Analysis of Challenges Facing the Pottery Industry in Lalejin Using Grounded Theory

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Extended Abstract
1. Introduction
Lalejin, with more than 750 years history of pottery and ceramic production is one of the most important parts of the pottery production in Iran. On the other hand, the highest employment rate of Hamadan Province (87.3%) is dedicated to this City. Besides, regarding the local and foreign tourists, Lalejin has always been considered as a tourism center in Hamadan. Unfortunately, in the recent years due to the problems this art-industry is facing with, pottery production workshops in this area are closing one after another. So, the purpose of the present paper is to identify and perform a pathologic diagnosis of the challenges Lalejin's Pottery Industry is facing in order to provide solutions and take new measures to achieve the growth and prosperity again.

2. Theoretical Framework
Since the late 70s and early 80s, considering the deteriorating economic conditions, and even failing to provide the minimum basic needs in many third world countries, this, gradually caused to express doubts about the efficiency of the western models of development. It is believed that these communities with different cultural, economic background, requirements and capabilities should be looking for different and appropriate pattern of development. Therefore, the concepts of medium technology or appropriate technology, as a technology that meets the real needs of society, with less destructive effects to the society and environment have been raised. Thus, many developing countries to deal with unemployment and poverty have begun extensive planning to expand small and rural industries such as handicrafts.

3. Methodology
The purpose of this study is to provide a clear picture of the challenges Lalejin's pottery industry is facing in the form of a model using Grounded Theory. This

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study used a qualitative method and the study population includes potters and qualified persons in pottery and handicrafts. Based on the proficiency and knowledge in the studied subject, purposive process of sampling was performed using the snowball technique. The main method of data collection in the Grounded Theory was the in-depth interviews. Theoretical saturation was gained after interviewing 30 individuals (10 experts and 20 potters). In this study, in addition to the researcher's theoretical sensitivity to data collection, specific criteria including credibility and dependability for doing the qualitative research were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the data.

4. Results & Discussion

In the first step of data analysis, after the implementation of the collected data through interview, open coding was performed. Then, according to the nature of the challenges and the relationship between them, the codes from A to I were given to each of the propounded problems and challenges. In the axial coding, the coded data were compared and similar codes were classified in the same group. In the final stage, selective coding was reviewed across all the stages of research with a holistic view through the story path review, the integration of the classes, and understanding the relationship between them. Finally, a conceptual framework derived from the combined results was presented. Based on the obtained results, Lalejin pottery industry is facing 9 major problems which are as follows: problems related to the mobilization of resources and the required raw materials, technical and technological problems, structural and infrastructural problems, information giving and advertising problems, legal problems, administrative and management problems, financial problems, educational and research problems, and problems related to the supply and marketing system.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

One of the main problems is the resource mobilization and the required raw materials. The main part of this issue is related to the lack of research centers and laboratories for the preparation and processing of the raw materials. Technical and technological problems are other raised issues by the experts and potters. In Lalejin's pottery workshops, the required tools, moulds and patterns are still produced traditionally by indigenous people and welders which can reduce the efficiency and the quality of the products. Structural and infrastructural weakness such as inappropriate distribution of workshops at the regional level and their style-industrial activity mismatch is another challenge. Poor information giving and advertising to introduce Lalejin's pottery industry is another serious problem, why Lalejin name and its pottery industry which has the highest rate of inflow exchange for Hamedan has not been mentioned in tourism brochures. Other raised issue is related to the legal problems. Unfortunately, the social security does not consider pottery as a hard work despite the hardship and difficulties many potters are facing. On the other hand, working with pottery wheels is considered as an
industrial activity which is not considered eligible for the artists’ insurance coverage. The most important challenges of Lalejin' pottery industry from the experts’ and potter's view are the administrative and managerial problems. One of the important raised issues is the handicrafts' import through illegal channels. Financial problems are the other raised issues which affect the potter’s ability to modernize their traditional ovens and kilns and the use of gas piping system. Poor education and promotion system and potters unfamiliarity with the modern knowledge of pottery is another major problem. In this regard, repetitive and undiversified shapes and forms, lack of innovation and imitative products are some other causes of failure while competing the Chinese products. Issues related to supply and marketing system are other challenges faced by this industry. The main problem to export goods is the variety of products’ dimensions and the lack of proper packaging. Middlemen activities and the impossibility of direct supply of products due to the shortage of required beds and, consequently, meager profits of the producers are the major problems related to the marketing. In the end, the following suggestions are presented to solve the above-mentioned problems to overcome the challenges faced by the industry: Establishing research centers and laboratories, e setting up Trade Unions to protect the potters’ rights, reviewing the potter’s insurance regulations, organizing the training courses and scientific visits, creating customs post in Lalejin, Developing modern and industrial packaging, Developing pottery cooperative activities in various fields, designing TV programs and advertising brochures to introduce Lalejin Pottery.

Key Words: Handicrafts, Pottery, Challenges, Grounded Theory, Lalejin City.

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