

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



Come Forth



A Comfortable Feeling in a Bag

Executive Summary: Come Forth is a retailing business created by four De La Salle University students borne out of a research project that addresses various global issues explicitly disseminated 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 in its products some of the Philippines' natural barriers, specifically Sierra Madre, Tubbataha Reef, and Banacon Mangrove, which were artistically painted on its pillows compacted in eco-friendly tote bags. 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 simpler. The business, duly registered as a sole proprietorship to avoid too much paperwork and legal writings, was owned by Ivan Boncodin, who functions as owner and Human Resource Manager as well. He is joined by Giorgina Arcebucho, the marketing manager; Nicole España, the operations manager; and Christine Villanueva, the finance manager. To reach its target market, ages 13-40, the group engaged in multiple promotional ways and 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; thus, strategically, they have set their prices to be budget-friendly. It started with a P50,000.00 capital (P12,500.00 from its registered owner and P37,500.00 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 continually 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

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1. Business Registration and Organization

Come Forth obtained the following forms applicable for registration. Firstly, the company acquired documents from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and was filled up to register Come Forth's business name. The firm was given legal recognition through this registration, enabling them to function legally. Secondly, the Mayor's permit was obtained from the BPLO office of the City of Santa Rosa, Laguna, where the owner, Ivan Boncodin, resides. A local government body issues this authorization and acts 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 adhere to tax laws, promoting responsibility and transparency in financial concerns.

Come Forth was a business classified as a sole proprietorship owned by Ivan Philip Boncodin. The firm chose this business structure because it presented few difficulties in owning and operating it than other business structures as it involved less amount of legal formalities and paperwork. Additionally, the owner had complete control over the business and could create and make decisions, allowing 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, and as shown in Figure 1, the business consisted 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 ultimately created critical decisions about its direction.

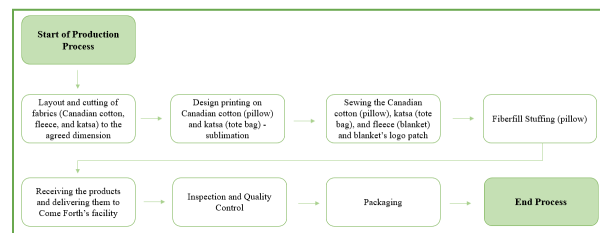
This structure improved the firm's relationship since it eliminated extensive levels of management and had minimal boundaries, increasing trust and transparency. It enabled excellent communication and collaboration since all were involved in the decision-making process, and it promoted flexibility, which allowed the business to adapt to changes swiftly. On the other hand, the firm experienced difficulties understanding their roles and responsibilities as they were overwhelmed by direction, which led to unorganized implementation. Nevertheless, 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, the firm's operation should be taken into consideration, including the production processes, marketing strategies, and financial and human resources.

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 katta) were laid out to prepare for cutting. Once these materials are cut, the sublimation of the designs is then printed on the fabrics to have their designs printed. The natural barrier designs are printed on the Canadian cotton fabric, while the logo was printed on the fleece. The following step was to sew the fabrics together to assemble and form the final product. Stuffing of the pillows is then done before the products are sent off to Come Forth's official facility. Once the products

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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 had the following materials used: 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 P230.00, P190.00, and P55.00, respectively. Additionally, minor productions were done, such as the message cards and sublimation. These cards contained thank you messages to the consumers who have supported the business and the desire to help sustain the natural barriers that the Philippines has. This indirect material costs P2.42, and sublimation costs P25.00. These materials helped produce the product Come Forth had to offer to its market. All in all, the direct cost per unit of the product consisted of P502.42.

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 and seek comfort while on the road with a simple mechanism that they can conveniently bring anywhere and anytime. The group made the combination of quality and innovation tangible to its customers, along with its design (Sierra Madre, Tubbataha Reef, and Banacon Mangrove), features, brand name, and available sizes.

Price

Taking note of the production cost, logistical expenditure, and product promotion, Come Forth set its selling price at P670.00, with a 33.35% markup. Its pricing profile considered the following: variable cost, markup, markup percentage, cost of goods sold, revenue, and profit, and 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, by encouraging customers to choose all three designs that must be bought together to obtain them for P2,000.00.

Place

There are various access doors and channels for customers to enter the sales cycle of Come Forth. One of which is retail stores – the most feasible setup for the business prospects in this avenue was 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, namely 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. An advertising solution that the company has done to expand its marketing efforts is using flyers and tarpaulins. With the help of the family and friends that the sellers have talked to, which they could also share with their peers, the management team reflected how the product is valuable 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 objectives. The human resources of the firm consisted 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;

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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 state, new insights, and plans and apply them effectively. He also organized meetings with their supplier, which facilitated smoother and easier transactions for manufacturing and producing the company's products. Lastly, he ensured the organization stayed on track and completed all timely activities.

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 align with the firm's objectives and keep 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, it guaranteed that the company reached its targeted audience and remained top of mind regarding the product it offers.

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 was also essential; thus, she secured different time schedules wherein the rest of the members were available to conduct their quality control efficiently.

Finance Manager

The finance manager, Christine Villanueva, collected the initial capital of the business. She also overlooked the company's financial operation 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 as they acquired direct benefits from its profit.

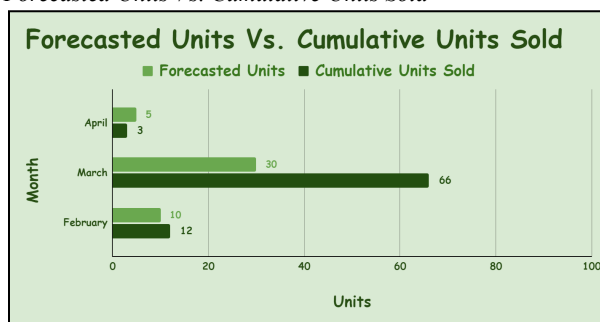
2.4. Finance

A capital or fund played a vital role in the firm as it served as Come Forth's start-up monetary assets; hence, the firm had an initial capital of P50,000.00 for its product development. As the business progressed, additional funds were needed, so P2,242.00 was put into the business; however, this was deducted from the company's net sales to return the additional funds invested. The business utilized debt financing, whereas the company borrowed money from Come Forth members, which was recorded under the company's loans payable. It will be returned to the members after the business liquidation.

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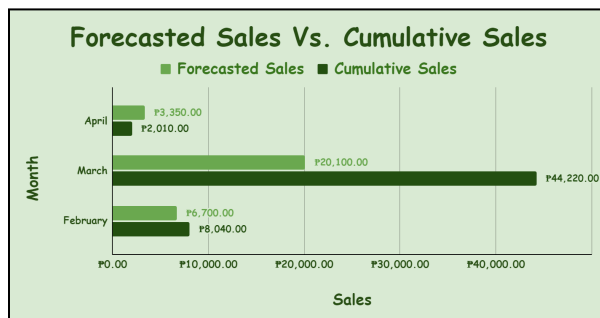


Figure 3
Forecasted Units Vs. Cumulative Units Sold



The units presented in Figure 3 were 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 was the equivalent of the forecasted and cumulative units from February to April 2023 in Philippine Peso; hence, it was called sales. The business had ₱8,040.00 cumulative sales for February, compared to forecasted sales of ₱6,700.00. Next, there was a huge boost in sales for March as the incremental sales

amounted to ₱44,220.00, while the forecasted sales for that month were only ₱20,100.00. Lastly, there was a decrease in sales for April, and the money accumulated by the business was only ₱2,010.00.

The firm's overall sales after deducting the ₱50.00 sales discount was ₱54,220.00, and a total of 81 units were sold for the time span of three months. They 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 release product diversification for its consumers. The product they chose was a sleeping eye mask. This was done by buying ten eye masks through an online seller in an e-commerce application. From there, they decided to add their business name through embroidery lettering on the lower right corner of the product. With this, 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 there was also soft plush cotton added to the front part of the eye mask. Imitation silk was used for the area of the face mask to ensure that 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 secured through an elastic silk strap to ensure that any size of the head, starting from the general size, could wear the sleeping mask. These features were included in the product's diversification to increase the consumers' comfortability while going through their 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 of 2022-2023, under the condition that the company continues to perform well. With this in mind, the firm plans to expand its

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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 would also register its logo, designs, and other elements owned by the company under the 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 to ensuring that Come Forth receives the proper licensing to provide security for themselves, their staff, and their clients. A firm with a valid license offers various benefits, including that their property would be safeguarded in litigation and still protected in any events the company may experience.

Moreover, in terms of patents, the products produced by Come Forth will not be issued a patent because it does not meet the criteria in which "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 played an integral role in helping the company to 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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To **Come Forth's valued customers** for their trust, support, and patronizing of the company's products and for providing the company with an opportunity to provide their wants and needs.

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Most importantly, to **God**, who provides everything for the researchers, may the physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and mental needs of the group, and for continuous guidance to the researchers to accomplish the entire task in this study.

6. References

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7. Appendices

DTI Registration Form

Mayor's Permit

BIR Registration Form 1901

Come Forth's Product and Diversification

Blanket-in-a-Pillow

Sleeping Eye-Mask

