier (2009) discussed culture and customs of the Arab Gulf states. Al-Omari (2009) published a guide for business people in the Arab world. Halaf (2009) wrote the reader *Arab Society and Culture*. Torstrick (2009) published the book *Culture and Customs of the Arab Gulf States*. Cooper and Momani (2008) discussed the new Arab business class in the Gulf countries Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. Salzman (2007: 837) in *Arab Culture and Postcolonial Theory* mentioned that “Arab culture, originating in Arabia, is grounded in Bedouin culture” with a system of security based “upon an ingenious system of deterrence.” Baaghil (2007) published *Eccentric Marketing: Awakening the Arab Business World to the Benefits of Branding*. Noack (2007) wrote the guide *Doing Business in Dubai and the United Arab Emirates*. Baumann (2007) demonstrated the differences between Western and Arab business behavior. Perry (2006/7) in *Shari'ah, Islamic Law and Arab Business Ethics* (2006/7) discussed the influence of the religion of business behavior in the Arab world. Shair (2006) published *Out of the Middle East: The Emergence of an Arab Global Business*. Terterov (2006) published *Doing Business with the United Arab Emirates*. Salzman (2007: 837) in *Arab Culture and Postcolonial Theory* mentioned that “Arab culture, originating in Arabia, is grounded in Bedouin culture” with a system of security based “upon an ingenious system of deterrence”. Rosen (2005) in *What We Got Wrong: How Arabs look at the Self, their Society, and their Political Insitutions* discussed how the Arabs look at their self, culture, society, and

their political institutions and the failure to keep pace with the economic, political, and scientific innovations. Allen (2010) described tribalism in the Arab World. Sabry (2010), Aksikas (2009), Noland and Pack (2007) wrote about the modernization process in the Arab world.

### 1.1. The Case Oman: Business Communication in Oman

Wippel (2010) described the economy of Oman. In *International Business Wiki* is written in *Communication Patterns in Oman*: “Business is greatly affected by communication because communications affects business deals, contracts, and many other aspects of business. Having knowledge of Oman’s Islamic, conservative background as well as knowing the language and norms of greetings and dress will greatly help international businesses entering Oman. Oman only recently opened its doors to international business. Although wanting to diversify in business, Oman wants to maintain its strict culture heritage and not adopt many traits of the Western world.” (*International Business Wiki*) The media communications company *Omantel* represents itself this way on its online website: “In today’s business environment, Omantel knows that your business requires solid and stable communication solutions that you can rely on to drive your growth and increase employee productivity. Omantel offers a variety of products, services and solution to cover all your communication needs - Mobile, Fixed, Internet and connectivity solutions.” (*Oman Telecommunications Company*) The situation of media communication in Oman is described by *ITA* as follows: “The telephone system of Oman is a modern system consisting of open-wire, microwave, and radiotelephone communication stations; limited coaxial cable; domestic satellite system with 8 earth stations. Domestic telephone lines are fixed-line and mobile-cellular subscribership both increasing with fixed-line phone service gradually being introduced to remote villages using wireless local loop systems International lines use the Fiber-Optic Link Around the Globe (FLAG) and the SEA-ME-WE-3 submarine cable provide connectivity to Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.” (*ITA*) *Omantel* writes on its homepage:

"In today’s business environment, Omantel knows that your business requires solid and stable communication solutions that you can rely on to drive your growth and increase employee productivity. Omantel offers a variety of products, services and solution to cover all your

communication needs - Mobile, Fixed, Internet and connectivity solutions." (*Oman Telecommunications Company*)

Malinak wrote in *Doing Business in Oman* published by the *Communicaid Group*: "Today Oman strives to create a more modern state which respects and incorporates its strong cultural heritage and traditions. Understanding this unique Middle Eastern culture and Omani business etiquette is essential for anyone wishing to successfully do business in Oman." (Malinak) Malinak wrote that "generosity, modesty and respect for others are key concepts, which are present in both social and professional spheres of life." (Malinak) Malinak wrote in *Doing Business in Oman*: "Omani hospitality is closely connected to their desire to establish trust and build relationships with people before doing business. Foreigners should therefore show their gratitude for this generosity and spend time getting acquainted with their Omani business counterparts." (Malinak) Malinak wrote in *Doing Business in Oman* that "dignity and respect are key elements in Omani culture, preserved mainly by the concept of saving face. Through the use of compromise, patience and self-control, Omanis avoid embarrassing or putting others down so as prevent them from losing face." (Malinak) Malinak wrote that the "Omani culture places a high importance on family and tribal connections. The family and tribe are highly influential and play a role in shaping a person's values and behaviour. Loyalty to both comes before anything else, even in a business context where it is not uncommon to have several members of one family working for the same company." (Malinak) Malinak mentioned that the "Omani attitudes to time are much more relaxed than in many Western cultures. People and relationships are more important than schedules and punctuality." (Malinak) Malinak noticed that "most Omani companies have a strong vertical hierarchy. Decisions tend to be made from the top-down by the most senior member. Status is an important part of Omani society and is determined by factors such as age, wealth and family or tribal relations." (Malinak) About the *Oman 2011 International Business Conference* was written at *Sultan Qaboos University* by Almoharby: "In recent years, government and business organizations have faced coinciding challenges; the financial and environmental crises, rapid social and cultural change, and radical developments in technology, and in business itself. While such developments have led to widespread problems, they have also created new opportunities for many organizations, including new start-up businesses." (Almoharby)

*Communicaid Group* wrote on key concepts and values of the Omani culture: "Oman is the only Muslim country to have a majority of Ibadhi sect followers which contributes to their conservative culture. Islam governs every aspect of a Muslim's life, from holidays to the food they eat to how they dress and do business. Generosity, modesty and respect for others are key concepts which are present in both social and professional spheres of life. (...)" (*Communicaid Group*) *Communicaid Group* wrote about the business activities in Oman the following advice: "Don't schedule business meetings during prayer times or any of the major Islamic holidays such as Ramadan or Eid. These are extremely important periods for the majority of Omanis who are Muslims. Business is usually put on hold during these occasions as it is a time for reflection and celebration." (*Communicaid Group*) About the *Oman 2011 International Business Conference* at *Sultan Qaboos University* was written: "The financial and environmental crises, rapid social and cultural change, and radical developments in technology, and in business itself. While such developments have led to widespread problems, they have also created new opportunities for many organizations, including new start-up businesses." (CIS. *Sultan Qaboos University*) In *Management in Oman* on the website *Kwintessential* is written that "the business set up in Oman is extremely conservative and successful cross cultural management will understand the importance of maintaining a degree of formality. It is common to hire a local agent to act as an intermediary. This person can arrange appointments and make the appropriate introductions. The Chamber of Commerce or the commercial attaché of your country's embassy in Oman can often recommend people to fill this important role. Although a local agent is not technically required to do business, it is often advantageous, especially if you do not have a large local presence. Since Omanis prefer to do business with those with whom they have a personal relationship, a letter of introduction from someone they know facilitates their trust." According to the website *Kwintessential*, "Omanis do not require as much personal space as most western cultures. As such, they will stand close to you while conversing and you may feel as if your personal space has been violated. Omanis are extremely hospitable and enjoy hosting foreign guests. At the same time, they expect you to understand the rules of their country and obey them." *Kwintessential* writes that "Employees do not question the decisions that have been reached. Managers or those in a position to do so will make decisions, while in general their subordinates will wait to be told what to do." According to *Kwintessential*, in Oman "in order for change to take hold, the idea

needs to be perceived as good for the group and be accepted by the group. Intercultural sensitivity is important with Oman’s attitude toward risk dramatically impacted by the negative ramifications of failure on both the individual and the group.” *Kwintessential* writes that in Oman “decisions are reached slowly and patience is essential for effective cross cultural management. If you try to rush things, you could risk your business relationship. Omanis are event rather than time-driven. The actual meeting is more important than the timeliness or outcome. Omanis are skilled negotiators. They often see bargaining as entertainment. Negotiation generally follows a ‘win/lose’ attitude. Be prepared to come down in both price and terms. Do not set your initial price so high that the ending price makes it apparent that you did not expect to settle at that rate. There is a tendency to avoid giving bad news and to give flowery acceptances, which may only mean ‘perhaps’.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **1.2. The Case Kuwait: Business Communication in Kuwait**

*Kwintessential* wrote about the tribal origin of the Kuwaiti society that “the extended family is the basis of the social structure and individual identity. It includes the nuclear family, immediate relatives, distant relatives, tribe members, friends, and neighbors. Nepotism is viewed positively, since it guarantees hiring people who can be trusted, which is crucial in a country where working with people one knows and trusts is of primary importance. The family is private. Female relatives are protected from outside influences.” (*Kwintessential*) Regarding Kuwait the 'Country Profile Kuwait' of *Kwintessential* mentions the following details: “The extended family is the basis of the social structure and individual identity. It includes the nuclear family, immediate relatives, distant relatives, tribe members, friends, and neighbors. Nepotism is viewed positively, since it guarantees hiring people who can be trusted, which is crucial in a country where working with people one knows and trusts is of primary importance.” (*Kwintessential*) In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about Kuwait: “Britain set up more exclusive treaties, first with independent Oman in 1891, but then with Ottoman-controlled areas of the United Arab Emirates (1892) and Kuwait (1899) over which they then assumed administration, effectively transferring control. In 1911 Italy declared Libya a protectorate. Soon after, France conquered the formerly independent Morocco in 1912. In 1916 Britain entered into one of its last exclusive treaties, negotiating the occupation of Qatar.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In

*Kuwait's Business World* is written that in order to “assure foreign investors of their investment's safety, companies operating under the FDI law cannot be nationalized or confiscated, and if such is deemed to be in the public interest, the investor will be compensated an amount equal to the company's economic value. Foreign investors working under this law can also transfer ownership freely.” (*ArabCin.net Arabian Business*) *Kwintessential* writes in *Intercultural Management Kuwait* that in order “to ensure successful cross cultural management in Kuwait, you need be aware of the strict protocols and rituals that exist. Older Kuwaitis and those in senior positions should be treated with respect and deference. Kuwaitis enjoy hosting foreign guests but expect them to understand the rules of their country and obey them. Socializing with your Kuwaiti colleagues is an important method of reinforcing a business relationship.” (*Kwintessential*) In *Intercultural Management Kuwait* on the website *Kwintessential* is written that “exchanging mutual favours is an important component of business relationships. If you are asked for a favour, agree to do it even if you think you may not be able to comply. Your Kuwaiti colleague will understand that circumstances prevented you from fulfilling the request and he will appreciate that you agreed to try to help. Since Kuwaitis judge on appearances, stay in a high standard international hotel. Likewise, good quality, conservative clothes mark you as someone of status. They respect education, so casually mention if you have an advanced degree from a prestigious university; however, do so cautiously and without appearing boastful.” (*Kwintessential*) In *Intercultural Management Kuwait* is written that “in Kuwait, as in other hierarchical societies, managers may take a somewhat paternalistic attitude to their employees. They may demonstrate a concern for employees that goes beyond the workplace. This may include involvement in their family, housing, health, and other practical life issues.” (*Kwintessential*) According to *Kwintessential*, “Kuwait is a fluid time culture, and as is the case with many fluid time cultures, it is also very relationship-oriented. People in Kuwait will not want to upset others in order to force adherence to a deadline, and while appointments and schedules need to be set well in advance as a sign of respect for the individual, you need to understand that those schedules are seen as flexible, not necessarily needing to be adhered to.” (*Kwintessential*) According to *Kwintessential*, it is typical for Kuwait that “in general, business retains a strong hierarchical structure and intercultural sensitivity is required. Who you know is often more important than what you know in this relationship-driven culture. The word 'wasta' refers to

the power someone has by virtue of who they are or who they know." (*Kwintessential*) *Kwintessential* writes in *Intercultural Management Kuwait* that "Kuwaitis are shrewd negotiators who are especially interested in price. Many rate their skill by how far they move you from your initial offer." (*Kwintessential*)

### 1.3. The Case Saudi Arabia: Business Communication in Saudi Arabia

*Kwintessential* writes: "The family and tribe are the basis of the social structure. As is seen in their naming conventions, Saudis are cognizant of their heritage, their clan, and their extended family, as well as their nuclear family. Saudis take their responsibilities to their family quite seriously. Families tend to be large and the extended family is quite close. The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the family. Nepotism is considered a good thing, since it implies that employing people one knows and trusts is of primary importance." (*Kwintessential*) In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States: "Yet the nation is almost entirely dependent on oil, with over half of its economy based on the public sector. In this respect, Saudi Arabia is typical of its Gulf State neighbors Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. All are almost wholly dependent on oil exports, yet all require diversification to secure their futures." (*Encyclopedia of Business*) *Kwintessential* writes about Saudi Arabia: "As is seen in their naming conventions, Saudis are cognizant of their heritage, their clan, and their extended family, as well as their nuclear family. Saudis take their responsibilities to their family quite seriously. Families tend to be large and the extended family is quite close. The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the family. Nepotism is considered a good thing, since it implies that employing people one knows and trusts is of primary importance. Saudis do not require as much personal space as most western cultures." (*Kwintessential*) *Kwintessential* advises about business in Saudi Arabia: "Decisions are made slowly. Do not try to rush the process. The society is extremely bureaucratic. Most decisions require several layers of approval. It takes several visits to accomplish simple tasks. Saudis are tough negotiators. Repeat your main points since it will be interpreted as meaning you are telling the truth." (*Kwintessential*) In *Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabian Business Etiquette* is written in *Cyborlink*: "The Geert Hofstede analysis for Saudi Arabia is almost identical to other Arab countries their Muslim faith plays a large role in the

people’s lives.” (Cyborlink) In *Business and Social Customs in Saudi Arabia* of *The Saudi Network* was written: “Saudi businesses are unlikely to finalize any serious negotiation without such a face-to-face meeting, as doing business in the Kingdom is still mostly personal. Proper attire at business meetings is essential, as it is a sign of respect for the person with whom you are meeting. Conservative business suits are recommended.” (*The Saudi Network*) In *Management in Saudi Arabia* on the website *Kwintessential* is written that “the business set up in Saudi Arabia is extremely conservative and to ensure successful cross cultural management you will need to maintain a proper degree of formality and treat everyone with respect. Older people and those in senior positions are always deferred to and treated with the utmost respect.” According to the website *Kwintessential*, “patience may be a necessary cross cultural attribute. Things generally take longer than expected since meetings are frequently interrupted and Saudis take time to get to know you. In general, punctuality is expected of the westerner but not of the Saudi. Never do anything that would make a Saudi appear less in the eyes of others.” *Kwintessential* wrote that “cross cultural management will be more effective with an understanding of the individual roles and existing hierarchy. Employees do not question the decisions that have been reached. Managers or those in a position to do so will make decisions, while in general their subordinates will wait to be told what to do.” According to the website *Kwintessential*, “business is personal. It will be impossible to finalize agreements without face-to-face contact. Decisions are made slowly. (...) Most decisions require several layers of approval. It may take several visits to accomplish simple tasks. Saudis are tough negotiators. They believe that everything is negotiable. Business is hierarchical. Decisions are made by the highest-ranking person. Repeating your main points will be interpreted as meaning you are telling the truth. High-pressure tactics are counter-productive.” (*Kwintessential*)

#### **1.4. The Case Bahrain: Business Communication in Bahrain**

*Kwintessential* writes that "the extended family or tribe forms the basis of both the social structure and individual identity. Loyalty to the family comes before other social relationships, even business. Nepotism is viewed positively, since it guarantees hiring people who can be trusted, which is crucial in a country where working with people one knows and trusts is of primary importance. The family is very private. (*Kwintessential*) In *Bahrain's Business World*

of *ArabCin.net Arabian Business* is written: “As of late, the nation of Bahrain has become more open to the rest of the world, thereby becoming more modern both socially and economically. The country is rich in natural resources (it's the first place in the Arabian Gulf where oil was found), has good infrastructure, and low taxes. Bahrain's current modernization efforts and its robust economy have made it a haven for investors. To be successful there, you must have a basic understanding of Bahrain's business world.” (*ArabCin.net Arabian Business*) *Kwintessential* writes in *Intercultural Management Bahrain* that “the business set up in Bahrain is extremely conservative and successful cross cultural management will understand the importance of maintaining a degree of formality. It is essential to defer to older people and those in senior positions and treat them with utmost respect. Appearances are extremely important so always wear good-quality conservative clothes and stay in a high standard international hotel. Never do anything that would embarrass a Bahraini in the eyes of bystanders; status is important and you would be wise to flatter your business colleagues frequently.” (*Kwintessential*) According to *Kwintessential*, the cross cultural management in Bahrain is “will be more effective with an understanding of the individual roles and existing hierarchy. Employees do not question the decisions that have been reached. Managers or those in a position to do so will make decisions, while in general their subordinates will wait to be told what to do.” (*Kwintessential*) As described by *Kwintessential*, “Bahrain's intercultural competence and readiness for risk is low. Bahrain is a low risk and low change-tolerant culture. New projects will be carefully analyzed to assure that whatever risk they represent is thoroughly understood and addressed.” (*Kwintessential*) Honor is considered a factor of business in Bahrain: “If you are working in Bahrain, it is important to remember that honor and reputation play an important role. The risk becomes amplified in a team or collaborative setting. If you would like to encourage participation it is important first to clearly establish a non-threatening work environment and communicate fully that team-member participation is desired.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **1.5. The Case UAE: Communication in the UAE and Qatar**

The *United Arab Emirates (UAE)* are the most diverse country in the Gulf area: “Only the United Arab Emirates (UAE) among the Gulf States has made any real effort to diversify. With proven oil reserves of 98 billion barrels, the UAE is third in the world. Yet unlike its

neighbors in the Gulf, the UAE doggedly pursued diversification of its economy throughout the 1990s. By mid-decade, fully 63 percent of the UAE's GNP rested on nonpetroleum sources, and Dubai had become the region's largest free trade zone." (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In *United Arab Emirates' Business World* is written: "Business meetings can be time consuming and confusing, as they are always subject to unexpected interruptions and changes. Punctuality is not a priority in the Emirates; don't expect the Western approach to organization. A meeting slated to begin at 10 will more often than not start an hour late or more, and go on for hours." (*United Arab Emirates' Business World*) Irfan wrote in *Doing Business in the Middle East* in *Business Knowhow*: "The real powerhouse of the UAE is Abu Dhabi - the more conservative, wealthier elder brother to the more adventurous and gregarious younger sibling -Dubai. Following Dubai's financial problems, it was Abu Dhabi that came to Dubai's rescue. Dubai captured the heart and imagination of investors during the glory days of 2002-2007." (*Business Knowhow*) In *Management in Qatar* on the website *Kwintessential* is written that "Qatar's intercultural adaptability and readiness for change is developing all the time. Qatar is seen to have a medium tolerance for change and risk. It is important for innovations to have a track record or history noting the benefits if they are to be accepted and implemented." On the website *Kwintessential* is mentioned that "the fear of exposure, and the potential of embarrassment that may accompany failure, brings about aversion to risk and the need to thoroughly examine the potential negative implications. Because of this attitude, intercultural sensitivity is going to be required, especially when conducting group meetings and discussing contributions made by participating individuals." According to *Kwintessential*, "cross cultural understanding is important when reviewing the approach to timelines. Qataris will not want to upset others in order to force adherence to a deadline. Things generally take longer than expected since meetings are frequently interrupted and several meetings may be required to do what could be handled by a phone call at home. Globalization and intercultural expansion means some local managers may understand and appreciate the importance of adherence to schedules and deadlines." *Kwintessential* mentions that "managers reach decisions after many discussions with everyone involved. Once a decision is reached, it is handed down to subordinates to implement. Employees are generally treated with respect. In turn, employees treat their manager with the respect and deference attributable to their position." (*Kwintessential*) In *Management in the Arab Emirates* on the website *Kwintessential*

is written that “successful cross cultural management will understand the importance of maintaining a degree of formality and treating everyone with respect. Patience is critical to successful business dealings. Emiratis prefer to deal with people they know. They spend a great deal of time in relationship building. This is a crucial process and you would be wise not to rush it. Expect things to take longer than they would in a more western culture. It may take several meetings to accomplish what could be handled by a telephone call at home and patience may be a necessary cross cultural attribute.” On the website *Kwintessential* is written that “cross cultural management will be more effective when managing in the UAE if you keep in mind that each person has a very distinct role within the organization, and maintaining that role helps to keep order. In the UAE, as in other hierarchical societies, managers may take a somewhat paternalistic attitude to their employees.” (*Kwintessential*) According to the website *Kwintessential*, “managers reach decisions only after discussing the matter with the major stakeholders. Employees do not publicly question the decisions that managers have made. They wait to be told what to do. Risk-taking is limited to those in decision-making positions.” *Kwintessential* wrote that “good personal relationships are important since trust is required in order to conduct business. Emiratis are event rather than time-driven. If you try to rush things, you will give offense and risk your business relationship so patience is a necessary cross cultural attribute. Emiratis are tough negotiators. Do not use high-pressure sales tactics. Repeating your main points indicates you are telling the truth. Emiratis may repeatedly ask the same question to see if your response is consistent. There is a tendency to avoid giving bad news and to give flowery acceptances, which may only mean “perhaps”.”(Kwintessential)

According to *Kwintessential*, in Qatar “meeting deadlines is often secondary to maintaining personal relationships. Managers do not publicly chastise employees because it would cause the subordinate to lose dignity and respect so intercultural sensitivity will be needed.” *Kwintessential* wrote that “if you are working in Qatar, it is important to remember that honor and reputation play an important role and so some cross cultural sensitivity will be required. The risk becomes amplified in a team or collaborative setting. If you would like to encourage participation it is important first to clearly establish a non-threatening work environment and communicate fully that team-member participation is desired.” *Kwintessential* describes

Qataris as follows: “Qataris are event rather than time-driven and the actual meeting is more important than the timeliness or outcome. Companies are hierarchical with the highest-ranking person making the decisions. Decisions are reached slowly and if you try to rush things, you will give offense and risk your business relationship. Be careful about committing yourself orally, since verbal evidence carries more weight than written evidence under Sharia (Muslim) law.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **1.6. The Case Yemen: Business Communication in Yemen**

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Yemen: “On the other economic extreme from the Gulf States, Yemen is representative of the most impoverished Arab nations. Formerly two separate countries, present-day Yemen took shape when communist South Yemen and Islamically conservative North Yemen united.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*)

### **1.7. Business Communication in the African Arab Countries**

#### **The Case Morocco: Business Communication in Morocco**

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Morocco: “After more than 30 years in which most industry was controlled by the state, Morocco began in the mid-1990s to encourage privatization of a wide range of industries from its important fertilizer makers to hotels and telecommunication firms.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about Egypt: “Resentment of colonial occupation led to independence movements throughout the Arab World. This resistance led to a rather rapid return to at least partial self-rule in the British territories of Egypt (1922), Jordan (1923), and a bit later in Iraq (1932) in the interwar years.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about Tunisia and Morocco: Tunisia and Morocco broke free of France in 1956. Independence had to wait until the 1960s, however, for Mauritania, Kuwait, and Yemen; and even the 1970s for Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. The last colony, Djibouti, received independence from France only in 1977.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In *Business Style Morocco* on the website *Culture Crossing* was written that “Moroccans are very careful and indirect in their

communication style. Any direct confrontation with a Moroccan could cause a loss of face and hence shame for their family, thereby potentially dooming your future relationship. It is considered better to express a criticism through a colleague or friend, rather than face to face. Also, a Moroccan may say one thing in public to avoid awkwardness or shame, but sing a different tune when no longer in the public spotlight. A Moroccan adage reminds one to “Praise your friend in public but reprimand him in private.” (*Culture Crossing*) In *Intercultural Management Morocco* on the website *Kwintessential* is written about the activity of a manager: “The business set up in Morocco is conservative and hierarchical and to ensure successful cross cultural management it is important to remember that strictly defined roles exist. Always err on the side of conservative behaviour through your dress code and general conduct. Intercultural adaptability relies on an understanding of this hierarchical system. This belief means that people believe their supervisors have been chosen because of their greater experience.” (*Kwintessential*) Here also was mentioned that “Morocco’s intercultural competence and readiness for change is low. Its’ conservatism means that change can often be seen as a threat to society. Managers are therefore likely to be averse to change and it is essential that any changes are viewed as positive for the ‘whole’ and not just an individual. (...) Intercultural sensitivity is essential; introductions are imperative in this relationship-driven culture. The social side of business is very important. Moroccans must know and like you to conduct business.” (*Kwintessential*) In *Management in Morocco* on the website *Kwintessential* is written: “Intercultural adaptability relies on an understanding of this hierarchical system. This belief means that people believe their supervisors have been chosen because of their greater experience.” In *Management in Morocco* on the website *Kwintessential* is written that “Moroccans do not require as much personal space as many other cultures. As such, they will stand close to you while conversing and you may feel as if your personal space has been violated. Since Moroccans judge people on appearances, stay in a high standard international hotel. Likewise, wear good quality conservative clothes since they mark you as a person of status.” On the website *Kwintessential* is mentioned that “cross cultural communication will be more effective when you are working in Morocco, if you remember that honor and reputation play an important role. When holding meetings, it is important to ensure that any ideas raised do not expose or embarrass the individual. Managers should avoid praising individuals as all projects are to be undertaken collectively.” According

to *Kwintessential*, “the social side of business is very important. Moroccans must know and like you to conduct business. Companies are hierarchical with the highest ranking person making decisions, but only after obtaining a group consensus. If the government is involved, discussions will take even longer since the ministers of several departments may be consulted.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **1.8. The Case Libya: Business Communication in Libya**

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Libya: “In August 1996 the United States passed its Iran-Libya Sanctions Acts. The acts require mandatory sanctions against any company, whether it be a U.S. company or not, that invests in Iran or Libya. The act has little effect on Libya itself, nor on U.S. companies, which had not dealt with Libya in any case. The resultant backlash from European and Asian nations, however, has actually raised Libya from the status of pariah to one of sympathy.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about Libya: “First Libya, and then Iraq and Algeria, nationalized their foreign oil companies. During the same decade, both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait purchased controlling interest of theirs.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* is written about Algeria: “It was (...) France which began the occupation of the Arab World in earnest when in 1841 it wrested Algeria from the Ottomans after more than a decade of warfare.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In *Libya's Business World* is written about business in Libya: “There are some key concepts in Libyan society that govern the way business is done there, and the most essential concept is that of *wasta*, which roughly translates to ‘influence’. *Wasta* is a direct effect of personal relationships, trust and honor, and it relates to the idea of having friends in high places. Libyan business is largely based on reciprocity, so *wasta* is a prominent concept there”. (*ArabCin.net Arabian Business*) In *Doing Business in Libya* on the website *Kwintessential* is written about communication customs in Libya: “Most Libyans consider themselves Arabs, although there is a strong Berber influence in the population. Nearly 98% of the population is Berber-Arabic. There are small communities of Greeks, Maltese, and Italians. (...) As Arabs the vast majority of Libyans are Muslim. Colonel Qaddafi states that Islam is the only viable system that can help answer man's political, economic and social

problems on earth and provide him with happiness in the world to come.” (*Kwintessential*) On the website *Kwintessential* is also mentioned about communication customs in Libya that “it is important for Libyans to maintain the dignity, honor and a good reputation of their families through their own conduct. This is a collective culture. In order to maintain a sense of harmony, people will act with decorum at all times and not do not do anything to cause someone else public embarrassment. Personal feelings and needs are often subjugated for the good of the group.” (*Kwintessential*) On the website *Kwintessential* is also mentioned about communication customs in Libya that “Libyans prefer to do business with those they know and respect, therefore expect to spend time cultivating a personal relationship before business is conducted.” (*Kwintessential*) Abubaker wrote in *Influence of Core Cultural Values on the Communication Behaviour of Staff in Libyan Organisations* about the communication behaviours in Libya in the time before the end of the Ghaddafi regime: “In Libya, communist public organisational systems are adopted in many sectors, such as business, education, health, and media; in addition to other social and political organisations. The organisational development in developed countries leads many organisations in developing countries to adopt Western models without considering local cultural values, as is the case with Libya. This leads to conflict between organisational values and national values (Al-Hamadi et al, 2007). Therefore, the allure of globalisation has affected most organisations in Libya. It has also created huge debate about organisational values and the methods of dealing with social issues in Libyan organisations. In terms of education, Libyan universities are considered new organisations in Libyan society.” (Abubaker) Abubaker mentioned that “according to the Islamic work ethics, hard work and the respect of people in the place of work are considered virtues. Therefore, social relations at work are also encouraged. Thus, it is important to have good relationships with your colleagues and leaders, because links inside and outside work can be vital elements in achieving successful communication among staff.” (Abubaker) According to Abubaker, “Libyan culture is characterised by high power distance, high masculinity, high uncertainty avoidance and low individualism. According to Hofstede, all these factors have contributed negatively to the communication among staff in the decision making process. He argues that most of the appointed managers in this region held high power distance and uncertainty avoidance, which affect decisions and communication in Libyan organisations.” (Abubaker) Belshek in “How are core cultural values manifested in

communication styles of Libyan postgraduate students in the UK?” wrote: “Cultural background can have an effect on communication styles which can be seen through actual behavior and ways in which people interact with one another. In this study, it was hypothesized that notions of individualism-collectivism, self-construals and values have varying effects on Libyan students' communication styles with people of a British background. In particular, the more collectivistic the values of Libyan postgraduate students, the more interdependent their self-construals are; consequently, the more high-context (HC) communication styles they tend to use; and vice versa. It is also hypothesized that the predominant communication style of Libyan postgraduates tends to be HC.” (Belshek)

### **1.9. The Case Egypt: Business Communication in Egypt**

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Egypt:

“By contrast to Yemen, the most impressive turnaround story in the Arab World has been Egypt's success in the 1990s. At the beginning of the decade, Egypt—the most populous Arab nation—ran a fiscal deficit of 20 percent of GNP and its foreign reserves were negligible. (...) Of all Arab nations, Egypt was most affected by the East Asian economic crisis, since the collapse of shipping both to and from Asia seriously hurt revenues from Suez Canal traffic.”  
(*Encyclopedia of Business*)

In *Doing Business in Egypt* on the website *Kwintessential* is written: “When doing business in Egypt you will soon realise that business and personal are intertwined. Therefore do not be offended if people walk into a meeting and start chatting to your counterpart. This is just part of the process. Remain calm, be patient and you will soon get your counterpart's full attention.” *Kwintessential* also states: “The key to doing business well in Egypt is patience. This is especially true in negotiations. Business meetings will be slow and lengthy affairs as you move from chit-chat to business.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **1.10. Business Communication in the Mediterranean Arab Countries**

#### **The Case Jordan: Business Communication in Jordan**

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Jordan: "Like Egypt, Jordan too found it necessary to turn to the IMF for assistance, though at a later date and for different reasons. Following the Gulf War, Jordan was perceived to have sympathized with Iraq. As a result, Jordan suddenly found itself with reduced trade options and without its previously substantial aid from the Gulf States, notably Saudi Arabia." (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In *Intercultural Management Jordan* on the website *Kwintessential* is written that "the business set up in Jordan is conservative and hierarchical and to ensure successful cross cultural management it is important to remember that strictly defined roles exist. Always err on the side of conservative behavior through your dress code and general conduct and show and expect to be shown the appropriate deference to position, age and rank. Intercultural adaptability relies on an understanding of this hierarchical system. This belief means that people believe their supervisors have been chosen because of their greater experience. It's seen as inappropriate to question any supervisor's decisions and managers should not consult lower-ranking individuals in the decision-making process." (*Kwintessential*) According to *Kwintessential*, "managers in Jordan are often paternalistic and relationships with their employees usually overlap into personal areas." (*Kwintessential*) The role of a manager is connected to cross cultural communication, which "will be more effective when you are working in Jordan, if you remember that honor and reputation play an important role. When holding meetings, it is important to ensure that any ideas raised do not expose or embarrass the individual. Managers should avoid praising individuals as all projects are to be undertaken collectively. The paternalism between manager and employee means that the role of managers often extends to advice on personal matters." (*Kwintessential*) The approach to time and priorities in Jordan is according to the website *Kwintessential* as follows: "Deadlines and timescales are fluid. Patience is the key to successful intercultural management when working in Jordan. Essentially a relationship-driven culture, it should be understood that taking the time to get to know someone will always take precedence over any timelines. Don't rush the relationship building process or you may jeopardize any future business dealings." (*Kwintessential*) The critical point of management in Jordan is the deadline: "When working with people from Jordan, it's advisable to reinforce the importance of the agreed-upon deadlines and how that may affect the rest of the organization. However, it isn't unusual for a

manager in Jordan to avoid confrontation over a deadline in order to maintain a positive relationship within the team.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **The Case Syria: Business Communication in Syria**

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Syria: “In stark contrast to the economic flowering of Egypt or the more painful growth of Jordan, Syria is one of the most stagnant major economies in the Arab World. For most of the Cold War, Syria was the Soviet Union's closest ally in the Middle East. Soviet aid financed Syria's economic isolation from the reach of the global economy.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*)

### **The Case Lebanon: Business Communication in Lebanon**

In the section *Doing Business in the Arab World* of the *Encyclopedia of Business* the following is written about Lebanon: “Since 1992, Lebanon began to regain economic stability and its GNP (currently at approximately \$16 billion) has averaged an 8 percent annual growth rate throughout much of the following decade, among the most rapid rates of growth in the Arab World. Yet the political state of the nation is questionable. While clearly the most democratic nation in the Arab World, Lebanon remains heavily dominated by the hostilities of its neighbors Israel and Syria.” (*Encyclopedia of Business*) In *Intercultural Management Lebanon* on the website *Kwintessential* is written that in order “to ensure successful cross cultural management in Lebanon, you need be aware of the strict protocols and rituals that exist. You may be able to relax your style over time as you develop a more personal relationship with your business colleagues. Lebanese business is in a state of flux. Many companies, eager for international investment and trade, have adopted Western business practices while others have not. If chosen carefully a local agent or representative may be advantageous when scheduling meetings with a company you have not done business with previously. Do not rush the process of hiring an agent as your company will be judged on the reputation of this person and they will be viewed as your organization when you are not in the country.” According to the website *Kwintessential*, “Lebanese will ask for and expect business associates to grant favors. It is in your best interest to agree even if you do not think that you will be able to comply. They will understand that circumstances prevented you from taking

action, but their honor will be preserved by your agreement.” *Kwintessential* wrote that “Lebanon’s intercultural adaptability and readiness for change is low. Lebanon remains a low risk and low change-tolerant culture despite the apparent adoption of Western business practices. This means that change for its own sake is not necessarily considered a good thing, although in some circles it may be. Many older Lebanese continue to see change as a threat to the culture.” According to *Kwintessential*, “Lebanon is a fluid time culture, and as is the case with many fluid time cultures, it is also very relationship-oriented. (...) “Lebanese prefer not to give an overt “no” during negotiations and will often use elaborate language that says little to avoid saying something that could be contentious. Be prepared to offer concessions; however, do so with elaborate demonstrations of regret and reluctance. Asking for concessions in return brands you as a skilled negotiator.” (*Kwintessential*)

### **The Case Tunisia**

In *Management in Tunisia* on the website *Kwintessential* was written that “since business is considered personal, it is fairly common for Tunisians to request favours. Even if you think that you will not be able to comply, it is a good idea to agree. Your Tunisian colleague will appreciate your agreement and will understand that circumstances intervened that prevented you from doing so.” (*Kwintessential*) *Kwintessential* writes that “in Tunisia (...) honour and reputation play an important role.” (*Kwintessential*) On the website *Kwintessential* was also written that “due to the hierarchical set up in Tunisia, it is important that the manager maintains his / her role as ‘boss’ and engenders the necessary respect from within the team. Cross cultural sensitivity is essential as it is important any individual contributing ideas that are deemed irrelevant or impractical does not feel shamed in front of his/her colleagues and that the rest of the group feel able to continue participating and offering their contributions.” (*Kwintessential*)

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