

*Final Report for the
Learn Through Discovery Projects Hatchery
at California State Polytechnic University,
Pomona*

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RICH Tribe LA Project Proposal

Abstract

RICH Tribe LA is a lifestyle streetwear brand whose products are for the creative and conscious consumer who is in the market for contemporary, fashion-forward apparel and accessories. Our target market is men and women from the ages of 24 to 36 years old who have a college education and have an estimated annual income of \$70,000 or more. RICH Tribe LA will seek to diversify the options of sustainable streetwear by featuring handwoven textiles from indigenous tribes of the Philippines and working directly with them as an example of ethical practice. The customer discovery will be based on the hypothesis that our customers are 1) in the market for fashion-forward, contemporary apparel that is comfortable and functional, 2) becoming more aware of the environmental impact of the apparel industry and are opting for more eco-friendly clothing, 3) willing to spend more on products that are ethically and sustainably made, and 4) seeking for more knowledge and transparency about the brands they are supporting.

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Introduction

RICH Tribe LA represents the bridge between streetwear and tradition, unifying street-born designs with cultural practices. The purpose of my project is to continue an ongoing mission to preserve the traditions of handweaving textiles of the indigenous tribes of the Philippines, as well as having an ethical and environmentally conscious approach to designing and producing apparel. I intend to serve my customers with quality and unique garments, and the livelihoods of the weavers in the Philippines. As a senior, I have learned so much in the Department of Agriculture as an Apparel Merchandise and Management major, and I appreciate the opportunity to use my knowledge and skills to make a positive impact. This project is supported with the best intentions to use the knowledge I have gained at Cal Poly Pomona and to use the skills I've learned to educate my customers on the communities they will be helping, and the positive impact they will be a part of. This project is unique in several ways – 1) I will be working directly with the master weaver of two tribes to curate textiles that are unique to RICH Tribe LA, 2) I will be designing a collection and sourcing all the materials, 3) the collection will be made in the Philippines, 4) sustainability and ethical practices are the priority, 5) my customers will have an opportunity to experience a side of the Philippines many are not aware of. As a Filipino-American, having the opportunity to work with people of my heritage to create an apparel collection is an honor.

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Goals

Initial Goal: For this project, my goal is to release a full collection that features handwoven Philippine fabric sourced directly from two indigenous tribes.

Specific: I will be releasing a five-product collection that features handwoven Philippine fabric. The collection will include a men's t-shirt, women's t-shirt, unisex basketball shorts, bucket hat, and face mask. I will be working with my business partner to handle all the responsibilities to accomplish our goal, as well as our partner in the Philippines who will be producing our garments. The project was started in February and will take about 5-6 months to complete, so our projected release date is end of June. My partner and I decided to go forward with this project because we enjoy designing clothes, and we also want to make a positive impact in the apparel industry.

Measurable: I will be able to measure our progress through each milestone we complete. Each milestone has a checklist that needs to be complete before moving onto the next milestone.

Achievable: I know this goal is achievable because it will be my second collection. I learned a lot from the first collection that I released for my brand, so I was able to apply all the I learned to this collection. The biggest challenge with this collection I would say is time because due to COVID restrictions, we are experiencing more than normal delays on production. Regardless of the challenges, I am determined to go above and beyond to find solutions to make sure this project is complete.

Relevant: I will be graduating this semester with Apparel Merchandising and Management under my belt. This is the perfect project to showcase my knowledge and skills that I have learned here at Cal Poly Pomona, as well as catapult my career as the CEO of my clothing brand.

Time-Bound: This project is projected to take about 5 to 6 months to complete, and it is a very realistic timeline when considering a normal design and product development lead time for a clothing company takes around the same amount of time.

Smart Goal: For this project, my goal is to release a full 5-product collection that features handwoven textiles that was sourced directly from two indigenous Philippine tribes in about 5 to six months. I will be applying the knowledge and skills I have learned over the past 4 years to ensure exceptional execution.

Methods

Customer Discovery – RICH Tribe LA

Introduction

RICH Tribe LA is a lifestyle streetwear brand whose products are for the creative and conscious consumer who is in the market for contemporary, fashion-forward apparel and accessories. Our target market is men and women from the ages of 24 to 36 years old who have a college education and have an estimated annual income of \$70,000 or more. RICH Tribe LA will seek to diversify the options of sustainable streetwear by featuring handwoven textiles from indigenous tribes of the Philippines and working directly with them as an example of ethical practice. The customer discovery will be based on the hypothesis that our customers are 1) in the

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market for fashion-forward, contemporary apparel that is comfortable and functional, 2) becoming more aware of the environmental impact of the apparel industry and are opting for more eco-friendly clothing, 3) willing to spend more on products that are ethically and sustainably made, and 4) seeking for more knowledge and transparency about the brands they are supporting.

I interviewed 5 different customers. The purpose is to discover evidence that supports my hypothesis and to indicate solutions to pain points that I can implement into my business model. The questions I asked are as follows:

Questions

1. What are some primary considerations you have when purchasing clothes?
2. What do you consider ethical sourcing and sustainable manufacturing when you purchase clothes?
3. How much do you typically spend on clothing?
4. Are you more likely to spend more on apparel and accessories with the knowledge it was made ethically and sustainably? Why or why not?
5. What are some expectations you have for a sustainable brand?

Principal Questions:

- Do people care enough to support ethical and sustainable brands?
- Are they willing to pay more?
- Is there a market for sustainable streetwear?
- Do people need transparency to justify the price?

The results from the interviews both challenged and supported my hypothesis. Overall, there is a market in sustainable streetwear, and people are willing to purchase higher-priced products due to their ethical and sustainable qualities. After finishing up my market research, I realized that although more brands are introducing more ethical and sustainable practices into their processes, there was a lack of representation in the Philippine community. There is an endless list of brands that take influences from Asian cultures such as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, etc., but I have not found one Philippine-influenced brand in the streetwear market that is sustainable. The purpose of RICH Tribe is to implement ethical sourcing and sustainable manufacturing into the production of apparel and accessories while introducing Philippine textiles to the streetwear market.

Through the discovery process, two main themes appeared from the surveys: the purchasing habit of our interviewees depends on the quality and design elements, and most consumers are not fully knowledgeable of what is considered ethical and sustainable unless the brand discloses it. This addresses several principal questions that RICH Tribe plans to answer by not only producing quality products with the customer's comfort, functionality, and budget in mind but also using our platform as a source to educate our consumers of the environmental impact of the apparel industry. If we investigate the future of retail, we will see more companies becoming more transparent to their customers to achieve an advantage over their competitors.

For this project, the goal I intend to complete is to design and create an entire collection that features handwoven Philippine textiles and other sustainable materials that will be available to purchase on my brand's website (www.richtribela.com). This entire collection will be custom

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designed for customers of RICH Tribe LA and will include an all-around experience with my brand- from quality product to the packaging, all inspired by my Philippine heritage. I have divided each process by milestones.

Milestone I: I have already designed the entire collection for this project. It will be called “RICH Tribe LA ‘*LGNDNVRDIE*’”- a five product collection consisting of men’s t-shirts, women’s cropped t-shirts, basketball shorts, face masks, and bucket hats. I already contacted the tribes I will be working with and ordered the fabrics I will be using in the collection. The fabrics are now completed. I also have a partner in the Philippines who I am coordinating with to manufacture my designs. I already shipped him the completed handwoven textiles so now we are coordinating to produce the samples. For milestone I, the funding required will be to pay for the handwoven textiles and labor to produce samples.

Milestone II & III: I will be sourcing all other fabrics and materials necessary for my designs. I will be coordinating directly with my partner in the Philippines to produce the samples of my designs. I will also start designing and ordering packaging materials. For milestone II, the funding will be used to pay for the remainder of the raw materials, packaging materials, and down payment for the labor cost of production. Samples typically take about 2-3 weeks to produce, and depending on if they need revisions, it could take longer. Milestone II will require more time because sourcing and production normally takes the most time. I am currently in Milestone II and have been coordinating with my partner in the Philippines for mock samples. Once samples are approved, I will be moving onto Milestone IV.

Milestone IV: Once the samples are approved, I will be coordinating with my partner in the Philippines to prepare my designs for the main production. Once production starts, while waiting to be completed, my business partner, Christine, and I will be using the samples to create marketing content and hire models for photoshoots to model the collection. Since one of our mission as a brand is sustainability, our collection will be produced in low quantity (500 pieces total) to prevent overstock. Production typically takes 3-4 weeks. The funding for Milestone III will be used to pay for the remainder of the production cost and any marketing cost needed for models and photoshoot equipment. Once all marketing material and production is complete, we will go live on our website for purchase. My projected release date for the collection is around the end of June.

Results

The approach that I took with this project was first creating a customer discovery to indicate any pain points my perspective customers may have and find solutions that will solve them. I came up with four hypothesis that my audience is -1) in the market for fashion-forward, contemporary apparel that is comfortable and functional, 2) becoming more aware of the environmental impact of the apparel industry and are opting for more eco-friendly clothing, 3) willing to spend more on products that are ethically and sustainably made, and 4) seeking for more knowledge and transparency about the brands they are supporting- about my customer audience and found two main themes that appeared from the surveys. The two main themes that appeared from the surveys were that 1) the purchasing habit of the interviewees depend on the quality and design elements, and 2) most consumers are not fully knowledgeable of what is considered ethical and sustainable unless the brand discloses it. This addresses several principal questions that RICH Tribe plans to answer by not only producing quality products with the customer's comfort, functionality, and budget in mind but also using our platform as a source to educate our consumers of the environmental impact of the apparel industry.

For this project, the collection is influenced by Laker legend, Kobe Bryant. My approach to designing this collection was to make it comfortable, design-oriented, and affordable. From the first theme I discovered, most consumers purchase a product because 1) it looks good and essentially does what they want (design sensibilities), and 2) the price must justify its quality ("you get what you pay for"). The primary issue behind having products with design sensibilities is cost because 1) the more intricate the design, the higher cost it will be to produce, and 2) high-quality fabrics with functionality are expensive. The advantage, however, of well-designed products is durability and a longer lifespan. This would be considered a sustainable quality because it will take longer before the product's natural wear and tear. As a result, the design and quality of the end products were created with design sensibilities that is also affordable.

I designed a bucket hat with removal drawstrings and a side pocket on the hat to serve as storage for the drawstrings. The bucket hat will be reversible and is incorporated with our first and second handwoven Philippine textile. Next, I designed two staple pieces, one for men and one for women. For the men, I designed a double-hemmed t-shirt and for the women, I designed a crop tank top. Both pieces are intended to style perfectly with the final design. For the final design, I designed a pair of unisex basketball shorts with pockets and a drawstring that incorporates our third handwoven Philippine textile. The collection supports the first theme of the discovery process because 1) each garment is designed with the customer's comfort and functionality in mind, and 2) all raw materials are carefully and ethically sourced to further enhance the garment's sustainable qualities.

Through the second theme, I discovered that the common consumer 1) does not know the meaning of being ethical and sustainable because the brand does not market themselves as sustainable, and 2) does not normally purchase from sustainable brands. This disproves my hypothesis that consumers are becoming more conscious about the environmental impact of the

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clothing industry, however, proves a pain point of the lack of transparency in brand marketing. As the sustainable market is growing, people will eventually start becoming more environmentally conscious once more major brands include ethical and sustainable practices into their branding. As a result, I cannot fully claim the products are 100% sustainable, however, I can market the brand to be making sustainable and social conscious approaches with low quantity production, sustainable packaging, and working directly with Philippine weaving tribes.

RICH Tribe's current manufacturing process is considered sustainable because of our low quantity production. By having our products produced in smaller batches, it reduces the chance of overstock and waste. Our sourcing process is considered ethical because we work directly with the weaving tribes of the Philippines to source our textiles and include other sustainable materials in our packaging. For this project, our raw materials are about 85% sustainable except for using premade fabrics that contain polyester. Our plan for the near future is to include 100% sustainable materials such as natural threads and dyes into our textiles. For shipping packaging, we will be using biodegradable plastic and paper boxes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the collection encompasses two very diverse cultures- the Philippine culture and basketball culture. The strategy was to relate to two very diverse audiences at the same time give a deeper meaning to the apparel so when people wear the clothes, they can appreciate the little details from the design to the fabrics. Referring to the customer discovery process, this collection touched on several pain points. Firstly, this collection achieved quality and design sensibilities within budget by including premium materials and featuring functional design elements. Secondly, this collection features handwoven from three tribes of the Philippines- the Itneg Tribe, Ifugao Tribe, and Tawali Tribe. By including handwoven Philippine fabric, we can market our brand as socially conscious by supporting local artisans in the Philippines.

The first theme regards to design sensibilities. I was able to accomplish this with each piece within budget which makes the collection attractive to those who are looking for functionality and practically in their wardrobe as well as keeping the items affordable. The second theme regards to sustainability which I was not able to achieve 100% because of cost of materials. To achieve 100% sustainable products, it would have costed about three times the budget available, so instead I opted for other areas to apply sustainability which was in low quantity production per item and sustainable packaging materials. To market the collection, I will market it as a collection that features handwoven textiles from the Philippines and disclose my methods of pursuing sustainability.

In the final phases of this project, we accomplished the photoshoot, created marketing content and a brochure about the collection, and completion of production. I will be working with my team to reach out to media companies, retailers, and pop-up events to promote the collection which is projected to officially release on October 8. Since we cannot market the collection as 100% sustainable, our strategy is to promote the collection that features traditional Philippine textile which we hope to attract conscious consumers. We will also disclose our

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commitment and pursuance to becoming sustainable. In future collections, I will continue to make it a goal to include more sustainable practices to achieve 100% sustainability.

I learned many things from this project. The customer discovery served as market research where I was able to narrow down my target market, which is the conscious consumer. There is a lot of depth in market research than what is taught in textbooks and is only achievable once its applied. For example, I was taught that market research is to discover a target market and to see if there's a market for a product, but when applied, I found out there is more details to a customer such as buying habits and what a customer looks for when shopping. This discovery was available through the survey. I also learned the meaning of compromise. This regards to compromising my original plan and adjusting where it was needed to save on cost without jeopardizing the overall goal. This area was specifically in sourcing materials, where originally, I wanted to produce a sustainable collection but due to cost, I had to settle with low quantity production. Low quantity production may make it slower to achieve revenue, but it is a form of sustainability that I believe is more valuable.

This project can be taken into the future with a different collection that includes more sustainable practices, which is my plan. The biggest mistake I believe I made was overreaching within my capacity which resulted in many adjustments and revisions, so for the future, I will plan a collection within a set budget so that it will lessen unnecessary expenses that was caused by revisions. For anybody who is interested in doing a similar project, I would suggest starting with a plan whether it is producing a collection or creating one innovative design, planning helps ease the transition from phase to phase. I would also suggest working with a partner who has the same vision and goal as you, better if they are a fellow student, but also okay if not. This helps take off the load of your responsibilities so you both can perfect your specific department. Finally, I would suggest to only to start a project if you are truly passionate about it and are committed to completing it. A project like this will take a lot of your spare time and will require a lot of patience and work. Those who are working full-time and going to school who would also like to do the Project Hatchery will have a very difficult time achieving a project within a time frame. Overall, I believe the Project Hatchery is a great fit for young entrepreneurs who are looking to start their own company but need guidance and a little bit of financial help. The Project Hatchery helped me gain confidence to reach out to potential investors if I ever need to reach out for help. The Project Hatchery is a great source for open opportunities.

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Team

Team Member 1: Ria Custodio

- **Qualifications:** Senior, Apparel Merchandise and Management, Department of Agriculture
- **Position:** Head Designer, Product Development Manager, Sourcing Manager
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Design collection
 - Coordinate and communicate with manufacturer
 - Communicate with Philippine master weaver
 - Maintain production processes- technical flats, measurement charts, tech packs, etc.
 - Source fabrics and materials
 - Arrange payments
 - Help with marketing content and photoshoots

Team Member 2: Christine Hernandez

- **Qualifications:** BS International Business, Cal Poly Pomona Alumni, C/O 2018
- **Position:** Marketing Manager, Design Assistant, Sourcing Assistant
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Source fabrics and materials
 - Hire models and host photoshoots
 - Update website
 - Maintain Instagram and Facebook accounts
 - Create marketing content

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Budget

Milestone 1			
Type	Description	Qty	Budgeted
Philippine textiles	Materials	1	1500
Sample 1	Production cost for sample 1	1	100
		Total	\$1,600.00
Milestone 2			
Type	Description	Qty	Budgeted
Fabrics	Cotton, Polyester fabrics	1	1000
Materials	Drawstring, labels, packaging	1	300
Labor	Downpayment for Production Cost	1	700
Sample 2	Production cost for sample 2	1	100
		Total	\$2,100.00
Milestone 3			
Type	Description	Qty	Budgeted
Labor	Remaining production cost	1	1300
		Total	\$1,300.00
TOTALS			
How many student team members do you have?		1	Milestone 1
Allotted Budget		\$5,000.00	Total \$1,600.00
			Milestone 2
			Total \$2,100.00
			Milestone 3
			Total \$1,300.00
			Entire Project
			Total \$5,000.00

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Photos



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