

Reaffirming the Critical Role of Transformative Research and Knowledge Production in the Age of Post-Truth



Come Forth



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Executive Summary: Come Forth is a retail business created by four De La Salle University students born out of a research project that addresses various global issues explicitly articulated by the United Nations in its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The business proponents in this research have addressed the issues of Life on Land and Life under Water by showcasing some of the Philippines' natural barriers, specifically Sierra Madre, Tubbataha Reef, and Banacan Mangrove, which were artistically painted on its pillows compacted in eco-friendly tote bags as part of their products. The 2-in-1 pillow was conceptualized to answer the needs of its target customers to travel comfortably. The unique feature of the 2-in-1 multifunctional blanket-in-a-pillow allows users to travel considerably more easily. The business, registered as a sole proprietorship to streamline paperwork and legal processes, is owned by Ivan Boncodin, who serves both as the proprietor and Human Resource Manager. He is joined by Giorgina Arcebuche, the marketing manager; Nicole España, the operations manager; and Christine Villanueva, the finance manager. The group employed multiple promotional strategies to reach its target market, ages 13-40. These included a combination of traditional media (Flyers, Posters, and Tarpaulins), social media (Facebook and Instagram), and word-of-mouth. The business considered Chineeshi and SongYi.ph as its closest competitors; consequently, they set their prices to be budget-friendly as a strategic approach. It started with a Php 50,000.00 capital (Php 12,500.00 from its registered owner and Php 37,500.00 from various lenders) and, after three months of operation, has earned a considerable amount to hit its break-even point. In the future, the business plans to expand further, catering to the demands of its customers as it progresses continuously and pays back its borrowed money. It further plans to register its intellectual property rights to protect the business from identity fraud.

Keywords: 2-in-1 multifunctional blanket-in-a-pillow; Philippines' natural barriers; sole proprietorship; sustainable development goals; intellectual property rights

1. Business Registration and Organization

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1. Business Registration and Organization

Come Forth obtained the following forms necessary for its registration. Firstly, the company acquired documents from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and completed them to register the business name for Come Forth. The firm was given legal recognition through this registration, enabling it to operate legally. Secondly, the Mayor's permit was obtained from the Business Permits and Licensing Office (BPLO) of the City of Santa Rosa, Laguna, where the owner, Ivan Boncodin, resides. This authorization, issued by the local government unit, serves as evidence of adherence to the city or municipality laws, ordinances, and zoning restrictions. Lastly, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) Form No. 1901 was obtained and registered online. Through this, the company can generate official receipts, pay taxes, and comply with tax laws. This promotes responsibility and transparency in business practices.

Come Forth is a business classified as a sole proprietorship owned by Ivan Philip Boncodin. The firm chose this business structure because it presented fewer difficulties in its ownership and operation than other business structures. This choice involves fewer legal formalities and paperwork. Additionally, the owner has complete control over the business, enabling him to initiate and make decisions. This allows the firm to be flexible and responsive to changes in the market.

Figure 1

Come Forth's Organizational Chart



Come Forth used a flat organizational structure. As shown in Figure 1, the business consists of four members: Ivan Boncodin as the owner and human resource manager; Nicole España as the Operations Manager; Giorgina Acrebuche as the Marketing Manager; and Christine Villanueva as the Finance Manager. They set the company's strategic direction and made critical decisions about its direction.

This structure improved the firm's relationships by eliminating unnecessary management layers and minimizing boundaries, thereby increasing trust and transparency. It enabled excellent communication and collaboration by involving everyone in the decision-making process. Moreover, it promoted flexibility, allowing the business to adapt swiftly to changes. On the other hand, the firm experienced difficulties clarifying roles and responsibilities as the group members were overwhelmed by multiple directives, resulting in disorganized implementation. Despite the challenges encountered, the flat organizational structure was an effective approach as it fostered flexibility and better cooperation.

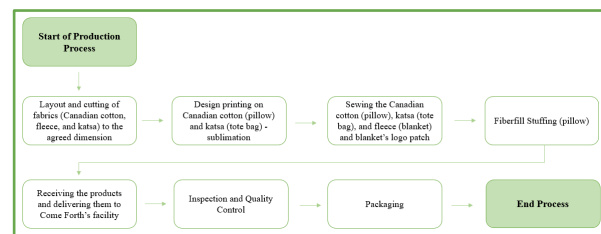
2. Business Plan Implementation

For a business to run successfully and sustainably, careful attention must be given to various aspects of its operations, such as production processes, marketing strategies, and financial and human resources management.

2.1. Production

Figure 2

Come Forth's Production Process



Come Forth worked with Jabriz Ventures to create the 2-in-1 multifunctional blanket-in-a-pillow product. The supplier's raw materials (Canadian cotton, fleece, and katus) were laid out to prepare for cutting. Once these materials are

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cut, the designs are sublimated onto the fabrics to imprint the desired designs. The natural barrier designs are printed on the Canadian cotton fabric, while the logo is printed on the fleece. The next step is to sew the fabrics together to assemble and create the final product. The pillows are then stuffed before being sent to Come Forth's official facility. Once the products are delivered to the facility, the company members undergo quality control and inspection of products to ensure that they meet the company's standards. Lastly, the products are packaged and prepared for delivery to customers.

The trademark product of the business used the following materials: Canadian cotton, fleece, and katsa. Each of these materials helped create the blanket-in-a-pillow. The product consisted of a pillow, blanket, and tote bag, which cost Php 230.00, Php 190.00, and Php 55.00, respectively. Additionally, minor productions were done, such as the message cards and sublimation. These cards contained thank you messages to the consumers who supported the business, accompanied by the commitment to help sustain the natural barriers that the Philippines has. This indirect material costs Php 2.42, and the sublimation process costs Php 25.00. These materials helped in the production of the product that Come Forth presented to its market. All in all, the direct cost per unit of the product is Php 502.42.

2.2. Marketing

Product

Come Forth created a 2-in-1 multifunctional blanket-in-a-pillow compacted in an eco-friendly tote bag. It is mainly intended for people who travel often. It offers comfort while on the road through a simple mechanism that can be conveniently carried anywhere and anytime. The group not only brought tangible quality and innovation to its customers, but also introduced designs (Sierra Madre, Tubbataha Reef, and Banacon Mangrove), unique features, a brand name, and a range of available sizes.

Price

Taking note of the production cost, logistical expenditure, and product promotion, Come Forth set its selling price at Php 670.00, with a 33.35% markup. Its pricing profile considered the following: variable cost, markup, markup percentage, cost of goods sold, revenue, and profit. It has also observed the charm pricing strategy for price digits to appeal

to and influence consumer's perception and evaluation positively. Apart from this, the business also offered bundle discounts through a product bundling approach. Customers were encouraged to choose all three designs, which, when purchased together, were available for Php 2,000.00.

Place

There are various access doors and channels for customers to enter the sales cycle of Come Forth. One of these is retail stores. The most feasible setup for the business prospects in this avenue are small kiosks in bazaars, like those held in the De La Salle University Integrated School - Laguna Campus, and direct orders from the management team. This is supported by Harshith (2019), who stated that the evolving retail industry generates income, increases sales revenue, and analyzes customers' preferences without much cost. Come Forth took advantage of the platforms with minimal to zero expenditure, such as social media networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), accessible Google Forms, online marketplace, and e-commerce (Lazada and Shopee).

Promotion

Come Forth used multiple ways to market the product: social media, traditional media, and word-of-mouth. It has created social media pages for Instagram and Facebook (@official.comeforth) to share general information about the products and business by creating posts, stories, and interactive activities to help gain the target audience's attention. It has also decided that a face-to-face marketing strategy is essential to be done as well. The company has adopted an advertising solution to expand its marketing efforts using flyers and tarpaulins. With the help of family and friends, the sellers not only shared the product but also encouraged their peers to do the same. The management team highlighted the product's value in daily dialogues through a customer experience that is free of charge (Subramanian, 2018).

2.3. Human Resources

Come Forth employed a lean team structure, with each member having a specific set of responsibilities. The business's management team had a skilled workforce that provided the groundwork for the organization and the qualities and aptitudes necessary to achieve the firm's goals and

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objectives. The firm's human resources team consists of four core members: the owner/human resource manager, operations manager, marketing manager, and finance manager. The company was established as a close-knit group; thus, roles were assigned based on the members' expertise and interests.

Owner/HRM

The owner and human resource manager, Ivan Boncodin, managed and oversaw the overall operation of the business. He guided and ensured that the members worked toward a common goal. Moreover, he communicated with the members and the firm's research adviser to discuss the company's current status, share new insights and plans, and effectively implement them. He also organized meetings with the supplier, which facilitated smoother and easier transactions for manufacturing and producing the company's products. Lastly, he ensured that the organization stayed on track and completed all activities within the designated timelines.

Marketing Manager

The marketing manager, Giorgina Arcebuche, handled the company's marketing strategies and promotional activities. She developed new ideas for branding and advertising that aligned with the firm's objectives and kept it ahead of the competition. She also researched to identify target audiences, was in control of the social media campaigns, evaluated their effectiveness, and discussed trends and statistics across media platforms. She also managed the firm's social media platforms, keeping current customers interested in the company's products. Furthermore, she handled all publication materials, from posters, tarpaulin design, flyer layouts, and teasers, and ensured a caption was ready to post. Order forms and customer relations, like feedback gathering, were also tasks filed under the marketing department. Through her efforts, she guaranteed that the company reached its target audience and remained top of mind regarding its products.

Operations Manager

The operations manager, Nicole España, was responsible for day-to-day operations, such as recording the number of products sold and the inventory left. She worked with the other departments, especially the finance manager, to keep track of the total sales done throughout the whole business operation. Additionally, she was also responsible for using her networking skills to communicate with different

suppliers to negotiate the best possible prices that the company could get for the products to be sold. The quality of the product is also essential; thus, she organized different time schedules to ensure that all team members were available to conduct quality control checks efficiently.

Finance Manager

The finance manager, Christine Villanueva, collected the initial capital of the business. She also managed the company's financial operations by journalizing the transactions from November 2022 until April 2023. With the use of the journal entries, she managed to create the income statement, statement of changes in equity, statement of cash flows, and balance sheet. With this, she was able to monitor the assets going into the business and the payables and expenses accumulated by the firm. Furthermore, during the selling period, she was in charge of tracking the company's sales and making sure that the figures were accurate based on the quantity sold.

In terms of compensation packages, the company adopted a profit-sharing compensation model. The business' profit was divided and evenly shared with all firm members. The approach ensured impartial and fair financial benefits that encouraged systematic collaboration and teamwork. It also fostered a sense of ownership, which motivated the company's members to contribute to its success, knowing that they directly benefited from its profits.

2.4. Finance

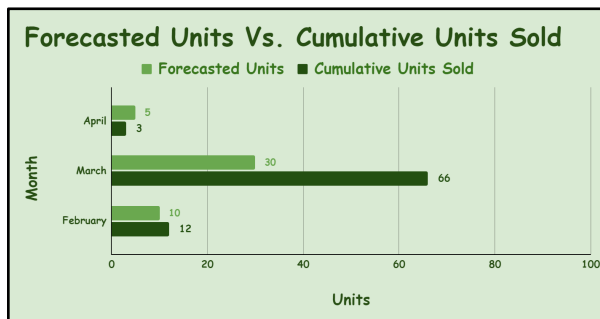
Capital or funds played a vital role in the firm, serving as Come Forth's start-up monetary assets for product development. Consequently, the company had an initial capital of Php 50,000.00 for its product development. As the business progressed, additional funds were needed, so Php 2,242.00 was put into the business. However, this amount was subsequently deducted from the company's net sales to reimburse the additional funds invested. The business utilized debt financing, wherein funds were borrowed from Come Forth members and duly recorded under the company's loans payable. The money will be returned to the members after the business liquidation.

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Figure 3

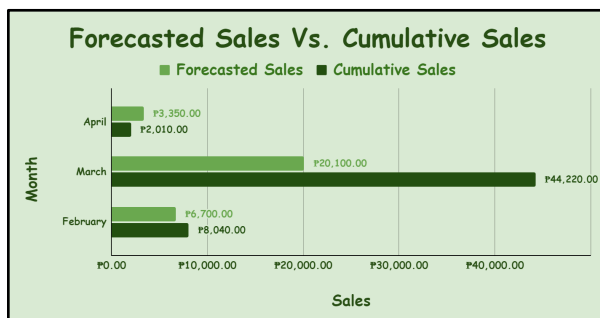
Forecasted Units Vs. Cumulative Units Sold



The units presented in Figure 3 are the comparison between the projected units to be sold and the actual quantity of the products distributed from February to April 2023. For February, the cumulative units were two units greater than the forecasted units. While for March, the business garnered more than twice the forecasted units, amounting to 66 quantities. The rationale behind the significant increase in the quantities sold for March was the presence of the bazaar. Lastly, the cumulative units for April were two units less than the forecasted units. The reason behind the decrease in quantity was the absence of the bazaar.

Figure 4

Forecasted Sales VS Cumulative Sales



The data shown in Figure 4 represents the forecasted and cumulative units from February to April 2023 in Philippine pesos, collectively referred to as sales. The business

had Php 8,040.00 cumulative sales for February, compared to forecasted sales of Php 6,700.00. Next, there was a huge boost in sales for March as the incremental sales amounted to Php 44,220.00, while the forecasted sales for that month were only Php 20,100.00. Lastly, there was a decrease in sales for April, and the money accumulated by the business was only Php 2,010.00.

The firm's overall sales after deducting the Php 50.00 sales discount was Php 54,220.00, and a total of 81 units were sold for the time span of three months. It managed to recoup the capital as the break-even point was 78 units. Furthermore, the business also earned a considerable amount of profit after subtracting the cost of sales and other operating expenses from the company's accumulated sales as of April 2023.

3. Product Diversification

The business decided to introduce product diversification for its consumers. The product chosen was a sleeping eye mask. Ten eye masks were bought through an online seller in an e-commerce application. The company then added its business name with embroidered lettering on the lower right corner of the product. Come Forth looked for an embroiderer around the City of Biñan to accomplish this final detail for product diversification. The sleeping eye mask's base was silk, and soft plush cotton was added to the front part of the eye mask. Imitation silk was used for the face mask area to ensure there would be less skin irritation and provide comfort to the consumers.

Additionally, soft plush cotton was added as one of the product's features to give the customer a diverse texture in the eye mask. The eye mask was affixed with an elastic silk strap, ensuring that individuals of any size of the head, starting from the standard size, could comfortably wear the sleeping mask. These features were integrated into the product diversification to increase the consumers' comfort during long rides on the road.

4. Future Plans

Looking ahead, Come Forth has exciting plans to keep the company on the path to success. After careful consideration, the group has decided to continue running the business after the end of the academic year 2022-2023,

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provided that the company continues to perform well. With this in mind, the firm plans to expand its operations and officially register the business by obtaining the necessary permits and registrations from the Mayor's Office, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Moreover, Come Forth will also register its logo, designs, and other company-owned elements under Republic Act No. 8293 (Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines, 1997) and the copyright law to safeguard the business's intellectual properties. These regulations are essential in ensuring that Come Forth receives the proper licensing to provide security for the company, its staff, and its clients. A firm with a valid license enjoys various benefits, including safeguarding its property in litigation and protection in the face of any unforeseen events the company may encounter.

However, concerning patents, the products produced by Come Forth cannot qualify for a patent because they do not meet the criteria where "patentable inventions are any technical solution to a problem in any field of human activity that is new, involves an inventive step, and is industrially applicable" (Federis & Associates Law, n.d.).

5. Acknowledgments

Come Forth would like to express its sincerest gratitude to everyone who significantly contributed to this project and provided unwavering support and assistance to the group. Their knowledge and resources were crucial to the success of the business. Their hard work, dedication, and commitment were integral to helping the company achieve its goals and objectives. Hence, the group would like to give its deepest appreciation and utmost recognition to the following individuals and institutions:

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Most importantly, to **God**, who provided everything for the researchers' physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and mental needs and continuously guided them in accomplishing the entirety of the study's tasks.

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