

An Explanation of Future-Building Factors Influencing the Preservation and Development of Lustre Pottery in Kashan (Based on James Allen Dator's Components)

Zahra Amani

PhD Candidate, Department of Islamic Art, TarbiatModares University, Tehran, Iran/
zahra.amani@modares.ac.ir

Mahnaz Shayestehfar

Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Art, TarbiatModares University, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author)/ shayesteh@modares.ac.ir

IrwanSyah Md Yusoff

Assistant Professor, Department of Industrial Design, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia/ irwansyah@upm.edu.my

SahraKosari

Assistant Professor, Department of Futures Studies in Science and Technology, National Research Institute for Science Policy, Tehran, Iran/ kosari@nrsp.ac.ir

Received: 29/03/2025

Accepted: 14/07/2025

Introduction

Iran is regarded as one of the most important cradles of pottery in the Islamic world. With the advent of Islam and a cultural shift from ostentation toward simplicity, certain functions of costly metal vessels were transferred to ceramics, including lustreware. Among the pottery-producing centers, the city of Kashan attained a distinguished position in the development of lustreware. Accordingly, the present study seeks to explain the factors influencing the preservation and development of Kashan lustreware through a futures-studies approach. Today, this art faces challenges such as the decline in master artisans, limitations in knowledge transmission, shifts in audience preferences, and competition with industrial products. Under such circumstances, futures studies can serve as an effective tool for analyzing the current situation. Dator's approach, with its focus on the trends, events, images of the future, and actions, provides a framework for understanding possible futures. As an example, the works of Abbas Akbari, selected as an active artist in this technique in the city of Kashan, were examined to analyze the connection between tradition and innovation in the contemporary context.

Materials and Methods

This qualitative research is applied in terms of its purpose and was conducted using a descriptive-analytic method, with its data collected through documents and observations. The data analysis carried out through a futures-studies approach. This approach was based on James Allen Dator's components, which identified trends, events, images, and actions for the purpose of outlining future scenarios. Dator emphasizes the importance of studying the future and believes that people should be prepared to confront various possible futures. Given that the focus of this research was on the city of Kashan, among contemporary artists, the works of an artist active in the production and promotion of lustreware in Kashan were selected for study. This paper seeks to enhance preparedness for shaping desirable futures and aims through examining trends, events, and related images and actions so as to provide appropriate solutions by presenting compatible scenarios. This requires creative thinking and interdisciplinary collaboration so that effective strategies for preserving culture and identity can be offered.

Results and Findings

The components of Dator in this research include various factors, the most important of which in the trends and events section are as follows:

- Cultural Factors
 - Religious and ideological influences
 - Symbolism and motifs
 - Intercultural influences

- Social Factors
 - The emergence of the middle class
 - The reflection of social life

- Economic Factors
 - Economic constraints
 - Trade and commerce
 - Recession and revival

- Technological Factors
 - Lustreware technique
 - Use of nanoparticles
 - Innovation in materials

In the actions and images section, which follows the previous two components, the scenarios derived from the analysis of factors influencing the preservation and development of Kashan lustreware were presented based on Dator's components and the identified drivers.

- a) Continued growth scenario: the growth scenario refers to a future in which existing trends continue without fundamental structural changes, and the system that relies on increased production, consumption, and expansion of activities, follows a path of quantitative development.
- b) Collapse scenario: this scenario depicts a future in which Kashan lustreware will gradually disappear due to the lack of support, declining interest among younger generations, and the competition with industrial products, becoming limited to a museum-based or obsolete art.
- c) Transformation or discipline scenario: this scenario encompasses sustainability and standardization, technological innovation, specialized and global markets, institutional support, and international cooperation. In this future, Kashan lustreware is recognized as an authentic, rare, and simultaneously modern and global cultural-artistic product. This art, while preserving its historical roots, attains a stable and valuable position among both specialized and general audiences through innovation and intelligent presence in global markets. This scenario is more desirable than the previous two.

Based on Allen Dator's components, the works of Abbas Akbari illustrated the imitation of past works, innovation in design, and new applications. As mentioned in the text, Alan Caiger-Smith and Greg Daly both had emphasized the balance between tradition and innovation in Akbari's works. This balance transfigured Akbari into a pioneer in the production and promotion of lustreware. In particular, the use of ta'liq script in a visual manner without emphasis on conceptual content demonstrated a modern approach to traditional art that can attract global audiences.

Therefore, It can be noted that Kashan lustreware is highly dependent on maintaining a balance between preserving traditional authenticity and embracing modern innovations. The transformation scenario, with its focus on technology, global marketing, and

international collaboration, can turn this art into a global brand, while the discipline scenario, with its emphasis on sustainability and specialized markets, prevents its extinction.

Conclusion

Lustreware is not only an artistic achievement but also a reflection of cultural, social, economic, and technological conditions in Iran. Based on the analyses conducted in this research, it was determined that four major cultural, economic, social, and technological factors are evident in Kashan pottery. The explanation of these four factors based on Dator’s components is presented according to the items shown in Table (1).

Table 1: Explanation of the factors of Dator on Kashan's Lustre Pottery

Dimension	Social	Technological	Economic	Cultural
Trend	The entry of Chinese products and responding to European tastes; Excessive import of cheap, high-quality products; Reduced craftsmen; Enhanced participation of women and youth	Improved glazing methods; Using digital design	The expensiveness of gold and silver utensils and tendency to cheaper utensils, the growth of online markets; increasing demand for luxury products	Disinterest in silver and gold objects; increased interest in pottery with diverse and authentic Iranian forms and patterns
Event	Holding academic training courses; Reverse migration of youth	Creating a dedicated online platform; Using advanced kilns	Reducing export restrictions; holding local festivals; Providing bank’s loans	Global registration of the Iranian Lustre Pottery technique with UNESCO; holding international exhibitions
Action	Educating the new generation; holding media campaigns; attracting tourists	Establishing a glaze laboratory; Using 3D printing of molds	Forming cooperatives; branding using exquisite packaging; increasing national income	Collaborating with museums; holding the Lustre Pottery festival
Vision	Creating Kashan’s pottery production technology park, continuing pottery production in small workshops	Producing new utensils using nanotechnology, smart kilns with precise temperature control, and digital design of traditional motifs, using 3D scanning to reconstruct historical Lustre Pottery works	Private sector investment and branding of small workshops	Re-promoting theLustre Pottery art as a symbol of Iranian identity

Based on this, some strategies for the development of Kashan lusterware pottery are presented in Table (2).

Table 2: Proposed actions for the development and preservation of Kashan lusterware

Actions	Factors	Example	Descriptions
Reviving original motifs and forms with a contemporary approach	Cultural: Maintaining identity Social: Increasing society's tendency to identity-based products Economic: Luxury goods market Technological: Design software	Producing creative utensils in Kashan's workshops (such as Abbas Akbari's works)	Redesigning traditional motifs such as: Arabesque and Khatai (floral) with modern use
Developing technology for glaze production and firing kilns	Cultural: Maintaining authenticity Social: Promoting public awareness of traditional arts Economic: Reducing costs Technological: Using advanced kilns	Specialized research on Lustre Pottery glaze	Improving the quality of glazing and firing with modern kilns
Teaching and promoting pottery skills	Cultural: Cultural transmission Social: Enhancing community participation in learning and revitalizing indigenous arts Economic: Job creation Technology: Digital education	Holding Lustre Pottery technique workshops in Kashan	Holding workshops and training courses for the new generation
Marketing and Branding	Cultural: Introducing the Iranian art Social: Increasing public demand for authentic artistic products Economic: Increasing exports Technology: Online sales	Selling Lustre Pottery dishes as elegant corporate gifts	Offering products on online platforms and in international exhibitions
Manufacturing applied utensils with traditional forms	Cultural: Adapting to modern needs Social: Promoting the daily use of traditional art in lifestyle Economic: Increasing sales Technology: Molding	Using hunting ground-decorated table services in traditional restaurants	Designing applied utensils and dishes inspired by historical forms
Collaborating with museums and cultural centers	Cultural: Enhancing public awareness Social: Strengthening the sense of social belonging to cultural heritage Economic: Attracting capital Technology: 3D scanning	Reconstructing and replicating Kashan's Lustre Pottery utensils and dishes	Reproducing historical utensils and dishes with the support of cultural institutions

The case study of this research, the lusterware works of Abbas Akbari, as one of the most prominent contemporary productions, demonstrates that this historical technique still possesses a high capacity for continuity, growth, and innovation. The creative re-creation of past motifs and forms, alongside the efforts of this artist and other practitioners active in this field to teach and introduce lusterware at the national and international levels, attests to the possibility of a dynamic and meaningful promotion of this art. The identified factors—strengthening educational infrastructures, utilizing modern technologies, developing digital marketing, and institutional support—can outline a sustainable path for the future of Kashan lusterware. Although the future is always accompanied by uncertainty, by reliance on historical experiences, the analysis of current trends enables the provision of effective strategies for safeguarding and developing the rich Iranian cultural heritage.

Keywords: lusterware pottery, futures studies, James Allen Dator, Kashan pottery.