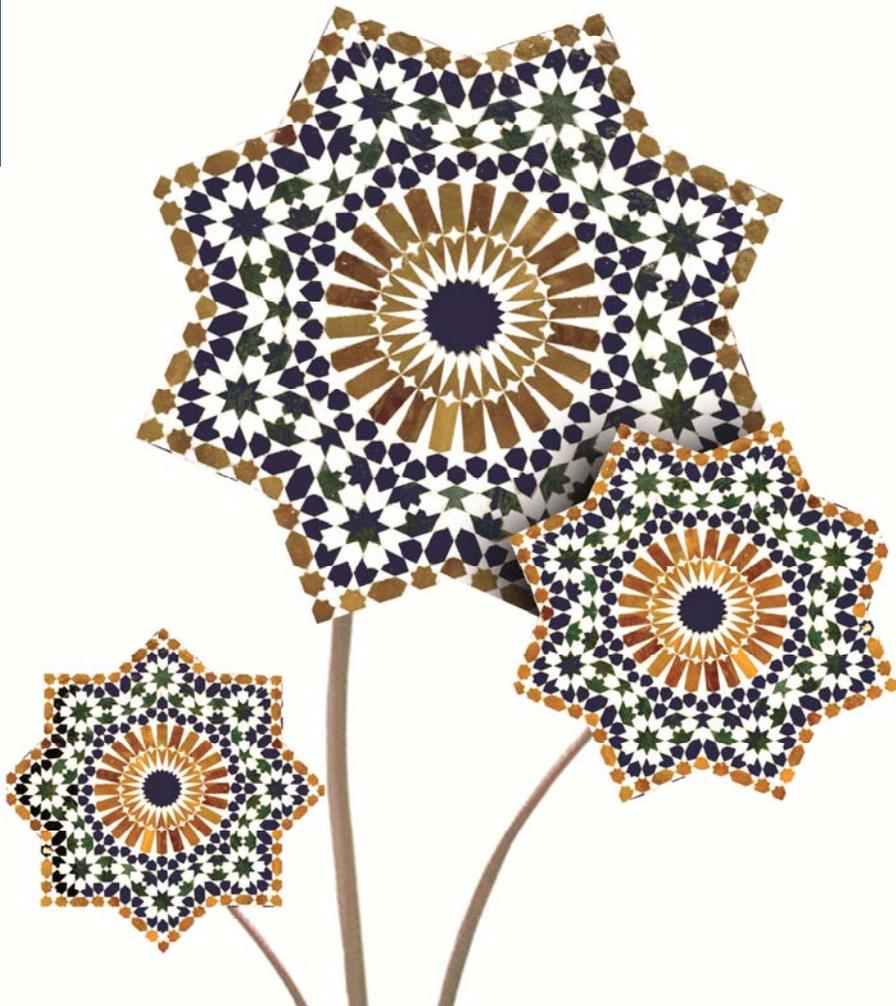




USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MOROCCO ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAM

DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETING OF SAFI POTTERY



September 2011

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MOROCCO ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAM

DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETING OF SAFI POTTERY

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By DAI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report combines the findings of several consulting assignments in Morocco and home furnishings expositions in the United States, and is meant to provide an overview of the Safi pottery market; its current status, needs, and opportunities; and the potential for sales in international and domestic markets. Specifically, this report includes findings from the following consultants' activities from March-August 2011:

- Ernie Owens
- Andrea Chartock
- Aïcha Zanifi

This report is intended to inform work planning for the MEC project, and will also serve as an informative reference for companies, cooperatives, and individuals involved in the pottery sector in Morocco who are interested in an overview of the challenges and opportunities facing Safi pottery producers.

Overall, the consultants found that although there is a relatively well-developed domestic end-market for Safi pottery in Morocco, exports to US and European markets are often constrained to smaller, "international" stores, rather than entering mainstream home furnishings markets. There are also untapped domestic markets that could be accessed by Moroccan firms. There are significant opportunities for growth in these markets; however, market entry and expansion will require improved adherence to quality standards and understanding of design preferences, stronger relationships with buyers' representatives, and augmentation of existing market channels to facilitate agents' ability to work internationally.

SAFI POTTERY – STATUS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Historically, the coastal town of Safi has been known throughout Morocco and the world for its artisanal pottery. From the information gathered during the workshops and meetings with artisans, their businesses were able to afford them reasonable living during the past years, thanks to the intermediaries and the agents buying containers of pottery and ship them to tourist areas such as Marrakech or shops in big cities such as Casablanca and Rabat.

Today, artisans complain that the sales are slow and their businesses are barely surviving. They are aware that this is the direct consequence of a lack of the necessary business processes to further develop and grow their activities: There is no set production schedule or planning, no quality assurance notions, no packaging development, no costing documents nor clear bill of materials or catalogue of products to promote their business in the marketplace, no predefined marketing strategy; the few artisans do have web sites that are not updated in a regular basis, or do not contain extensive catalogs and are not representative enough of their products range and the varieties.

There are three main categories of enterprises that can be found in Safi working in Pottery. These are medium, small and micro enterprises.

- The medium sized companies within SME definitions are the largest of Safi companies. They export and have more than 20 employees, but less than 70 employees total.
- Small enterprises use skilled labor to run the pottery wheel, paint the decorations, and carry out production. These enterprises have between 10-20 Employees and might have a few small export orders such as a European buyer visiting once per year.
- “Mono artisans” or microenterprises all have less than 10 employees. These could be artisans working by themselves, who often share a kiln and wheels within a cooperative, or have their own small workshops with 5-6 employees.

Production quality varies greatly, and can be divided between artisanal pottery (often very high quality), and mass-produced pottery (often significantly lower quality). While some master artisans have developed prosperous enterprises and produced high quality pottery for export and high-end domestic and tourist markets, the majority produces poor quality objects sold in local markets.

DOMESTIC MARKETS

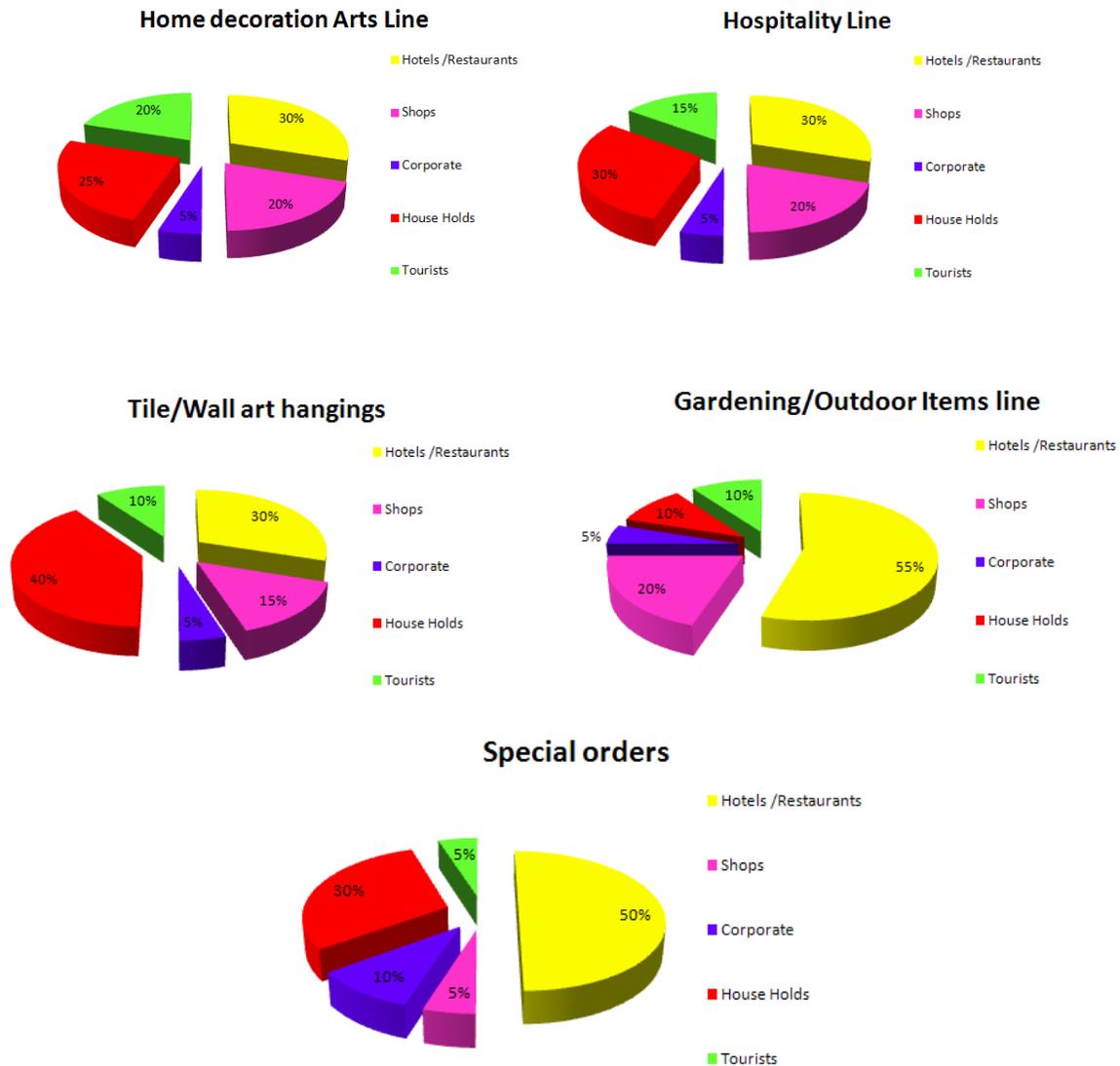
Production and Design

Safi's domestic pottery's market covers five major products lines, including: hospitality, wall arts, home decoration arts, outdoor/gardening, and special orders. These product lines are sold across five basic market segments: hospitality, retail, corporate, household, and tourist. It is important to note that there is no significant production related to promotional items and gifts for corporate clients. This particular line could be developed for the domestic market targeting corporate, multinational firms based in Morocco, and institutions such as banks, communication agencies, or spa centers for their promotional events.

While the variety and potential for production is strong, in general, many plants' equipment is depreciated and suffers from poor maintenance: machines and equipment are badly maintained and need renovation. Furthermore, a lack of quality Assurance (QA) systems and quality inspections for in-process and finished goods result in a majority of pottery products with flaws and/or deficiencies.

During the visit to Safi's pottery makers to assess the domestic market potential, the MEC consultant conducted a survey of pottery makers, cooperatives and mono artisans to understand how the domestic market is built up and its main market segments. Despite the difficulties encountered in gathering accurate statistics and data related to domestic sales per product line, the consultant conducted a survey to estimate the sales breakdown per product line and per market segment as illustrated in the charts below:

Figure 1 : Domestic Pottery Market Segmentation



Domestic pottery producers face high competition from imported pottery and ceramic products in the domestic market. There are a growing number of local shops and domestic franchises selling imported and cheap pottery products including home ware, decorative items and gifts at very competitive prices. For example, YA Tout has more than 60 stores in Morocco that offer a wide variety of pottery products such as: candle-holders, table tops, flower pots, home decorations, *coin de chine* and others. Safi's pottery is also facing competition from international franchises based in Morocco that are offering pottery products from Portugal and Spain (such as Miro Home, Zara Home, etc) to Moroccan consumers at attractive prices.

Marketing

Safi's pottery handicraft sector is an essential part of the tourism sector, and pottery from Safi is sold widely in tourist market places nationwide as well as at hotels and airports gifts shops, giving producers a readily-available domestic market for their goods. Safi's pottery makers also have the ability to provide a wide range of products customized to customers' preferences with the availability of high capacity plants for production, especially medium sized companies such as Serghini, Assif, Mattouf, and Chakir.

However, despite these strengths, a lack of human resource capacity, particularly in "soft skills" such as creativity and talent, coupled with weak marketing and promotion activities (web sites, catalogues, visual data base), and a lack of modern packaging limits the ability of firms to expand their sales.

Poor preparation for client meetings combines with distance and poor ability to communicate with potential local firms, gift shops, restaurants and luxury hotels to further limit the spread of Safi's pottery in the domestic market. Furthermore, most producers lack a costing and pricing system that would allow them to respond promptly to clients' requests. For example, when meeting with firms interested in sourcing corporate gifts, producers did not bring free customized samples, catalogues, or price lists.

EXPORT MARKETS

Production and Design

As with domestic production, quality and infrastructure of workshops and factories varies greatly among producers. Specifically, MEC's consultant visited some high-quality showrooms with unique and beautiful pottery, but also visited two large factories that were disorganized, with broken ceramic, clutter, and trash throughout, and low-quality products.

Regarding design, the pieces identified to be exported to the US have either been the traditional Safi design to be sold in "Moroccan/ international stores" or terracotta potted plant holders (more suited to the usual consumption of terra cotta pottery in the US). As shown at High Point, the US market varies a lot by region and market segment. However, simple colors such as white and monotonous are popular. In particular the new "trendy" colors seen at the market are: lime green, teal, orange (with a red tint "cayenne"/ "marigold", persimmon), and cobalt blue (with a hint of teal), different hues of gray and turquoise. Some showrooms had pieces with more "glamorous/ glitzy" color schemes such as pieces with busier patterns and gold accents, but the showroom owners explained that such patterns are more for Eastern European/ Russian buyers visiting the show and not for the American preferences.

In contrast, the pieces exported to France, Spain, Switzerland and other European countries were either traditional Safi designs, those modified to look less colorful and more modern (e.g. light gray design on white background) or to look more similar to the traditional motifs produced in that importing country (e.g. French "country style pottery" with yellow and one other color).

Currently, there is a need for producers to start working on new designs, shapes, and colors that better address the needs of the US market, as there is too much pottery with the same "look" and not enough variety among samples, which leads to difficulty in placing multiple large orders with international buyers who are looking to compete with one another in either the US or European markets.

Marketing

As of March 2011, most sales of Moroccan pottery are to either domestic markets (Marrakesh, Casablanca, and tourist towns) or for export to smaller stores in Europe and around the world. France has been a traditional export market, as seen in the chart below, but since the economic

recession, sales have fallen dramatically. Spain, Belgium, and the US are significant importers of Moroccan pottery (see tables 1 and 2, below).

The small and microenterprises report that international buyers previously came to Safi with orders before the economic recession, but have stopped coming since 2008. As a result, they now sell their products to middle men who are from other Moroccan cities (such as Marrakech and Casablanca) who then either sell them there or ship them overseas. Those same enterprises mention that they don't generally know where the products go after they are bought by middlemen. Currently, these pottery producers are currently producing without any clear concept of what would be demanded by international clients as they receive little market information about color, style, and functionality taste preferences.

The medium sized companies all report diminished sales, orders and exports since the economic crisis but do still export. One of the leading medium sized companies noted that a lot of pottery enterprises used to sell one big order per year to Carrefour in France and then went out of business in the process. Therefore, this enterprise diversified into selling smaller orders to more international buyers (e.g. 20 spaced over a year). The consultant identified one medium sized company exporting all of their production, which had clearly modified their design for export market requirements. In their warehouse, non-traditional colors and motifs can be seen such as pictures of sunshine, fish, small animals, etc.

Despite diminished sales, importers at the High Point show confirmed that the wholesale prices mentioned from Safi all were seen as very competitive. In general though, all the importers mentioned that the Safi companies will need to devise much better quality packaging (and, therefore, increase their wholesale prices) in order to sell successfully to the US market.

Tables 1 and 2, below, highlight the volume of sales of Moroccan pottery in US and European markets from 2005-2010.

Table 1 : Moroccan imports in USD into key export markets 2005- 2010, HS 691200, Ceramic Tableware, Kitchenware, and Other Household & Toilet Articles

Importing country	Rank	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Germany	30th	91,326	122,414	134,374	68,782	71,483	63,970
France	22	1,094,434	1,105,307	807,219	1,622,389	229,898	188,040
US	39	92,346	92,138	112,299	232,332	46,369	77,614
Italy	29	96,608	42,818	81,282	60,325	41,276	24,979
Belgium	21	110,066	110,408	245,487	96,242	89,746	107,211
Spain	13	129,123	164,399	321,139	135,434	406,578	239,786

Table 2: HS 691390, Statuettes and Other Ornamental Articles of Ceramics Moroccan sales in USD

Importing country	Rank	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Germany	28	120,962	120,915	211,061	26,146	92,095	70,440
France	12	1,189,092	1,028,017	1,710,846	1,015,233	640,236	374,362
US	23	210,118	487,730	378,426	407,456	213,548	152,650
Italy	21	157,170	144,752	85,701	101,778	109,285	30,925
Belgium	20	133,621	112,264	114,434	121,804	80,236	90,647
Spain	14	427,089	294,507	342,730	202,266	95,668	111,004

Source: <http://www.gtis.com/gta/secure/gateway.cfm> (global trade atlas subscription service)

Despite the favorable reception of US buyers to Safi pottery, challenges to market entry remain, both from a logistical perspective, and in terms of quality control.

US buyers will insist on working with a buyer's agent which represents them and their interests. This person should speak English, make sure all quality standards are met (and tested as necessary), that the packaging and paperwork is done correctly and that the order is on time. Occasionally, such a person might need to advance money to producers for materials and/ or act as an intermediary for payment. European buyers typically send such a person to Safi and once trust is established with a supplier they may stop sending a buyer's agent and just rely on the Safi company to comply with requirements and communicate back and forth with photos over email.

For Safi, there are Moroccan buyer's agents in other cities in Morocco who can do this work, or it is possible to try to train local Safi agents. At the time of the investigative work in March, we were told that there were no independent local buyer's agents that were actively working. The local government Delegation is interested in helping to create a commercial structure within Safi that can represent pottery producers to the market and feed them with orders and marketing requirements (colors, designs, etc.). Such a person would need to be on email daily, in contact with the buyers and with the producers. Obstacles include:

- A negative local perception of middlemen who receive a commission that is perceived as large;
- The fact that the person would need to be well educated and speak English or French; and
- Would have to have financial resources to advance money to suppliers for input purchases. Particularly in terms of financing, such an individual would likely be leading his or her own company, and therefore not be independently objective as a buyer's agent.

Several samples that MEC acquired and took to High Point had noticeable flaws including painting "outside-the-lines", ink smudges, re-patched clay, and small marks where clay bubbles had popped in the kilns. The majority of production in Safi has one or more of these flaws. When importers were asked which flaws would be accepted in orders to the US market, they stated that popped clay bubbles and "re-patched" clay were unacceptable. Most importers felt that the other flaws (smudges and painting out of the lines) would be considered acceptable by some consumers and might be rejected by other consumers. However, the importers were less concerned about this issue. Other hand painted pottery being shown at High Point also had painting outside-the-lines.

POTTERY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

DOMESTIC

As discussed briefly above, there are several market segments, both existing and new, that present an opportunity for increased sales and growth for pottery producers. These include:

- **Hotels/Restaurants and Coffee shops:** The hotel, restaurant and food service industry is a powerful and a competitive sector that can contribute to the growth of Safi's pottery sales nationwide (Table tops and hospitality products line). There is a considerable number of prestigious hotels and restaurants located in tourist towns such as Marrakech and Agadir that are already using Safi's pottery in their catering and hospitality services and are interested in displaying other product lines for their rooms and hotel facilities.
- **Corporate gifts:** Producers should target big corporate, banks and firms (communication agencies) for their promotional gifts and their clients' special events gifts: There is a growing demand from corporations and firms based in big industrial cities such as Casablanca and Rabat who are seeking new gifts ideas for their clients and associates for special occasions such as new year souvenirs, team building meetings, internal promotions and awards.
- **Retail Franchises:** If appropriate designs and concepts could be adopted for some selected product lines (such as hospitality goods, home decoration), it would be possible to target domestic specialty stores and franchises. This concept is already adopted by Amine of Assif Potterie: A newly designed range of tableware has been developed with the objective of targeting domestic retailers.

This same approach could be followed by women's cooperatives as they aren't yet ready for the international markets.

EXPORT

There was a positive reaction from US wholesalers who saw the sample Safi pottery. Requests for sample orders were generated from 6 different companies. There are 6 select High End/smaller volume shops who will pay for designer Ernie Owens to create and manage the samples. At least two of them will be for collections including ceramic lamp bases. One is for The Natural Light, the others for Wildwood Lamps and Accents Inc. The other 4 showrooms are Bradburn Gallery, The Import Collection, Platt Furniture and John Richard. These are all very well respected top-end showrooms which will do this to have something "new" and "fresh" in their collections. As the manager from the Natural Light explained, they don't want to do it if everyone at the show will do it (rather, they expect it to be something exclusive and interesting to buyers). Therefore, the idea is to start with a small number of buyers and then expand in the future. Safi exports to High Point could be ramped up to more showrooms and generate higher volume export sales as production and marketing capacity of Safi producers is increased. Preparation for High Point will include:

- First, MEC's pottery production expert (Reid Harvey) will take some of the sample designs from Ernie Owens and begin to teach the producers appropriate techniques during the upcoming training.
- Second, the packaging and transport issues need to be solved and the increased price for appropriate packaging needs to be taken into account when the producers provide samples and price quotes. Packaging should be either high quality bubble wrap or foam that hardens around

the products into the required shape). One Italian producer told MEC that the foam-shooting machines cost about \$1000. MEC will explore the possibility of having several companies that are actively exporting pool their resources to acquire such a machine. It could be housed at the Delegation in Safi.

- Finally, identifying and training the buyers' agent(s) who will manage and control export will be critical in order to build the reputation of Safi pottery producers at High Point and achieve on-time, high quality, low breakage deliveries.

MEC also identified some specific potential buyers for Safi pottery through contacts at High Point. For example, there is another showroom company, Wunderley (Wunderley.com) that exhibits Moroccan goods, mostly furniture. They tried doing Safi pottery about a decade ago and said that it failed because the buyers didn't buy it and they could only move it when they discounted it 50%. Even then, it still sold slowly. When Ellen visited Safi, she didn't find anyone with gas kilns and the products may not have been as good as they are now. Production appears to have seen some improvement since then and it seems likely that the market response will be better.

A salesman from Wildwood provided MEC with the contact details of a store specializing in Moroccan products (La Casa Manor House). La Casa Manor House is a rug company that has diversified into pottery and other Moroccan imports. In terms of ceramics, La Casa Manor House sold only tagines for cooking to gourmet and ethnic stores. He said there were huge problems with packaging and a very high rate of broken tagines. As a result, he has stopped importing the tagines. He said that he will be at High Point in the fall (October show) and that if there will be Safi products there he will be interested in buying them. MEC will follow up with La Casa Manor House before the next High Point show.

CURRENT MEC SUPPORT TO SAFI POTTERY SECTOR

In spring 2011, MEC hired a consultant to help Safi artisans identify and attract new buyers in sectors such as hotels, restaurants, gift shops, and shops specializing in artisanal products.

The consultant worked in close collaboration with the artisans, the delegation and La Chambre de l'Artisanat of Safi through a work plan covering two aspects: product development and a marketing plan to help new businesses gain market share and generate revenue from new buyers. The consultant conducted a situation analysis, designed and implemented a series of training workshops, and created a product development and marketing plan developed in conjunction with local artisans. Specifically, she:

- Performed an evaluation of the domestic potential of Safi pottery with the objective set up the adequate action plan in order to increase the domestic market sales volume through market linkage, product development with a heavy emphasis on market prospection assistance, improving artisans' entrepreneurial know-how and appropriate design for domestic market.
- Spoke with the selected artisans (including individual artisans, small artisans and small enterprises) with the purpose of obtaining their true understanding of the training needs. Based on that, a training program was designed and presented to the artisans through workshops and one to one meeting (individual meetings with artisans).
- Ensured, through workshops and meetings with artisans, that the information dissemination regarding the product development's process including the aspects of a market-ready product: Design, innovation, costing and pricing, merchandising as well as the administrative procedures, quality control and logistics issues related to distribution channels;
- Coached the artisans to create own profiles, catalogues, price lists, suggested to improve the existing websites contents;
- Arranged and organized meetings with the new clients attended the first meetings and assisted and helped the artisans establish business partnerships with the buyers. (Please see Annex #1); and
- Helped in organizing local fairs (in Mohammedia, Rabat and Luxury hotels in Marrakech), advertising the fair's events on Facebook, and sending invitations to various social groups to attend the fairs.

The training program described above was delivered in May 2011, and covered several core topics. It was designed to help artisans:

- Learn about the local market categories' trends and design;
- Learn how to design for a specific target market (While focusing in corporate gifts, the items to be submitted to client should be customized for promotional end use);
- Understand the importance of proper packaging to protect products, minimize damage, and prevent smudging (which often occurs when items are packed in newspaper);
- Learn how to cost and price their products in a competitive way; and

- Understand the importance and use of promotional material, including CDs with product catalogues, local fairs and exhibitions, and websites.

MEC support to Safi potters seeking to enter export markets – particularly in the US – has involved providing technical training on improved techniques and designs, providing potters with designs that US buyers have expressed interest in purchasing and brokering initial orders of samples for trade shows in the US.

Technical training in pottery design and production: At the request of USAID, MEC initiated and is close to concluding, a business linkage activity targeting potters in Safi. The activity has already resulted in expanded access to the international market for decorative pottery and tableware from the region.

An early diagnostic showed that the highest priority for skills-building was linked to the need for improved capacity in clay processing and new decoration techniques, involving the use of colored clays. During the month of May, 2011, 56 potters (12 women and 44 men) including artisans, trainers, graduates and apprentices from CQPAT, all from the city of Safi, took part in hands-on training enabling them to introduce new and innovative practices into their production techniques.

International marketing of pottery ware:

An activity similar to the marketing support offered for the domestic market was initiated for the international market. The activity had direct and indirect impacts: (1) selected Safi potters now have an opportunity to penetrate the US market; and (2) international tastes, standards, and other requirements have become more familiar to potters in the region. A group of 10 high potential potters capable of meeting international market demands was identified. The MEC consultant – Ernie Owens visited each of the ten selected potters to assess their production capabilities, safety, cleanliness, labor practices, working conditions, quality of product, packing techniques, cost, capacity, willingness to try new ideas, etc. He showed each producer new designs, ideas, finishes, shapes, and commission test pieces from the producers to determine how well they can perform. Based on all of these parameters, he selected six potters to produce 93 sample orders for the next October High Point show. He placed orders with these producers and advised the necessity of having samples completed for inspection by the end of August before shipment to clients (see Annex 4).

MEC support for improving commercialization of Safi pottery

According to one participant, Fatiha, treasurer of one of the participating pottery cooperatives, "There has never been a workshop like this in Morocco. The instruction is excellent and will help us improve our products." The training was delivered by American expert Reid Harvey, who has over 30 years experience working with traditional potters from Africa to Asia. , Harvey not only trained, but offered recommendations to help the potters to introduce appropriate technology to increase production capacity, modify decorative styles to satisfy tastes abroad. and diversify their product lines.

MEC worked with the pottery producers to make sure that all the requested samples would be ready on time and that quality standards were strictly observed. The commercial agent, Hicham Tabia, ensured coordination among producers and is in charge of monitoring progress and the quality of the samples. During his second trip to Morocco in late August, Ernie Owens, accompanied by Hicham Tabia, completed a visit to all the selected makers of sample products to assess their quality. The shipping/packing materials were also inspected. Most of the pieces that were ordered were ready and the quality was significantly better than the typical pieces from Safi. Most of the 93 pieces were accepted with less than 10 rejected. A training workshop was held with the producers to provide them with an overview of the marketing process and to discuss the changes that have to be made to meet the US market's requirements. The MEC consultant also shared several designs for new shapes and new finishes that several US buyers have provisionally approved (see Annex 6).

The shipment of pottery samples destined for the High Point trade show in North Carolina has been delivered to the shipper in Casablanca. Considerable delays were experienced at the Port as packing of the shipment was inadequate and additional paperwork was required by the Customs authorities. At this time, it appears that the shipment may not be in the US in time for the October High Point show but the importer, Wildwood Lamps, feels that the preparation of the pieces should not be rushed and that the larger show in April is a better opportunity for launching the new line.

RECOMMENDATIONS

DOMESTIC

Although artisans' awareness of the urgency of maintaining and growing their market share in the face of competition from international franchises based in Morocco, helping them take advantage of this awareness will require support from MEC. Based on the interviews with artisans in March, there is a need for substantial investment in training, with a focus on three areas of weakness: Product development, marketing training and promotion, management and entrepreneurial training.

Product Development

Another challenge to the industry is product development: During our visit to a large number of artisans, plants and showrooms as well as marketplaces (Chaaba), we noticed that while some artisans are working on creating and innovating new products (as an example, the Amine plant is launching a new contemporary collection of housewares), others are copying existing designs and thus creating products that are already in production, and flooding the market with these copies.

The pottery products made for the domestic market often duplicate the same products and design. While this trend is not restricted to the pottery sector, it will have a negative effect on the industry's capability to innovate and promote creativity. In fact, continued originality is a key for achieving growth. Artisans should be ready to go far beyond the classic Safi pottery style: Artisans need to be able to propose new designs based either on replications of popular styles or on their own innovation, and must balance between traditional designs and contemporary styles.

Based on a survey conducted among the contacted corporate, new gift ideas and new product lines can be introduced as corporate gifts such as picture frames, door designs, office supply holders, and tissue box covers.

Training and Promotion

MEC sees a real need for workshops in marketing training to help artisans explore the new domestic markets such as local franchises, corporate and gift shops. We recommend training programs on marketing, as well as support for introducing pottery products into local market. There is also a need to organize national and local pottery and ceramic fairs, special exhibitions in big hotels and media coverage. Further promotion, such as catalogue-brochure creation, price list, and an electronic photos database could also help with market entry. Specifically, training should help artisans identify marketing objectives, including:

- Plan a certain number of fairs and exhibitions per year;
- Increase total yearly sales by 10%;
- Maintain existing customers by building their loyalty through innovative designs, suggesting new styles with competitive offers;
- Build a documented customer data base and update it in a regular basis (for example, after visiting a client or attending a fair);
- Develop adequate and attractive packaging;
- Promoting the products: keep records, photos, and physical samples of past orders that will be used as catalogues; and/or
- Honor the first commercial orders and follow up on the identified opportunities.

Mr. Youssef Naouis, the representative of Safi's local government delegation, welcomed the idea of creating a "commercial structure" in Safi, eventually hosted by the local handicraft delegation that can provide the pottery producers with the latest market trends, and help to prospect new markets. The same structure would help for both domestic and global market entry.

Management and Entrepreneurial Training

There is also a need for a management training program to foster improved production and general management techniques by organizing periodical workshops in management to help artisans, cooperatives and very small enterprises create self-sustaining, profitable business and customer relationship management.

Upon identifying new opportunities for the domestic market, artisans have already received quotation requests, sampling and new development demands from new clients. If producers can demonstrate responsiveness, competitive pricing, quality and uniqueness of their pottery products with these clients, followed by a broader marketing strategy, then they will be in a much stronger position to increase their local market share.

In addition to the training program outlined above, strengthening the role of the coordinator, and hosting his office at the delegation of artisans (in collaboration with Safi's Chambre de l'Artisanat) could help institutionalize the role and lead to greater coordination between artisans and clients, and support longer-term sustainability of activities.

EXPORT

To continue to develop the export market, we recommend three areas of intervention: augmenting existing market structures, better matching design to the market, and solving production and shipping problems that result in breakage.

It is recommended that the project try to augment existing Moroccan market structures and know-how rather than creating entire new market channels. For example, there are exporters who have exported to the US and continue to do so. Instead of creating a whole new marketing structure, it will be more efficient to identify who is controlling current export and whether or not they can assist with additional agent duties. However, if this is impossible because all existing agents are tied too closely to individual producers, then it is possible to train a new agent who speaks English well enough to help develop the US market. If the project can train a new agent, it is recommended that more than one candidate is trained in order to assess what skills and profiles are best suited for the work.

As mentioned above, the American market generally prefers simpler styles and less decoration than is found in traditional Safi pottery. Nevertheless, the importers were interested in the traditional Safi designs because they are unique. Wildwood mentioned that they would like to have a DVD slideshow or movie about the Safi producers playing in the showroom near the Safi collection. This would have pictures of the producers painting, mixing the clay with their feet, etc. They expressed particular interest in pictures of women painting or working with the clay.

Furthermore, Wildwood liked the mixed medium pottery with silver appliqué – something usually added in Marrakech, although the owner of Serghini mentioned that his workshop has this capability. Therefore, if producers receive an order with this medium, they will need to build in the cost and time of doing this to a high quality, even if this means shipping product to Marrakech and back. It is important for the buyers to be clear on how much time will be needed to do this and not to over-promise and then risk being late with the order.

The importers also stressed the great importance of solving the packaging/breakage issue. This means the companies need to upgrade their packaging materials to either bubble wrap or a machine that shoots out foam and hardens in the appropriate shape. The Safi producers will need to include the additional costs for procuring such a machine into their price structure. For example, one producer

formerly used crates but now that they need to be fumigated, he thinks it is too expensive. Instead he uses bubble wrap. He mentioned that a lot of the Safi pottery has three point blemishes on it since it is stacked one on top of the other and the company that he works with has learned how to avoid this flaw. This is something that should be addressed in the production training.

If the presentation of the Safi products at the High Point trade show results in additional orders, the Safi potters will have to respond with high quality products and deliver them on schedule. The experience with DHL shipping the Wildwood orders to the US in September/October demonstrated that issues related to shipping times (and costs), paperwork for the shipping companies and for Moroccan and US Customs and packaging requirements all need to be addressed before the products are packaged and before they leave Safi.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LOCAL MARKET

Client name	Comments	Estimated opportunity in MDA
FEDEX	FedEx in Morocco is a growing firm with more than 10 offices located in big cities (Casablanca, Rabat, Tangier, Marrakech, etc.) This opportunity could be extended to cover the corporate gift (FedEx in Morocco has a large portfolio of clients in different fields, As new year gifts, they do offer expensive crystal gifts to their VIP clients such as automotive industry factories: YAZAKI, Polydesign, Delphy, but there should be a great deal of innovation and creativity to be considered here. Related products could include branded mugs, cache pots, and tissue box covers.	100,000.00
BMCI Group	BMCI has more than 240 agencies in Morocco with an average need of 2 to 3 customized cache pots, this represents an opportunity to sell more than 600 cache pots in different sizes	30,000
PICKALBATROS HOTELS & RESORTS Group	<p>Along with the artisan's coordinator and other artisans we met with the head of Pickalbatros hotel, Mr. Zaki. (This is the Royal Mirage Hotel, which is in the middle of changing hands to the Egyptian Pickalbatros group.)</p> <p>http://pickalbatros-morocco.com/hotel-and-resort.php</p> <p>We submitted more than 40 different items and products; 10 of which were selected and approved by Mr. Zaki and his team. Commercial orders were confirmed on 5 styles so far, for a volume of about 3,000 units, they are now finalizing the price and lead time. (Estimation at 60,000 to 80,000 Dhs for the first commercial order)</p> <p>The client also wants to order Moroccan white Tajines in 3 different sizes for same hotel Restaurant and is expecting samples for trial before ordering. (Transaction estimated at 45 000 Dhs).</p> <p>Then Mr. Zaki introduced us to Mr. Abou Ali, one of the owners of the whole group worldwide, who explained to us that they are heavily investing in Marrakech and that they took over the Royale Mirage, and newly opened AQUA FUN CLUB. MEC met with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The area manager of Aqua Fun. (Opening took place June 2011) ▪ The Project Manager of the group for their future 200 000 square meter project in Marrakech, the work will be starting in the next 5 months...(The biggest Aqua Park in Morocco) <p>There are golden opportunities to sell outdoor and indoor pottery vases and cache pots as well as lamps, lamps bases, ashtrays, decorative items and "luminaire" products to the new facilities at Aqua Fun.</p>	350,000

Other new client opportunities that could be considered as entirely new channels include:

- Banks :
 - Banque Populaire (customized *cache pot* for their facilities)
 - BMCI Bank
- Corporate Gifts
 - ACX Cargo
 - DHL
 - Maersk/Damco

ANNEX 2: PRESENTATION

The following presentation describes the fundamental market segments for the local pottery market, and explains how local producers can more effectively access them.

Comprendre les fondamentales segmentations du marché local de la poterie et comment réussir sa commercialisation

- 1

Introduction

Safi est considérée, avec Fès, le plus important centre marocain de production de la céramique, (poterie) et plus particulièrement de vaisselle à usage domestique et ornemental et de matériel pour la construction (tuiles, carreaux).

En 1600 la production de la poterie a commencé comme activité complémentaire à la pêche lors des périodes d'arrêt ...
La poterie s'est par la suite développée au cours des siècles jusqu'à devenir un des importants secteurs économiques de Safi.

2



3

Le marché local est caractérisé par la vente de la vaisselle pour usages domestique et ornemental .

Pour un pourcentage estimé autour de **25% !!**

4



5

SWOT

Nos forces...

- Malgré les conditions de travail difficiles, un engagement exemplaire des artisans.
- L'intérêt et l'engagement des autorités locales pour le développement du secteur.
- Une source d'inspiration du design historique, liée à une histoire culturelle.
- Une main d'œuvre assez compétitive.

6

USAID MOROCCO
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC

SWOT

Nos faiblesses...

- Peu ou bien pas assez d'innovation dans le design des produits.
- La quasi inexistence du contrôle et de la notion de la standardisation du niveau de la qualité.
- La qualité de l'argile la région et les carrières d'argile non exploitées.
- Le manque de connaissances de gestion commerciale, comptables et financières et modeste capacité managériale et productive.
- L'absence totale de la notion de l'habillage du produit/Packaging
- Les mauvaises conditions et l'insécurité dans les lieux de travail.

7



USAID MOROCCO
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC

SWOT

Opportunités...

- Le marché local très vaste (que 25%) et il est fort demandeur de produits de poterie.
- Ce programme en cours de Morocco Economic competitiveness/ USAID program.
- S'inspirer des modes de commercialisation de la poterie importée sur le Marché local. (Mise en place des campagnes publicitaires pour des occasions spéciales comme Ramadan...

9



USAID MOROCCO
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC

SWOT

Menaces...

- De plus en plus de produits ayant touches marocaines sont produits en Chine, font concurrence à nos produits.
- Le manque de moyens de marketing (Catalogues, liste des prix...)
- Absence de prospection structurée et ciblée afin de créer relations solides avec les acheteurs potentiels.
- Absence d'un agent commercial assurant la coordination entre les artisans et les acheteurs et aussi pouvant financer des petits investissements pour générer des commandes commerciales.

11





USAID MOROCCO  **COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC**

Les segmentations du Marché de la poterie

SEGMENTATION DU TARGET & POSITIONNEMENT

18

USAID MOROCCO  **COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC**



20

USAID MOROCCO  **COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC**

1- Segmentation du marché

Subdivision des clients par secteurs qui constituent une cible (segment de clientèle envers laquelle adresser les actions de marketing) bien précis par rapport à un produit déterminé.

La segmentation du marché de la poterie on peut identifier deux cibles différents:

- ➔ Clients ciblant l'achat de produits à des prix modestes : La population locale, les touristes ... intéressés à acheter beaucoup de produits à bas coût.
- ➔ Clients ciblant l'achat de produits à des prix moyens hauts: Ce sont ces clients locaux appartenant à une classe sociale moyen haute, touristes aussi ,
..... Et aussi les hôtels et restaurants locaux de haut de gamme.

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USAID MOROCCO  **COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC**



21

USAID MOROCCO  **COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC**

2-Positionnement

Les segments étant définis,
Mettre l'offre sur le marché selon :

- ➔ L'image que l'on veut communiquer.
- ➔ Prix et de la politique de distribution.

22

USAID MOROCCO  **COMPÉTITIVITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DU MAROC**

Une Grande part du Marché local reste encore a explorer ...



Prospection.

Force de proposition et innovation.

24

Marketing Mix

La combinaison des éléments de marketing

Produit: caractéristiques du produit / packaging, gamme, etc.;

Promotion: relations publiques, bureau de presse... publicité à travers moyens divers (télévision, radio, presse, dépliant, démonstrations sur place, affiches, etc.), etc.

Prix: détermination du prix de base par rapport aux marchés-cibles, définition de tranches d'escomptes, des conditions de paiement, des temps de livraison, etc.;

Distribution: définition des canaux de vente, gestion / Logistique.

28

Un petit exemple...



29

ANNEX 3: PARTICIPANT/ATTENDEE LIST

The following attendees list details those individuals who attended the pottery training on May 27, 2011, as referenced earlier in this report.

Royaume du Maroc
 Secrétariat d'État auprès du Ministre du Tourisme
 et de l'Artisanat chargé de l'Artisanat
 Délégation de l'Artisanat de Safi

المملكة المغربية
 مكتبة الدولة لادارة والصناعة التقليدية
 المملكة المغربية للصناعة التقليدية
 مندوبية آسفي

USAID | MOROCCO
 COMMISSION DES COMMUNAUTÉS DU MAROC

Programme de perfectionnement des artisans

Sujet : Comprendre les fondamentales segmentations marché local de la poterie et comment réussir sa commercialisation

Fiche de présence **لائحة الحضور**
 بتاريخ : 27/05/2011

Nom & prénom	Fonction	Emergement
Louvrachi - ZOUHRA	C. Q. P. Fournitrice	
LOUBNA RAMYLI	C. Q. P.	
MAHROUKASMAË	C. Q. P.	
Abdelghani Chaalti	Etudiant de C. Q. P.	
MOHAMED CHAFIKI	C. Q. P.	
ELJADDADELOUSSIN	C. Q. P.	
Moussine Mousaoui	C. Q. P.	
BELMAÏZI Abdelkader III	Président de la coopérative Cerafa	
BELHOUMRI Noureddine	Potier (coopérative "Cerafa")	
YOUSAF BOUTBALIF	boumaalif@hotmail.com	
SOUFIANE ELABDI	SOUFIANE_4U@HOTMAIL.COM	
AHRAIFI NAWAL	Ahraifi.nawal@yahoo.com	
ZAIRI YOUNES	younesovic551@hotmail.fr	
TABIA HICRAM	Potier	
HAMZABASSBOUSSI	C. Q. P.	
حسين بن علي	C. Q. P.	
HASSAN AMGHAR	C. C. C. S	
SEHBI BRAHIM	C. Q. P.	

Artisanat du Maroc
 Av. Jardin Public, Bab Chaâba, Safi
 Tél : 0524624694 / Fax : 0524610483

طابع المحفظة العمومية باميد الصعيبة آسفي
 المغرب

ANNEX 4: TRIP NOTES, MOROCCO, JULY 2011

The following notes summarize Ernie Owens' first trip to Morocco.

Summary of Meetings:

Prior to my travel to Morocco, I was fortunate to be able to spend some time in High Point, North Carolina with Andrea Chartock. We visited five importers that I have authority to order samples for. The information that Andrea gave to my clients was very influential in their decision to allow me to create and order samples. Also, the information she gave to me allowed me to prepare much better for my trip.

On July 11, the driver drove Abderrazak and me to Safi. The balance of Monday and all day Tuesday we visited a number of factories, show rooms and the ceramic market. This was time well spent as it gave me the opportunity to see a lot of different techniques, designs and colors that was being used by the producers.

Tuesday afternoon we visited Mr. Youssef Naouis from Artisanat du Maroc. We discussed plans and purposes of my trip to Morocco, Safi. He was very friendly and helpful with some of his advice. My only disappointment was his decision to not have a seminar for all of the producers. His reason was that the producers who were not invited would become upset. As a result we did not have the opportunity to pass on a lot of good information to the producers. Hopefully we can have a seminar on future trip.

Wednesday, I visited Hicham Tabia Showroom. I picked a number of items to order. Hicham then took us to other producer's showrooms and revisited ceramic markets and discovered showroom of Mustapha Sarnang. They produce beautiful black and silver ceramics, and I picked a number of samples to order.

I met a possible agent, Amina; however, I was not overly impressed. We discussed the duties of an agent and agreed to meet again. I believe that she then contacted Abderrazak and told him that she was not interested.

Thursday, I visited potteries Chakir and Serghini. I picked product from both producers to order, but was concerned about the cost of ceramic and metal items from Marrakech. I hope the prices quoted to me were competitive, and would like to visit producers in Marrakech.

That afternoon, Hicham joined us to visit two large producers out of the city. Both factories were highly disorganized with a lot of broken ceramic, trash and clutter throughout both facilities. The quality was bad. I would never try to work with either producer.

We also visited an iron worker on this trip and stopped to talk with the owner. I promised to bring designs combining iron stands with ceramics. Everyone was excited about the potential for collaboration. I have already put together designs to take on the next trip.

Abderrazak and I decided to work with Hicham as our agent. He is very knowledgeable and well liked by all producers. I spent a lot of time discussing the duties of an agent with Hicham. We revisited all producers and discussed cost, quality and packing. We then established cost on all of the samples that I had picked.

For the balance of the trip we returned to six makers with Hicham to choose designs, photograph products, and discuss how to produce, pack and price samples. We discussed at length with all six makers the importance of quality, adequate packing, on time delivery and costing. I advised all six producers that I would return the end of August to inspect the samples and packing techniques. I advised every producer that if quality of product and packing was not acceptable their order would be rejected. I ordered the following samples:

- I. STE Poteries Chakir = WW-500, WW-515 = 16 samples

2. Serghini = WW-520, WW-535 = 16 samples
3. Hicham Tabia = WW-550, WW-571 = 22 samples, plus 5 additional samples ordered from photographs, blue and white.
4. Al-Am Hassan = WW-600, WW-610 = 11 samples
5. Safi Artisanat = WW-650, WW-662 = 13 samples
6. Mustapha Sarhang = WW-625, WW-635 = 11 samples

Outcomes and Next Steps:

There is a great need for producers to start working on new designs, shapes and colors. There is too much of the same look. It would be difficult for me to place another sizeable order for product different enough from order placed for Wildwood Lamps.

ANNEX 5: TRIP NOTES, HIGH POINT, APRIL 2011

Andrea Chartock - Report on trip to High Point, North Carolina: April 5th and 6th

The objective of this SOW was to link export-ready Safi pottery companies with US wholesale importers and to gain information on market trends and reaction to Safi pottery. The consultant visited the largest home furnishing show in the world, which takes place April 2nd to 7th in High Point, North Carolina and takes place every six months: one show in the spring and one in the fall. The consultant took photos, samples, and fragments from Safi to show existing techniques and materials and showed these to buyers at the High Point Market. By visiting the High Point Market, we began the process of assessing the market, discussing preliminary orders for samples, and providing Safi pottery producers with incentives to modify production to meet market demands.

The High Point Market is the largest furnishings industry trade show in the world, bringing more than 85,000 retail home furnishings buyers to North Carolina every six months. High Point Demographics are as follows:

- 180 Buildings
- 10 Million Square Feet of Showspace
- 80,000 Attendees Each Market
- More Than 2000 Exhibitors
- 106 Countries Represented
- Tens of Thousands of New Product Introductions
- Approximately 10% of Attendees Are International

Tasks carried out by consultant:

- i. Met with industry expert Ernie Owens who has worked with DAI before to facilitate home furnishings export from Vietnam to the US and into the National Geographic Home Collection.
- ii. Visited approximately 60 showrooms to assess current market trends.
- iii. Had meetings and showed photos and sample pieces of pottery from Safi to 9 importers and home furnishing designers to assess interest of importers in providing orders for samples to be made.

Interest of US importers at High Point:

There was a positive reaction from US wholesalers who saw the sample Safi pottery. Requests for sample orders were generated from 6 different companies. There are 6 select High End/smaller volume shops who will pay for designer Ernie Owens to create and manage the samples. At least two of them will be for collections including ceramic lamp bases. One is for The Natural Light, the others for Wildwood Lamps and Accents Inc. The other 4 showrooms are Bradburn Gallery, The Import Collection, Platt Furniture and John Richard. These are all very well respected top-end showrooms which will do this to have something "new" and "fresh" in their collections. As the manager from the Natural Light explained, they don't want to do it if everyone at the show will do it (rather, they expect it to be something exclusive and interesting to buyers). Therefore, the idea is to start with a small number of buyers and then expand in the future. Safi exports to High Point could be ramped up to more showrooms and generate higher volume export sales as production and marketing capacity of Safi producers is increased.

The importers stressed the great importance of solving the packaging/ breakage issue. This means the companies need to upgrade their packaging materials to either bubble wrap or a machine that shoots out foam and hardens in the appropriate shape. The Safi producers will need to include the additional costs for procuring such a machine into their price structure. Furthermore, Wildwood liked the

mixed medium pottery with silver appliqué- something usually added in Marrakech, although Serghini mentioned that they can do this in his workshop. Therefore, if producers receive an order with this medium, they will need to build in the cost and time of doing this to a high quality, even if this means shipping product to Marrakech and back. It is important for the buyers to be clear on how much time will be needed to do this and not to over-promise and then risk being late with the order.

The positive outcome of the High Point visit was due in large part to the introductions and doors opened by Ernie Owens, a designer who has been working with US importers at High Point for more than 4 decades. He has also been working with DAI since 2004 on USAID export programs. All of the top brand importing companies have worked with Ernie before and trust his judgment to suggest new and interesting suppliers to add to their collections. This level of trust meant that introductions could be made and that managers would willingly commission Ernie to design samples and provide a small budget for samples from Safi producers. In the case of USAID's Vietnam National Competitiveness Initiative (VNCI), Ernie visited the producers, assessed their capacity, trained them on export marketing and then managed their entry into High Point showrooms and international collections.

Home Furnishing market trends:

Colors:

The US market varies a lot by region and market segment. However, simple colors such as white and monotonous are popular. In particular the new "trendy" colors seen at the market are: lime green, teal, orange (with a red tint "cayenne"/ "marigold", persimmon), and cobalt blue (with a hint of teal), different hues of gray and turquoise. Some showrooms had pieces with more "glamorous/ glitzy" color schemes such as pieces with busier patterns and gold accents, but the showroom owners explained that such patterns are more for Eastern European/ Russian buyers visiting the show and not for the American preferences.

Pottery:

Almost all show rooms have a piece or two of pottery on display as "accent pieces". Most commonly, they are vases. They are also used as bases of lamps, tableware (bowls, plates, dishes, etc.) and serving platters or large bowls. Terracotta clay is commonly used for plant holders. Common countries of origin for pottery at the show are: China, Vietnam, and Italy. Also visible were Turkey and Portugal. There was one showroom specializing in importing Moroccan goods, with Safi pottery on display throughout the showroom called Badia design. To see the ceramics they are selling online visit <http://www.badiadesign.com/item.jsp?category=14275>.

Price points:

The wholesale prices mentioned from Safi all were seen as very competitive. In general though, all the importers mentioned that the Safi companies will need to devise much better quality packaging (and, therefore, increase their wholesale prices) in order to sell successfully to the US market.

Pottery flaws:

Several samples that MEC acquired and took to High Point had noticeable flaws including painting "outside-the-lines", ink smudges, re-patched clay, and small marks where clay bubbles had popped in the kilns. The majority of production in Safi has one or more of these flaws. When importers were asked which flaws would be accepted in orders to the US market, they stated that popped clay bubbles and "re-patched" clay were unacceptable. Most importers felt that the other flaws (smudges and painting out of the lines) would be considered acceptable by some consumers and might be rejected by other consumers. However, the importers were less concerned about this issue. Other hand painted pottery being shown at High Point also had painting outside-the-lines.

Themes:

As mentioned above, the American market generally prefers simpler styles and less decoration than is found in traditional Safi pottery. Nevertheless, the importers were interested in the traditional Safi designs because they are unique. Wildwood mentioned that they would like to have a DVD slideshow or movie about the Safi producers playing in the showroom near the Safi collection. This would have pictures of the producers painting, mixing the clay with their feet, etc. They expressed particular interest in pictures of women painting or working with the clay.

Moroccan goods at the show:

There is a Moroccan importer with a showroom that has all of the main Safi pottery designs such as large plates and vases. The manager is Mohamed Tazi of Badia Design www.badiadesign.com.

His family is from Marrakech and he said he uses a producer "on the road to Essaouira" and that he uses his family/ family connections as the agent to control the export. Last year he brought to the US three 40 foot containers of the pottery. Mostly, he sells them to US "international souvenir stores."

Packaging:

Tazi formerly used crates but now that they need to be fumigated, he thinks it is too expensive. Instead he uses bubble wrap. He mentioned that a lot of the Safi pottery has three point blemishes on it since it is stacked one on top of the other and the company that he works with has learned how to avoid this flaw. This is something that should be addressed in the production training.

There is another showroom company called Wunderley (Wunderley.com) that has Moroccan goods, mostly furniture. They tried doing Safi pottery about 10+ years ago and said that it failed. Ellen Wunderley said that the buyers didn't buy it and they could only move it when they discounted it 50%. Even then, it still sold slowly. When Ellen visited Safi, she didn't find anyone with gas kilns and the products may not have been as good as they are now. Production appears to have seen some improvement since then and it seems likely that the market response will be better.

A salesman from Wildwood provided MEC with the contact details of a store specializing in Moroccan products (La Casa Manor House). La Casa Manor House is a rug company that diversified into pottery and other Moroccan imports. The Manager is Hassan (732)-637 8838 in New Jersey. In terms of ceramics, he sold only tagines for cooking to gourmet and ethnic stores. He said there were huge problems with packaging and a very high rate of broken tagines. As a result, he has stopped importing the tagines. He said that he will be at High Point in the fall (October show) and that if there will be Safi products there he will be interested in buying them. MEC will follow up with La Casa Manor House before the next High Point show.

Conclusions:

There is an exciting opportunity presented by High Point to deliver product to six different show rooms at the High Point show this fall. Even though this several months away, there is little time to ensure that all the necessary steps are accomplished and everything is ready. First, MEC pottery production expert (Reid Harvey) will take some of the sample designs from Ernie Owens and begin to teach the producers appropriate techniques during the upcoming training. Second, the packaging and transport issues need to be solved and the increased price for appropriate packaging needs to be taken into account when the producers provide samples and price quotes. Packaging should be either high quality bubble wrap or foam that hardens around the products into the required shape). One Italian producer told MEC that the foam-shooting machines cost about \$1000. MEC will explore the possibility of having several companies that are actively exporting pool their resources to acquire such a machine. It could be housed at the Delegation in Safi. Identifying and training the buyers' agent(s) who will manage and control export will be critical in order to build the reputation of Safi pottery producers at High Point and achieve on-time, high quality, low breakage deliveries.

ANNEX 6: TRIP NOTES, MOROCCO, AUGUST 2011

The following notes summarize Ernie Owens' second trip to Morocco.

Preparation:

Prior to my second trip to Morocco, I attended the Las Vegas Furniture Show. I took samples and photos of many shapes and finishes of ceramics that I acquired on my first trip. I met with two importers to get their response to the samples: both were very positive and indicated a definite interest in me developing samples for them.

I made no commitments to either because there are two other importers that I have worked with that I will see in High Point. I would rather develop samples for these two clients, due to the existing relationship. I plan to travel to High Point the last week of October to meet with them.

Meeting Summary:

I arrived in Casablanca early morning Tuesday, August 16th and Abderrazak advised that we would be driven to Safi the following day. We arrived Safi mid-day Wednesday, where we met Hicham in his showroom to discuss work schedule for the following eight days.

After establishing our work schedule I proceeded to inspect the samples Hicham had produced. Wednesday through Saturday we visited a few new potential producers, and also visited all the showrooms and displays at the ceramic village. Hicham advised that the Safi artisans Karima Chekkouri had not produced samples, so he produced her samples.

We then visited Potteries Chakir. Some designs would not be completed until Wednesday. The finished samples that I did see looked very good. Wafaa, the owner's daughter, showed me new unfinished ceramic shapes produced from designs that I left from my previous trip. Everyone seemed very excited about the new shapes.

We returned to Hicham's showroom and spent the remainder of the day looking at packing materials, cartons and discussing packing techniques. For the next four days we visited all producers and inspected all samples. I accepted most samples, but did reject samples from Al Am Hassan and two collections from Hicham.

Thursday we revisited Potteries Chakir, and accepted all samples ordered. They have, by far, the best quality of all producers. We also picked new finishes and placed an order for new shapes. There will be new a look for Safi Ceramics.

We then visited Serghini, which had new designs of Marrakech product. I added all new designs to the sample order. Because I am sure that we are paying too much for these pieces, on the next trip I would like to visit Marrakech and place orders directly with Marrakech producers.

Friday afternoon we met at Hicham's showroom and spent a few hours packing cartons. We decided not to use wood boxes, and will double-carton instead. I felt comfortable with this packing as long as producers use bubble pack and pack the cartons tightly.

Follow up from meetings:

The Morocco ceramic industry really needs new designs, new finishes, new shades and new colors. Almost every producer has the same shapes, designs and colors. There are many necessary improvements that can be made at all of the factories and showrooms. I told Abderrazak numerous times that I wished that we could have a discussion with all of our producers on ideas to make improvements. Abderrazak suggested that we arrange a seminar for just the producers that we work with. We discussed that idea with each producer and received a very positive response.

We held the seminar on Sunday. Abderrazak made arrangements to have the seminar at the hotel. While we told everyone that seminar would last approximately two hours, it actually lasted four hours.

All of the producers, plus the ironworker, attended the seminar. Much was discussed and all producers stated that the information was very helpful and informative. They all agreed that there would be changes made in their facilities and their production techniques.

At the end of the seminar, I offered 40 full scale designs for the producers to choose. Some of the designs included combinations of ceramic and iron. 36 of the designs were picked. I also offered many samples and ideas for finishes, colors and techniques. Many of the finish ideas were taken by the suppliers.

On Monday we returned to each of the suppliers to finalize everything, and are hopeful that the Safi product will arrive at Wildwood in time for the show. I plan to travel to North Carolina three days before the show opens. I will attend the sales meeting and tell all 33 Wildwood sales persons the story of Morocco ceramics. I will also help with display and make sure all items are numbered and priced correctly.