



People of the Sea

Sustainable Fashion

We are a regional brand that focuses on environmental sustainability by keeping industrial textile waste and plastics out of our oceans and seas.

By Amy Vogelaar

Our Company

We transform castaways of the sea into stunning, one-of-a-kind treasures. Our goal is to collect refuse that washes up on our beaches or industrial textiles (such as old nylon fishing nets) that may be discarded into the ocean to recycle them into clothing pieces (mainly designed around macrame) that will remind us all to be more conscientious about what can make its way into our water systems. We will use local sourcing and labor to reduce our carbon footprint and provide gainful employment to support people in our community.

We will have one medium-sized flagship store near the pier of Venice Beach, CA to allow us easy access to our customers and supply chain. All other commerce will take place over the internet, using platforms such as Etsy, that support our sustainability goals.

Our brick-and-mortar store will cater more toward locals and vacationers, carrying more of our everyday clothing and accessory products, with a limited ability to make customizations to the pieces. Our Etsy store will provide much more flexibility with styles to make more made-to-order, complex pieces produced by our team of contracted macrame designers.

We would have two managers, one to run the flagship store and one to operate the eCommerce store. The flagship manager would be responsible for the day-to-day operations and the keeping connected with the individual contractors producing the basic garments. The eCommerce manager would be responsible for the Etsy custom orders and the higher-level contracted designers. They'd keep the customer and contractors in touch, ensuring that the end design met both the customer's expectations and matched with the contractor's skill set.

Pricing and Services

Our pricing range was decided in order to be affordable based on Californian standards and allow us to pay our workers a competitive wage. The new minimum wage in nearby Los Angeles is \$16.78/hr, we'd be offering \$20/hr to our workers, giving them perks like being able to work from home (Lewis, 2023).

The clothes sold at the flagship store (such as shirts, shorts, and simple dresses) will cost approximately \$60 - \$100 to make the price more attractive to locals and tourists who are just looking for a souvenir or everyday outfit. The custom clothing sold on Etsy will cost \$200 - \$300 depending on the complexity of the design and trims requested.

Besides the garments, both stores will provide the added service to personalize pieces by adding trims such as sea glass, shells, materials brought in by beachcombers, or other materials that the customer provides. Because of the extra work in drilling holes and adding biodegradable resin to any customer-acquired pieces, there would be a surcharge for these services of \$10/5 pieces when added to normal clothes and \$20/5 pieces for event clothing.



Our Customers

Our main customers at the physical location in Venice Beach will be vacationers and locals, which means a diverse array of what we need to take into consideration. Both parties will look at the price of the clothing, but locals will often take more into account the sustainability aspects. Vacationers will be coming in to look for souvenirs and will be more interested in the customization we can offer to remind them of their trip to California.

Locals will tend to be more long-term, brand-loyal customers. This will especially play a part if our company can show that we are giving back to the community in valuable ways, such as keeping the beaches clear and providing good jobs to people who are in need. Our target audience from this market would mostly be women aged 18-50, as the younger generation will likely go to the beach more often and the middle-aged will consider more about their environment and its impact on their standard of living. Our local customers would likely be educated and have a middle-class salary range with no one type of occupation more prevalent.

Vacationers would be the types to target with impulse purchases, as tourists who are staying for a short time tend to be more lenient on pricing than locals when it comes to products that are unique and can be useful in daily life (Neffke et al., 2018). The age range for vacationers is quite wide, from college students to mothers or grandmothers looking for souvenirs for their (grand)children. Most would be educated and making a larger salary to afford the vacation or attending to business in nearby LA. While sustainability may be a factor in deciding which shops they will buy from, it will not factor as large in their decision as it would in a local's.

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Sustainable Strategy – Planet

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Life Below Water and on Land – Clean Water

People of the Sea plans to buy fishing net that fishing companies were already planning to get rid of either because of holes or wear and tear. Many times, fishing net that is snagged or no longer useable is disposed of in landfills or even cut adrift at sea. This net can then wind up damaging delicate coral reefs and killing marine wildlife. Buying the material would incentivize companies to retrieve these nets so they can see at least some profit and even gain reputation from keeping these non-biodegradable plastics out of the environment. There is also a promotional incentive for cleaning up the beach that will be discussed more on a later slide.

Responsible Consumption / Partnership for the Goals

The fact that the netting from the fishing industry is being reused limits the company's use of virgin material, keeping non-biodegradable material such as nylon in circulation instead of in landfills. Once our company has reached a substantial enough size, we also intend to branch out and work with California's textile recycling plants to use recycled polyester and nylon that has been mixed with CiClo (to make it more biodegradable) as the base fabric for our non-macrame garments.

Climate Action

Promoting our products on Etsy is not only a good way to reach our customers. Etsy is a carbon-neutral retailer that we could partner with to find better ways to distribute our products. Already, we are considering packaging our garments with brown paper and a twine netting that the end consumer can later use as a hanging basket for a potted plant.

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Sustainable Strategy - People

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Good Jobs and Economic Growth

While not *People of the Sea's* main sustainability focus, our company will employ many local workers that are either unable to work normal jobs, are only employable seasonally, or already low-income. While we'd need steady workers in the brick-and-mortar store, we'd be able to source from dock workers and fisherman who sometimes need employment to cover the times they aren't on a boat or didn't get a good catch. This also applies to those confined to their houses, whose hobbies may include activities such as sewing, quilting, or macrame.

Our trims (such as sea glass and shells) would be bought from beachcombers or transients for a fair price, though we'd likely need to be careful about whom we accepted these resources from, as California beaches have rules about picking up shells with live sea creatures (Anonymous). Not only would this make the material locally sourced, cutting down on transportation emissions, but it would also allow many lower-paid professional workers to make a secure wage during their off-season.

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Sustainable Strategy - Profit

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Since much of our sourcing material comes second-hand from things that people don't want anymore (old fishing nets and beach refuse), our materials cost will be quite low. Also, with how large industrial fishing nets are, we'd have a lot of it. We'd also be able to source any additional materials from the nearby LA fashion district, saving on time and transportation. Additionally, the garment district would be an excellent source of pre-consumer fabric scrap that we'd likely be able to get for a deal to add into our designs.

California surprisingly has the highest unemployment rate in the US, but mostly because people are holding out for jobs with good benefits or with less physically demanding or work-at-home availability (Gedye,2021). With the money saved on materials, we can afford to pay our workers a better wage and provide benefits that would enable us to hire them full-time, allowing them time and resources to improve their skills. This would improve both their designing ability and construction expertise; enabling them to add flourishes and special touches that would make the garment more valuable to the consumer. This added value by our more specialized garment-makers could then be incorporated into the consumer price.

Competitive Analysis

Four companies we chose to use to compare our brand to are *Whimsey and Row*, *Gotta Have It*, *Skylark*, and the LA Fashion District (as a whole). The reason we chose to compare ourselves with these brands was because each brand either sells a similar style or to a similar market.

Whimsey and Row sells the breezy, beach clothes that are our mainstay. We outrank them when it comes to affordability, which may help us against their strong reputation sustainable supply chain (*Whimsey and Row*).

Skylark and *Gotta Have It* focus mainly on the one-of-a-kind market that we are trying to enter, especially with our online store. They have brick-and-mortar locations that are local to Venice Beach and have been among the vicinity's top-patronized, "hole-in-the-wall" stores. Their online presence is relatively small, though, limited to only a few pieces. *Skylark* doesn't do sustainability, but *Gotta Have It* is a vintage store that sells second-hand clothing, meaning it is inherently eco-friendly on some level.

The LA Fashion District would be the most dissimilar, but because of its size and location, it is an area we will need to analyze as competition. It is less than an hour away from Venice Beach and with its reputation in fashion is likely to have a bigger draw to fashion-oriented shoppers than a small cluster of Indie brands. However, our store will be closer to the beach where many tourists visit and is focused on sustainable practices, which is a bigger draw in California than it might be in other states.

Our Sourcing and Packaging

People of the Sea plans to source all our materials locally to both help give back to the community through employment and pollution reduction and cut down on carbon emissions from transportation. As stated earlier in this presentation, we intend to buy second-hand materials for a fair price from local fishing companies (netting for macrame) and beachcombers (sea glass and shells) and any pre-consumer waste from the nearby LA Fashion District to prevent any reusable materials from becoming possible environmental pollutants.

Our workers will be paid more than minimum wage, with work-at-home benefits and even some design freedom on custom orders. This will employ many people that either have restrictions on their physical mobility, are living paycheck to paycheck, or have other responsibilities such as small children. Should they inquire on resources for further learning, there is a possibility of expanding into worker programs once our company reaches a stable economic situation.

Our packaging is designed with the environment in mind. With a call-back to how packages used to come to the doorstep, we plan to wrap our products in brown paper tied with twine. The brown paper will keep any production dust or dirt during the shipping process away from the garment and lighten the package weight to reduce the shipping cost. It will also be easily recyclable. The jute twine will be tied in a diamond pattern, imitating the fishing nets that we sourced to produce our garments, and in such a way that untying the netting will allow the customers to reuse it as a hanging plant holder. Should the netting break, get thrown away, or be composted, the jute should decompose within 1-2 years.



Marketing

Our marketing strategies would differ depending on whether we were trying to funnel customers toward our store in Venice Beach or our online Etsy storefront.

To bring attention to our Etsy store, we'd likely want to have Facebook advertisements or sidebar advertisements on sustainability and vacation / special event websites, since the consumers we are targeting online are going to be looking more for custom designs than beach wear. We can also advertise the packaging doubling as a plant hanger and our sustainable practices, including the impact statistics we've had on taking refuse out of the ocean. From our Venice Beach location, we'd also have an Instagram Sustainability account that shows the efforts put in by our customers that participated in the beach-cleanup program that will be discussed more on the next slide.

In Venice Beach, we'd likely rely on signage along the boardwalk or targeted audible/radio advertisements as well as word of mouth to bring in customers. TikTok would also be a great way to advertise our brand since influencers at the beach are a common theme online, and if they're wearing our garments it would be great exposure. We'd want to focus on local areas so that it would be easy to take a little walk from the beach and find our store. To help encourage buying, we'd also have products that include sunscreen, sunglasses, and other beach-friendly accoutrements that are reasonably priced.



Promotional Activities

One of the promotional ideas that our company is most looking forward to putting into action is our beach-cleanup program. It is a rewards program for people that collect waste from the local beach. The rewards would be accessories, such as macrame bracelets or headbands, that come in sets of different colors.

Each time a person takes a picture of themselves throwing away a shopping bag full of trash they collected from the beach then comes to the store to show us the social media posting (#PoftheS) or brings in a copy of the picture for us to hang on our Wall of Sustainability, we'd gift them a simple accessory in one of the colors. This way, even tourists who came for short stays could earn a little something for their environmental efforts

Because there are different colors you can collect, if a local or longer-term visitor wanted to join the program, we would give them a punch card that had an increasing number of bags to be collected to earn the next color of accessory. Bonus points and a special charm at the completion of the punch card if they show that they recycled any cans or bottles that they found.

Not only would this promote environmental sustainability and keep the beach clean, but it would also draw potential customers into the shop to explore our merchandise. Also, if tourists completing the challenge find something interesting along the beach while they are picking up refuse, they may want to add it onto a customized garment as a reminder of their vacation activities.

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