BLOG 1:  
A Short Guide to Different Types of Materials Used in Backpack Manufacturing | Idealabgz

Introduction

Backpacks are an essential part of our lives, whether we are hiking, traveling, or going to school. Different backpacks serve different purposes, and the materials used in making them play a crucial role in determining their strength, durability, and overall quality. In this blog, we will take a closer look at the different types of materials used in backpack manufacturing, their uses, strengths, and weaknesses.

Nylon

Nylon is a popular material used in backpack manufacturing. It is lightweight, durable, and water-resistant. Nylon backpacks are ideal for outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, and backpacking. They are also suitable for everyday use because they are easy to clean and maintain.

Nylon backpacks come in different grades, with the most common being 210D, 420D, and 600D. 210D nylon is lightweight and suitable for day-to-day use. 420D nylon is more durable and can withstand more wear and tear. 600D nylon is the strongest and most durable and is ideal for heavy-duty use.

Polyester

Polyester is another popular material used in backpack manufacturing. It is lightweight, durable, and water-resistant. Polyester backpacks are suitable for outdoor activities and everyday use. They are also easy to clean and maintain.

Polyester backpacks come in different grades, with the most common being 600D, 900D, and 1200D. 600D polyester is lightweight and suitable for day-to-day use. 900D polyester is more durable and can withstand more wear and tear. 1200D polyester is the strongest and most durable and is ideal for heavy-duty use.

Cotton

Cotton is a natural material used in backpack manufacturing. It is soft, breathable, and comfortable to wear. Cotton backpacks are suitable for everyday use and light outdoor activities. They are not water-resistant and can be challenging to clean.

Canvas

Canvas is a durable material used in backpack manufacturing. It is made from cotton and is water-resistant. Canvas backpacks are suitable for outdoor activities such as hiking and camping. They are also suitable for everyday use because they are easy to clean and maintain.

Canvas backpacks come in different grades, with the most common being 10 oz, 12 oz, and 14 oz. 10 oz canvas is lightweight and suitable for day-to-day use. 12 oz canvas is more durable and can withstand more wear and tear. 14 oz canvas is the strongest and most durable and is ideal for heavy-duty use.

Leather

Leather is a premium material used in backpack manufacturing. It is durable, water-resistant, and stylish. Leather backpacks are suitable for everyday use and formal occasions. They are not suitable for outdoor activities because they can be heavy and difficult to clean.

Leather backpacks come in different types, with the most common being full-grain leather, top-grain leather, and bonded leather. Full-grain leather is the highest quality and most durable. Top-grain leather is a slightly lower quality but still very durable. Bonded leather is made from scraps of leather and is not as durable as full-grain or top-grain leather.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the material used in backpack manufacturing plays a crucial role in determining its strength, durability, and overall quality. Nylon, polyester, cotton, canvas, and leather are the most popular materials used in backpack manufacturing. Each material has its strengths and weaknesses, and the choice of material depends on the intended use of the backpack. At Idealabgz, we specialize in custom backpack manufacturing using high-quality materials.

Contact us at Enquiry@idealabgz.com for all your custom backpack manufacturing needs.

BLOG 2:

Backpack Manufacturing: Steps Involved and Key Considerations

Backpacks are essential items for outdoor enthusiasts, students, and travelers. As such, the demand for backpacks is always high, making backpack manufacturing an in demand business. However, producing high-quality backpacks requires attention to detail and adherence to specific manufacturing steps.

Step 1: Design and Conceptualization The first step in backpack manufacturing is designing and conceptualizing the backpack. This process involves determining the size, shape, and features of the backpack, including the number and types of pockets, zippers, and straps.

Step 2: Material Selection

When selecting materials for backpack manufacturing, it's important to consider factors such as weight, durability, water-resistance, and breathability. Nylon is a popular choice for backpacks because it's lightweight, durable, and water-resistant. Polyester is also a commonly used material because it's strong and easy to clean. Canvas is another material used in backpack manufacturing, particularly for more heavy-duty backpacks, as it's a thick and sturdy material.

Some manufacturers also incorporate specialized materials such as ripstop, which is a type of nylon fabric that is resistant to tearing, or ballistic nylon, which is a particularly heavy-duty and abrasion-resistant material. Choosing the right material depends on the intended use of the backpack, as well as the budget of the manufacturer.

Step 3: Cutting and Sewing

Once the materials have been selected, the backpack pieces are cut out from the chosen fabric. Each section of the backpack is cut to the required size and shape using a template, which ensures consistency and accuracy in the manufacturing process.

The different sections of the backpack, such as the main body, pockets, straps, and zippers, are then sewn together. The backpack pieces are typically sewn together using a heavy-duty sewing machine, with reinforced stitching in areas of high stress, such as where the straps attach to the backpack.

It's also common for backpack manufacturers to use heat-sealing techniques to create waterproof seams, particularly in areas of the backpack that are most susceptible to moisture, such as the zippers and around the edges of the backpack.

Overall, the cutting and sewing process is crucial to the final quality of the backpack. Attention to detail and precision in the cutting and sewing process can result in a high-quality, durable backpack that meets the needs of customers.

Step 4: Embellishments and Accessories

Once the backpack is assembled, manufacturers may choose to add embellishments such as zippers, buckles, and straps to enhance the functionality and appearance of the backpack. These embellishments are typically chosen based on their quality, durability, and suitability for the intended use of the backpack. For example, a heavy-duty backpack may require thicker, more robust zippers and buckles, while a lightweight backpack may only need simpler, lighter-weight embellishments.

Some backpack manufacturers also choose to add branding elements, such as logos or labels, to their backpacks. These branding elements are typically selected based on their quality, durability, and appearance, and may be applied to the backpack through methods such as screen printing, embroidery, or heat transfer.

Step 5: Quality Control

Before the backpacks are shipped out to customers, they undergo a thorough quality control (QC) process to ensure that they meet the manufacturer's standards for quality and functionality. A typical QC process might involve randomly selecting a sample of backpacks from the production run and inspecting them according to Acceptable Quality Level (AQL) methods.

AQL methods involve inspecting the backpacks for defects such as loose threads, missing embellishments, and incorrect stitching. The backpacks are typically inspected at various stages of the manufacturing process, including after the cutting and sewing process, after the embellishments are added, and after the backpacks are fully assembled.

If any defects are found during the QC process, the manufacturer may choose to either repair the backpack or reject it from the production run. This ensures that customers receive backpacks that meet the manufacturer's high standards for quality and functionality.

If you're looking for a backpack manufacturer who prioritizes quality and attention to detail, contact us at enquiry@idealabgz.com to learn more about our manufacturing capabilities and how we can help bring your backpack ideas to life.

Keywords: backpack manufacturing, backpack production, backpack design, backpack material, backpack assembly, backpack quality control, nylon backpack, polyester backpack, canvas backpack, ripstop backpack, ballistic nylon backpack, backpack cutting, backpack sewing, heat-sealing, backpack embellishments, backpack branding, backpack quality control, acceptable quality level, AQL methods.

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BLOG 3:

Mastering Technical Drawings in Backpack Design

What are technical drawings?

Technical drawings are detailed illustrations that communicate the necessary information for a backpack design to be constructed. They are the backbone of the design process, providing a visual representation of the product's dimensions, materials, and construction methods. Technical drawings are typically created using computer-aided design (CAD) software, and are essential for ensuring that a backpack is functional, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing.

The importance of accurate technical drawings

Accurate technical drawings are essential for ensuring that a backpack design is successful. They provide a blueprint for the manufacturing process, allowing designers and manufacturers to understand the product's construction methods and materials. Technical drawings also help to ensure that the final product meets the customer's requirements, as they provide a visual representation of the design that can be used to communicate with the customer throughout the design process.

Creating technical drawings for backpack design

Creating technical drawings for backpack design requires a high degree of precision and attention to detail. The process typically involves creating multiple views of the backpack, including front, back, side, and top views, as well as detailed illustrations of any pockets, straps, and other features. Designers must also ensure that the technical drawings are accurate and up-to-date throughout the design process, as any errors or omissions can result in a faulty final product.

The benefits of accurate technical drawings

Accurate technical drawings offer numerous benefits for backpack designers and manufacturers. They help to minimize errors and reduce the likelihood of rework, which can save time and money. Accurate technical drawings also facilitate communication between designers, manufacturers, and customers, ensuring that everyone is on the same page throughout the design process. Additionally, accurate technical drawings help to ensure that the final product is functional, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing, which is essential for customer satisfaction and brand reputation.

Mastering technical drawings is essential for successful backpack design. Accurate technical drawings provide a blueprint for manufacturing, minimize errors, and facilitate communication between designers, manufacturers, and customers. At IdeaLabGZ, we specialize in creating accurate technical drawings for bespoke backpacks. If you have a technical drawing and design enquiry, please email us at enquiry@idealabgz.com.

Contact us at IdeaLabGZ for all your technical drawing and design needs. Email us at enquiry@idealabgz.com to start the conversation today.

BLOG 4:

How Tariffs work and how they affect business.

Updated: Feb 1

I'm not the biggest fan of the BBC these days, but this article here really shows the power of the tariff especially in the garment manufacturing business. You can read the original here https://www.bbc.com/news/business-54164397 if you so wish, but I was going to just break it down a bit and evaluate how powerful tariffs can be when imposed on other nations.

Rwanda as it happens, has established itself as a prominent and established garment manufacturer in Africa, albeit with the help of the investment of Chinese money and factories opening up there as they circumvent the rising blue collar wages and rents that come with China's economic growth.

Rwanda, a smallish country nestled in East Africa between the almighty giants Congo and Tanzania imposed an import tariff on second hand clothing, referred locally as chagua. Which they argued were impeding the growth of their domestic garment manufacturing sector. Some 2/3rds of the population were buying second hand clothes, so you could argue it was really stifling opportunities for growth and employment.

Previously Rwanda and some other East African counterparts collectively known as the EAC (East Africa Community) had been allowed to export to the US, a huge market, tariff free. Every other country except Rwanda in the EAC backed out, Rwanda in effect doubled down and slapped a $4 USD per KG tariff on used clothing. In turn the US responded by putting a 30% Tariff on Rwandan clothing. Previously under the free trade agreement there had been none and garment manufacturing was bi-lateral and reciprocal.

This effectively killed, overnight Rwanda's garment manufacturing for export business. So the shift focused to other export markets and of course servicing the need of the domestic market. The ban on second hand imported clothes forced garment manufacturers to expand into manufacturing clothes for the local market.

There is a double-edged sword to this, whilst Rwanda is now able to focus on other markets and grow domestically, servicing the emergent middle class, it has also made Rwanda less of an attractive base for companies looking to set up their garment manufacturing base internationally. Namely Chinese entrepreneurs. One such example of this is the Chinese firm C & H, which closed its factory shortly after the US retaliated with tariffs.

In order to counter this, the Rwandan government has removed all import tariffs on raw materials required for manufacturing garments and new factories get grants and loans. However this in itself hasn't really worked as now Rwanda is importing cheap clothing from China, sellers have switched from buying cheap second hand Chagua to new imported clothing.

What does this tell us about the international economy. Firstly, it is very responsive and tariffs do impact on garment manufacturing. Companies can relocate, stop producing, change their buying patterns very quickly. Something similar is and has been happening in China since tariffs were imposed on them.

The effect has been a little bit different, but also worthy of taking note of. Firstly big factories have suffered. Output has fallen drastically as clothing production moves close to the US mainland, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia all have blossoming garment manufacturing businesses.

Smaller garment factories in China have done well, as they are able to service lower orders at lower costs and have benefited off the back of the tariff increases that have crippled the larger factories.

They too have also started to explore other markets for export and shift away from the dependency on the US market which has been the core of Chinese manufacturing for so long.

Anyway I wanted to keep this brief and not too complicated so its simplified so to speak. If you have any questions about garment manufacturing in general use the form to get in contact with us and we will be in touch.

BLOG 5:

Cheap & Simple Custom Backpack Manufacturer - Yiwu

Updated: Feb 1

A lot of people hate on Yiwu and I don't think its fair. Yiwu has its place in the custom backpack manufacturing world, as well as pretty much everything else under the sun.

If I had a penny for all the times people had said to me. "You can't manufacture backpacks in Yiwu, China." Well I honestly wouldn't be manufacturing backpacks, i'd be on a beach somewhere with cocktails and a hammock. It really does get a bad rap. I think that's mostly because people expect the same kind of quality you get out of Quanzhou or Guangzhou. When in reality, it's not that kind of backpack manufacturing market. I will concede that it's not the best for backpack manufacturers, but it has its absolute perks for sure.

It's by no means a big city (in chinese terms) but it does have some proper clout. I think 1.2 million people (someone can wikipedia that for me) but has earned the title of the worlds largest small commodity wholesale market in the world. It's a sight for sore eyes. Even if you wanted to walk it, I don't think you could in a day.

If you are there to find private label backpack manufacturers then I guess this is something of a do and don't list for you to help you navigate. The main benefit I found with Yiwu for manufacturing backpacks, is you can negotiate a cheaper price point as well as lower minimum order quantities.

Your list of Do's for Backpack Manufacturing in Yiwu.

Do visit, walk the market and talk to people in the booths. These booths are often fronts for manufacturing outlets.

Do venture off the main routes. Rental on the shops close to the entrances is super high. Go in a path or up a level and the rentals drop right down. Yiwu locals say "on the third floor, even the rats don't come out to eat." If there are shops up here, rent is cheap and this means your product prices are cheaper.

If your man says he has a backpack manufacturing business, Do go and visit his factory. Most if not all are located within 45 minute to an hour ride of the market.

Do negotiate hard the payment terms. In Yiwu they do have a culture of doing half a job, because when its done, they know some clients won't accept it. So they just palm it off to the wholesale market. If you can get 20% or 30% you minimise your risk. They know the game too, so it's no biggie if the gear ain't good enough.

Hire a local Yiwu agent to help with your QC, or grab the services of a reputable inspection company, like QIMA or something.

Your list of Don'ts for backpack manufacturing in Yiwu.

Don't buy fake goods or imitation goods. This business used to be pretty profitable. But they are having a huge clampdown. Despite what they might tell you, you may not even get it out of customs.

Don't do a large order. Yiwu is built for small regular orders. So there is no need to push the boat out. If you are ready to go large orders, move it to Quanzhou or Guangzhou and get that quality for the extra buck.

Don't take their lead times at their word. 45 days is more like 70 days in Yiwu. Everything just happens when they are ready.

Don't expect everything to go smoothly. Yiwu is cheap, sure. But cheap = problems. And stuff is always going wrong in Yiwu. Its par for the course. If you have your agent on hand or the services of an inspection company then you should be ok.

Don't pay anything until the goods are finished and ready to go to your warehouse.

This is just my 10 cents on backpack manufacturing in Yiwu. Custom bag makers perhaps prefer other cities in China, that offer better product and quality. However Yiwu does have its place. If your bottom line is price, and you are doing something in the promo section, giveaways, cheap school bags etc then Yiwu is for you.

We used to go up there once a month to deal with some backpack manufacturing, but in the end i lost too much hair and I just decided to move out of there for our backpack production opportunities.

If you want some advice on backpack manufacturing opportunities and how best to place your product in China, depending on its specifications and minimum order quantities, then reach out to us at.

BLOG 6

What do we mean when we say Custom Bag Manufacturer?

I guess the clue is in the title. But you'd be surprised. So we will lay it out for you.

A custom bag manufacturer is someone that will manufacturer a bag specific to your designs or drawings, as opposed to just producing something common and off the shelf. It can't happen without a custom backpack design & technical drawing. A service that we also provide, so no worries there. But also you can find a tonne online that will knock one up for you for a couple of hundred dollars.

What is the purpose of your custom backpack and how will it be manufactured?

Nearly all of our clients custom backpacks focus on a particular niche, and their backpack is manufactured around satisfying the demand for that niche. The weirder the better in many cases. We've seen some mad ones over the years. Some great. Some...yeah.

Know your audience. Are you marketing it towards outdoors people, travellers, security, business people, young people, pet owners, gym goers, emergency services? Knowing your audience and what you want to make will hugely affect the types of materials we use for your custom backpack and how we manufacturer it.

A school or college backpack needs to rugged and tough, but also probably come in some interesting colours with some patterning. It needs to be able to hold a lot of weight (think of all those study books) as well as be comfortable. It also needs to look great, so you minimise your chances of being picked on at school.

A business backpack will need to look more refined. We may decide to manufacture a business backpack in PU or a high strength Oxford. It will of course be absolutely no use if you can't find a laptop in it as well as some pens, notebooks, chargers etc. So functionality is going to take a stand here. It also needs to try and not look like a school or college bag....As well, its for business.

How to go about designing my custom backpack?

Start with a sketch, a scribble, some notes, drag images off pinterest, save things off google, take pictures in walmart. Whatever you need to do, just get your idea on paper. Then pass those images to us and we can help sort of mould them into shape. Designing a custom backpack is not easy and does take time, so remember this whole process is a marathon not a sprint. I think the average project takes about 6-9 months to finish, sometimes longer. It really depends.

Once we have your backpack designed and we sit down with the custom backpack manufacturer here in Quanzhou, China we need to choose a fabric. Often I like to make the first sample in black so we can be sure of the functionality and know the design is done correctly. Then once we've done that, we can start to pick colours, nail down fabrics and pick from swatches. Going from drawing to prototype can also be a frustrating and drawn out affair, but have faith. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

A quick overview on the types of fabrics we typically use.

1) An Oxford Fabric. Good for anything gym, sporty. trekky, hikey, walkey, It's a very durable and versatile fabric well suited for manufacturing these kinds of backpacks.

2) Non Woven fabric has a weave like finish. Made from fibres Non woven fabric is durable and will last a long time, perfect for a wide range of custom backpacks. It is also usually available in a wide range of colours.

3) Nylon is ultra strong and best suited for heavy duty backpacks. We recommend our clients who are developing something really out there to consider using Nylon.

4) PU Leather. Really PU Leather needs a post all on its own as it's so in depth, It comes with a wide range of colours, effects, touches and styles. You need to make sure your backpack manufacturer is familiar with PU and knows how to work with it before you proceed.

5) Vinyl Fabric. Vinyl is popular mostly for handbags and those sort of trendy style backpacks. We haven't done too much work with Vinyl but it is up and coming as a popular choice for people looking to manufacturer backpacks.

6) Microfibers. Extremely lightweight and for its denier quite strong. Best suited for people manufacturing picnic backpacks, travel backpacks, things that need to pack away small into the boot of a car.

7) Jute Fabric. Jute is super strong. Its eco-friendly and affordable. It also looks trendy as. Being organic it is rapidly emerging as a first choice for conscious minded backpack manufacturers.

Sorting out the dimensions of your bag.

Dimensions are important. Think airplanes. Carry on luggage, stuffing it in the back of the car. All of these things are crucial. We have standard dimensions that we can offer you, depending on your market. But of course if you have something bespoke that fits to your niche let us know and we can be sure to update your technical drawings with the correct information prior to sampling.

To learn more and find out how best to start your custom backpack idea and get it ready for manufacture here in Quanzhou, China fill out the short form below and we will get back to you asap with a proposal.

BLOG 7

Working with Dress Manufacturers in China

Going to share some generic information about working with a dress factory in China, on (most) if not all the things you need to know whether you are looking for a wedding dress factory in Guangzhou or a lace dress manufacturer elsewhere in China, hopefully this short blog will help you understand what you need to work well with dress manufacturers in china.

Of course, it all starts with looking for a suitable dress supplier in China. And for many people Alibaba is the place where that search begins, as it presents itself as the quickest, easiest and most efficient way to get talking to suppliers.

Finding a suitable dress manufacturer is complicated. But if you follow a few simple rules and guides you can minimise that risk somewhat.

You need your dress design for the factory.

You need to know what fabrics you want.

You need to know your dress factory in China can work with your sizes.

You need to know the fabric is good quality.

The other things must be handled well by the dress factory, such as zippers, printing if any.

The IdeaLabgz.com has had the opportunity to provide dress manufacturing services to a number of clients from Australia, to the United States to Nigeria. And we've seen (and made) most of the mistakes already in our 12 years experience as a women's clothes supplier in china so hopefully you can avoid most of them, by taking something of value away from this post. And of course if you find it useful hit us up at enquiry@idealabgz.com to learn more.

The first one is you need a good design template. If you can make your own dress patterns, then superb. You can skip stage 1 and start talking to your dress manufacturer directly in China to price up your design. If not, you will need to employ the services of someone who can do dress pattern making, whether it be an off shoulder dress or a ball gown, the process does not change.

The IdeaLabgz provides in house dress pattern making services, where we work directly with dress factory here in China to develop the pattern and check it's manufacturing viability at the same time. The cost is around $100-$150 depending on the pattern complexity. It takes us about 7-10 days usually and we include an unlimited number of revisions until you are satisfied.

But you may want to employ the services of someone close by to where you live so you can have direct oversight and control over the development of your design. However you do it, make sure you do this first.

Or your attempts at working with a dress factory in Guangzhou will be more or less futile and your dress will probably look nothing like what you envisioned.

The next stage in the process is fabrics. One of the reasons why guangzhou has become the number one spot for a lot of dress factories in china is because of the huge fabric market here in Zhongda, called in Chinese 中大布料市场. I've been working with dress manufacturers in china for 12 years, been visiting this market since as long as I can remember and I still do not know my way around it. It is huge.

Beyond huge even. It's just mind boggling. I think something like 75% of the dress factories in China buy their material from this place. Anyway i'm digressing.

This market is where we head next to procure your fabric. It's important to choose fabric that has been stored well, is relatively new, not old and in stock. Fabric that has not been stored well, is easy to tear, rip and means you will encounter a whole host of potential problems when you begin your journey with dress manufacturers. Further unless you have a good reliable inspection company to visit your dress factory in china, you won't discover many of these problems until you receive your stock. So strike early, strike fast and get that fabric checked before you begin production.

Most of the time the fabric supplier in Zhongda will deliver the fabric to your dress factory, as even though China is big, most dress factories are close by the fabric market. It is also relatively easy to transport and ship. It's not a given that your chosen dress manufacturer can work with the fabric you want to use, but a reasonably well established professional clothes supplier in China should not have an issue. But make sure on your initial inspection that they are a good fit for the dress pattern you have approved.

The first thing you will want to negotiate with your dress factory is a complete sizing check against your designs. Most dress manufacturers in china should and will produce a complete set of samples against production for the sizes you require. Typically you get one revision to the sizes prior to placing your mass production order, so make sure you receive the samples, check they fit well and note down any adjustments and have the pattern updated. Failure to do this and well you've got an ill-fitting dress that you can't sell.

Some dress factories in china will offer their own sizing suggestions. I always say here proceed with caution. If you know what you need, then make sure you communicate to the dress factory that your sizing is standard and thats what you want. Again I think it's always a good idea to arrange another inspection of the finished garments prior to export to make sure the sizes are as per your original specifications.

Some dress factories do use inferior zippers, not all. But some. Golden rule here, just ask for SBS zippers as standard. SBS are basically good quality, reliable zippers that will hold their own. Most dress manufacturers in China should have a good supplier of zippers.

if you are looking for someone to help you manufacture your dresses or just want access to a good dress factory in china through a company that understands your concerns, then talk to The IdealabGZ. We are a UK owned and operated company that has been based in South China since 2009, and we are all about customer care.

You can either email us at enquiry@idealabgz.com or just fill in the form below and we will get back to you.

BLOG 8

Guangzhou is the best place for finding Leather and PU Bag Manufacturers.

leather bag manufacturer swatches

Absolutely no vegans were offended or animals were hurt procuring this leather. It is totally synthetic. So you can relax.

The rise of conservationism and a greater awareness of animal welfare has pushed the leather industry in a new direction. And Guangzhou as a handbag and bag manufacturer is owning that space. In 2017, Guangzhou produced well over a 1,000,000 handbags for export. If you are umming and ahhing about how and where to start your handbag design and manufacturing ideas let us first explain to you why Guangzhou should be your first port of call.

Manufacturing around China is divided into areas, districts, regions, specialist zones meaning that different cities and townships across China have become specialist in manufacturing different things. Guangzhou has become known as the leather city. The workforce is divided into people that buy and sell leather (known as the material traders) and these place themselves around the city and leather bag manufacturing districts. They operate out of huge four and five story trading centres where you basically go and choose your swatches. For leather bag manufacturers like ourselves this presents itself as a goldmine where we can begin our manufacturing journey. Over the 12 years present here working with leather bag factories we have got our go to suppliers, who we know and rely on. But every now and again we do shake it up and see what else is out there. But having the relationship on the ground and being able to pick first hand is so important if you want to create a good leather bag with a manufacturer.

There is a catch here however. Custom leather bag manufacturers often use particular swatches and particular materials from particular suppliers. This means stock often sells out. Once it's sold out, you have no choice but to wait for the supplier to re-stock. Given that the material you choose for your leather goods supplier has to be such that it is readily available. Our comment about having relationships on the ground is super important here because through A LOT of trial and error we have now got good access to material that can be constantly used and delivered to leather handbag manufacturers. We rarely encounter stock issues. But it can be frustrating if you are starting out and you may find you have a conversation a little like this:

You: "Hey. Yes I got the sample its great. Ready to place an order whenever"

Leather Handbag Manufacturer: "Ok. Sure. Right now we only have similar material, is it ok for you?"

You: "Sure, how similar is it?"

Leather Handbag Manufacturer: "Well, its green not black and the pattern is a bit different."

You: "Hmmm, not ideal. How do we get the original material?"

Leather Handbag Manufacturer: "Well we need to pre-book the material and the MOQ is 5,000,000,000 yards? Can you accept an MOQ of 10,000,000,000 pieces?"

You: "Not really. I am just starting out."

Leather Handbag Manufacturer: "Ok. Bye."

Alright, so this is an exaggeration somewhat, but you get my point. You get so far down your leather bag manufacturing journey and then you get stumped by something that seems so irrelevant it should have been addressed in the beginning.

Well, with 12 years here in Guangzhou, we don't have that problem (much). We only usually source leather goods and materials through suppliers that are readily available. Most of the time for handbags, purses and other leather bag manufacture we can operate with minimum order quantities of around 100 pieces per design (this is not guaranteed, but just a guide). Email us with your idea for a more specific quote. But as I am sure you agree, the material is a huge huge part of bringing your handbag design idea from head space to handbag manufacturer is probably one of the largest and most important parts. Material, look and feel is everything. Next up is construction quality, finishing, zippers, tags, studs etc. Oh boy, this will be fun to try and explain.

Nobody wants their zippers to chip, their stud feet to pop off or their leather to start pocking. There is another link in the chain and that is the acquisition of what I call the bells and whistles. Just like the huge leather supplier markets and factories that churn out material there are equally just as many suppliers that sell the other bits in between. These can be even more hellish to deal with. Let's say the average handbag has 5 zippers.

A couple on the outside, a couple on the inside and one or two elsewhere. And you are looking at an initial order of 100 pieces. You will need around 500 zippers. And you want them plated rose gold. No leather bag manufacturer is going to have a connect that can just get you 500 custom rose gold plated zippers. They will have to buy from a market connect, or a distributor.

These guys hustling on the handbag zippers make cents per piece. So you can imagine by using some high school math, they need to sell a lot of zippers to be able to afford that Maserati. But mark my words, some of the guys selling handbag manufacturers, the zippers they sell are in huge quantity. But in a numbers game, how vested do you think they are in quality, or better still how are their resources to check the quality on all the zippers they receive from the manufacturer...I can tell you, its low. They get bagged up, weighed, counted and priced up. And then when they go out to the wholesale leather bag suppliers its a game of pot luck basically.

Now, again this comes down to experience. 12 years here, we know our good eggs from our bad eggs from our absolutely rotten eggs. And so do our trusted leather bag manufacturers. But if you are just starting out, it could be something that you come across. Unfortunately it's true many leather bag suppliers don't place a lot of value in first time customers, thinking short term rather than long term. This is mainly because it takes a long time to develop the leads and then you make $1000, it's hardly a business model that's easy to scale up without a great deal of time and patience. Even we cannot 100% guarantee that the quality of the zippers used by our leather handbag manufacturers are good every time, its just a numbers game. Some will slip through.

So we have a policy in place to protect our clients and ensure we filter out the bag eggs from the rotten eggs and the good eggs from the rest. We basically say if you buy any handbags and you encounter bad or faulty zippers then we will re-up for you on the next order. Basically re-make for you for free. Usually as a rule of thumb we encounter 3 or 4 leather handbags that have been manufactured sub-par shall we say. So we address where those quality issues are and we add them to the next order.

From here on out, it gets easy. I will say this. If you have a leather bag manufacturer and they are in Guangzhou. Chances are the standard of workmanship will be good. This is because the labour force is most hired on a temporary basis. Bigger orders. they pull workers in. Small orders they reduce the labour force. This means that most of the factories draw from the same pool of workers. So by the time you get your product to the factory floor, 9/10 leather bag manufacturers here in guangzhou are going to produce something that's good. In fact they are so good they make copy designer handbags that are nearly indistinguishable from the real thing. That's how good they are. But please don't go into the copy handbag business...let's create something unique and new.

Anyway, I hope this short blog post has been helpful for you to get some insight into how the leather bag manufacturing process works, what you should think about prior to getting involved and some of the potential snags along the way.

Of course The IdeaLabgz, positioned here since 2009 is in great shape and well positioned to help you develop your idea and bring it to the best leather bag manufacturers so please do reach out to us via the form below to discuss your idea. Everything is completely confidential, there are no upfront fees until we start sampling and we will not sign off on anything until you are completely happy with it, whether it takes 3 weeks or 3 months.

BLOG 9

We Made Luggage for this Car Brand & it looks Amazing

Updated: Sep 22, 2020

In this post I present a short case study so you can see the kind of work that we do and learn a little bit about our operation here, how long we've been here and the sorts of stuff we make.

There's a contact form at the bottom (or you can email here) if you want to drop us a message, its free and we reply within a day so do reach out to us with your enquiry.

Guangzhou, a city in South China has been our base of operations since time began for us. Back in 2009 we got settled here. This is a story of how we began making bags for one of the world's best known car manufacturers.

There are literally thousands upon thousands of factories making leather and nylon goods operating here. There is no end of choice and it can be hard knowing where to start sometimes.

Material procurement is probably the most important process when choosing your supplier. Poor material lends itself to poor quality product. You wouldn't build a house out of paper would you? Its the same for bag manufacturing. You want the proper stuff. The real deal. You want the stuff you see on the shelf when your browsing backpacks in the camping store.

Well, that's where we come in. With 12 years in this city, although I will be honest it feels like 120 sometimes, we know every nook and cranny there is here. We have established superb relationships with our fabric suppliers, and it is this relationship we pass downstream to our clients when they choose to manufacture with us. We've done the hard work, so you don't have to.

I'll be honest and admit something. We are not perfect. We do make mistakes sometimes. We operate in a very competitive space where everyone around us is involved in a race to the bottom for pricing, and sometimes that affects us indirectly.

That's not to say we are expensive, just we don't cut corners. This approach to business and ethos paid off in 2019 when we were approached by a company to make luggage for one of the worlds most premium car brands. A real badge of honour.

The client had some idea of what they wanted to do but needed some assistance with the actual bag design elements, and making it all work, look good and polished. We submitted a brief, it was accepted and we got to work. Designing bags and backpacks is not that straight forward. There can be a lot of back and forth, ironing out tweaks, problems, design flaws, sticky zippers, adjusting fabric denier, lining pockets properly. Sometimes it takes us 3 weeks, sometimes it takes us 3 months. But we love doing it, and for us its part of the journey. Of course we hope that you too can make that journey with us.

We started with a very rough generic sample using some off the shelf PU (imitation leather), Neoprene and a standard no.5 zipper. It looked good, but it was still a ways off.

The handle was bulky, intrusive and it well just looked a bit cheap, but we were definitely moving in the right direction. It was good enough to get the approval and we went back to our chinese bag factory to work on materials and refine the design. Eventually we ended up with this which I have to say myself is a superb looking piece of kit.

The leather we used was a premium leather finished and worked in the U.K before being imported here into China for use in our bag manufacturers workshop. Each piece of leather, zipper, logo was safely stored in a dry, air conditioned part of the warehouse where it sat until we began production.

Production was slow and heavy going, as every bag in the factory had to be handled with the upmost care and detail to ensure there were no nicks from needles, no scratches from being poorly handled or bent.

Credit where credit due, goes to our partner bag factory in china for their absolute professionalism as everyone worked with some of the highest levels of detail I have ever seen. We did during the sewing process encounter issues with the neoprene bending once it was stitched into the leather and side fabric 900D. But we were able to rectify this quite quickly by just switching out for a better, stronger neoprene. I think we lost about two weeks doing that.

So I guess in summary the point is this: China is China, I am sure you have heard horror stories about poor quality bag manufacturers here, producing inferior work and selling your brand short. But thats with every business. There are always a range of operators out there. Most are good, but there are always a few bad eggs.

If you are looking to create something next level and in need of a good bag factory in china make sure you drop us an email richard@idealabgz.com and we can give you a brief overview on how it all works or fill out the form below and we will follow up in time.

Thanks for reading and look forward to hearing from you.

Rick

BLOG 10

Is it safe to buy from Alibaba?

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Quick 2 min introduction for those of you that don't know me. My name is Rick and I have been manufacturing all sorts of products in South China since 2009. In my early days I probably spent more hours on Alibaba than I did Facebook (back when Facebook was actually half decent). I've no idea what TikTok is, so I won't reference that.

People often come to me and say "is it safe to buy from Alibaba?" or "is buying from Alibaba safe?" and to answer that question I have to ask another question.

Is every plumber guaranteed to do a good job?

Is every used car salesman selling you something that won't make it out of parking lot?

Of course Alibaba is safe to buy from, its a listing website for pretty much every factory on the planet. But many people continue to have horrible experiences that unfortunately taint their perception of manufacturing and put them off sourcing from China for life. It's like everything, there are always going to be a few bad apples that fall from the tree. So how do you sift them out and how do you know whose legit and whose basically...well....not.

Well actually - the responsibility for not getting scammed is on you. Yes! Spoiler alert.

Think of it like this and break it down for a minute.

You open up Alibaba and you go to the search bar and you type "business backpacks," you skip the first few because nobody ever talks to the first one right and you hit say the third or fourth one down. You hit the contact now button and say "Hey, can you make this backpack?"

Of course the answer is going to be "yes, of course we can." You exchange emails, trade a few pleasantries and eventually you get a quote from the named supplier. It seems ok, to be honest you don't really know. The order quantity seems a bit large, but factories need big orders right? STOP RIGHT THERE! Back track 3 steps. Turn off your computer, reboot it and lets' check this again.

Would you drop a picture of a Land Rover to a used car salesman and go "you got one of these?" NO. You wouldn't. You just wouldn't do it. And Land Rovers are reliable (sorta). You still wouldn't do it.

They are by the way pretty much indestructible and should outlive your grandkids.

You'd say "When was the oil last changed, hows the transmission, when were the cam belts last serviced. How are the filters? How many miles (or kilometres if thats the way you roll)? What's the tread like? etcetera etcetera.

Now apply that logic to talking to a supplier on Alibaba. Imagine they are a used Car Salesman. You know you can get a great deal if you are savvy, but you proceed with an err of caution and you definitely walk right out the door if he's sporting a dodgy moustache.

So yes Alibaba is perfectly safe to buy from, and its a great resource but you absolutely have to approach them armed to the teeth with the right questions and knowledge. In short, when you present yourself to the supplier online, you need to immediately qualify yourself as a serious well informed buyer who knows exactly what he wants. One that is not to be trifled with.

But how do I qualify them I hear you cry, when I am here in Sunny (insert home town) and they are all the way over there in (insert China)?

There are a total of 10 things you need to do to vet your supplier for the job, before any money changes hands.

1. Geographical knowledge of where your product is produced and where the supplier is.

2. A Guideline on what you think it should cost.

3. What is your MOQ limit (don't deviate from it)

4. What processes you should expect to be out-sourced.

5. How long you should expect it to take.

6. What is likely to go wrong (something always does)

7. The ways to validate your chosen factory.

8. A breakdown/oversight of the production processes.

9. When to conduct your inspections

10. An understanding of the logistical implications once manufacturing is complete (things can go horribly wrong here)

You might be reading this blog thinking, ok I did a search on sourcing, found this sourcing website. read your piece, it sort of makes sense - so whats the sell?

Well my sell is very straightforward and simple. It doesn't involve me sourcing your product for you, but rather lending me an hour of your time (you'll get it back 10 fold I promise with saved hours on Alibaba) and let me give you the toolkit so you can map out your own strategy to success with sourcing online. I want you to be independent and be able to reap the benefits from online sourcing.

In this hour we will cover the 10 points listed above as well a little bit extra. After our call I will help find you 3 factories that are suitable for the product you are trying to make (you can be as vague or as detailed as you want with the information you provide) and I will put together a short concise brief that outlines the expected processes and steps you will need to take to bring your product to life as well as the predicted timeline. That will take me about a week to do.

Alright. Last sentence then I will leave you be. What does it cost?

$97 USD for a full hour consultation at a time that works for you.

If this interests you, fill out the form below and we will get in touch to fix up a time.

Thanks for reading.

Rick & the team

IdeaLabGZ

www.idealabgz.com

BLOG 11

10 Pieces Minimum. Delivered to Door.

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Introducing Backpack Wholesale Options from China. Many people are put off by the somewhat larger minimum order quantities for backpack manufacturing in China, which when compared to garment and clothing manufacture is significantly higher. To buy materials, organise production and have a good run at something bespoke a minimum order of around 300 pieces is about as low as we can go.

However I understand that many people are starting their own online stores, unsure about what they maybe want to sell, or perhaps they want to have a bit of a range of products on their store. 300 pieces multiplied by styles and ranges can quickly become daunting and high risk. So we are introducing (hopefully with some success) a 10 Piece order Wholesale Backpack China option to our site.

The idea being, that some people out there want to move their purchasing to the Far East, but don't want to commit right off the bat to the larger orders, They'd prefer to move up slowly, maybe test a few products first before they commit to something bespoke, maybe want to work on building a range on Amazon or eBay but want to iron out the logistical implications first and get some traffic on those ever so crucial keywords. Whatever the reason, I would suggest most people want to have a go at online selling, but they do not want to drop-ship nor do they want to spend 10 grand bringing in stock they are not too sure can even sell.

If you want to be kept in the loop about how this develops as there is really nothing to lose when you are ordering 10 backpacks then drop your details in the form below, just an email address is fine. We won't and don't spam don't worry. You might get one email every two weeks and we will always keep it short and sweet.

What have we done?

Well. We've got good, even great relationships with our manufacturers, some of the time, most of the time, I guess all of the time. Yeah. Even we argue, we sort it out in the end! They have kindly helped me put together a list of stock items (items they have patterns, fabric, zippers for. Not common everyday items either, somethings are quite unique).

Basically they can make them easily and quickly. Further they are holding some stock for us to help get this off the ground. These backpack manufacturers in China are going to handle incredibly low order quantities, specifically 10 pieces as a minimum. Ship them to my warehouse within a week so we can check them and get them out to our vast and diverse backpack manufacturing client base in Australia, United Kingdom, United States, Canada and New Zealand. We are going to then use of consolidated logistics network of ocean freight only and ship them out to our clients inclusive of all duties, taxes and fees. Australia and New Zealand sorry, you will have to pay GST.

From buying your bags to the time receiving them at your front door should be around 45-50 days. Yes I know its a long wait, but its a means to scale up and enter the market at a low cost to you and with minimum risk. We need 7-8 days to get your stock ready for shipment & then it goes onto a weekly freighter. Whilst on the ocean unfortunately your China manufactured backpacks cannot be tracked, but you can use this time to prepare your website, your adwords, maybe start taking some pre-orders. With ten pieces only as a minimum order it should be fairly straight forward for you to sell. If you want to receive one ahead by courier just let us know, we will ship it out and then you can pay the courier fee of that one separately. Once the bags arrive at the destination port, after around 35 days they will clear customs. This is unfortunately the great unknown. It could take 3 days it could take 7 days. It depends on how busy the customs are and how well organised they are. After it has finished clearing customs the tracking number we provided you with, will become active. Once that tracking number becomes active you will receive your backpacks at your door in a matter of days.

What happens with faulty stock?

Of course we try and avoid this issue by inspecting everything prior to leaving but sometimes of course sh\*t happens. If this happens, just let us know and we can do 1 of two things.

1) we can refund you the value of the damaged bag.

2) ship out a replacement to you at our cost.

How does it all work?

It is a bit clunky at the moment the online shop as we are still tweaking the product pages and the checkout process but the idea behind it is quite simple. The image of the bag represents the bag we are selling and you are buying. Duh! And the price shown is the price for 10 pieces inclusive of shipping and duties. So there are no extra charges or fees outside of the price shown (Australia & NZ - GST - Sorry).

So all you need to do is click on the bag that you want to buy and the page will enlarge like so to show the expanded view of the chosen backpack.

The SKU036 refers to the number we have assigned to it, so we can find it here and pick it up from the factory. From the dropdown menu you can then select the colour you want. Here you can see for this manufactured backpack there are three colour choices. Blue, Black & Red. The price shown is for $216.30 USD (I am working on getting a currency calculator put in for those of you in the United Kingdom, Canada, NZ and Australia). Unfortunately you can't mix colours just yet, so the minimum order quantity is per 10 pieces. So the price per backpack per colour is $21.63 USD. And that price includes the shipping and the duties and the delivery, so even to a seasoned importer these prices are quite competitive and of course you only have to buy 10 and they are coming factory direct. The beauty of buying them factory direct is that we can solve quality issues quickly as well as being able to offer stock on a continued basis. And as your business grows you can explore new and different products as well as branch out into customisation and product development to differentiate yourself further from your competitors.

The next step, is add to cart. Yep! the bit where it moves into that imaginary shopping cart and we wait for your payment details. We've chosen the black one, because black is classy and it stays clean.

You only need to click quantity one, as the quantity one is for a set of 10. We figured it was easier that way to avoid potential mistakes. If you want to check the details, hit the button "View Full Details" and it will bring up a short brief just letting you know about the fabrics, the sizes etc.

We wanted to use Own It instead of Buy Now, but thats what it means. It means take me to the handing out my payment info bit. But we just thought Own It sounded more decisive. Once its in your cart, it will look something like this.

You can see the total is at $216.30.

Once you hit checkout, make sure you fill out all the information. We need it for the delivery courier. Zip Code, Address, the lot. If we don't have it. We can't ship it.

Finally it is highly likely as we get going and gather more momentum that we will start to offer more bags, develop our own and include logo placement and customisation as standard for all orders. If you want to be kept in the loop join us via this short form and we will keep you upto date.

Thanks for reading and if you have any specific questions please reach out to me directly via richard@idealabgz.com

BLOG 12

Corona & Manufacturing in China

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Anyone that knows me will know I am pretty critical of many things in China, but also grateful for the opportunities it presents. It's a sort of double edged sword. And those wet markets where they serve up half of the amazon on one dodgy ill-lit table have always freaked me out. When I first moved here I used to go around buying up the turtles and tortoises before releasing them back into the streams and ponds. Given how slow they move, how populated the cities are, and how every market including Walmart had a fresh supply of live turtles I quickly had to give up that 'hobby.' Walking into a restaurant, ordering some noodle soup and finding bits of shell in my bowl - I quickly realised I'd have to improve my Chinese and just sort of try and look the other way for many things if i was going to avoid being outraged. Point being, whatever the origins and cause of this virus, things are unlikely to change in China anytime soon when it comes to looking at palatable dinner options.

Fast forward 11 years and bang, there's a virus on the rampage and it cleared out pretty quick. It's doing its rounds now and whilst I am in no position of authority to talk about the peaks, the methods, remedies etc I have spent the last two weeks visiting all my suppliers getting an update on how the Coronavirus is affecting backpack manufacturing in China.

Backpack manufacturing is more complicated than garment manufacture but it's not rocket science. It does depend on a few variables that have definitely been disrupted by this bug. Firstly most of the labour force that operate the sewing machines do come from Hubei and Wuhan, the province and lead city most affected by the virus and locked down around the time of Chinese New Year. This means that whilst everyone is back at work in China and life is sort of returning to normal we are experiencing a huge dip in productivity and output. A backpack factory in China with a pre-CNY workforce of 35-40 is probably down to less than ten now on average. Yes some factories are recruiting new workers, but this in itself is a double edged sword. New workers don't work as quickly, diligently as the ones who have been with the factories before. Quality may suffer as factories bring in new workers, add pressure and try and make up for lost time by rushing through orders to keep the wheels turning so to speak. Time has a very close indirect relationship with quality. The quicker something is done, the chances are the less well it is going to be made. My stance with my partner backpack factories is this. Stay tight, keep me in the loop and if you need an extra fifteen days its ok, just keep me looped in. I'd rather things take 35% longer than take a 35% hit on quality control. The Idea LabGZ has reached out to all our clients and let them know that whilst things have gone from fast to slow, ultimately quality won't suffer.

The markets where materials are bought, sold, traded and bartered are the backbone of the backpack manufacturing industry here in China. Every factory will appoint someone to go and purchase material for orders. These markets only re-opened recently and there is a cap on how many people can go in, how close they can get to other people, the means of exchanging money, sanitary measures in place etc. The markets were the last to open and given that there are not that many markets in China, the whole backpack manufacturing is dancing on ice a little bit. If someone gets a sniffle in the market - it gets shut down and everyone is back to sitting on their hands again. Many factories will keep stock of fabrics such as blue, black, grey etc so reach out to them and check if they have material in stock and if so, in what colours.

The next point regarding backpack factories in China is the issue of insolvency. Some of the big backpack manufacturing boys have huge overheads, massive workforce salaries, huge contracts and credit lines with fabric suppliers. Since December, that has pretty much been a standstill and that unfortunately will trickle down to the majority of people who are buying from China in the form of inflated pricing. Factories need to make that 40% extra to recover some shortfall coupled with the productivity fall. Some of the smaller factories who have lower overheads are now moving into a competitive space as they try and win back customers with orders. The city of Yiwu in Zhejiang, well known for being the largest small commodities market in the world, was offering free international flights to the city and hotel accommodation paid for in an attempt to entice commerce back into the city. Yiwu as it happens, rose to prominence in 9/11 giving arab and middle eastern traders access to markets where they felt insecure elsewhere. Many have stayed and prospered. There is a lot of middle eastern money in Yiwu. So with that in mind, it should bounce back pretty quick and business as usual.

Keep good dialogue with your factories, don't feel uncomfortable asking difficult questions. The first thing I said to all my suppliers was "If someone gets a fever, let me know immediately" and "how many workers have you got now in the factory." We all know everyone is taking a hit here around the world, so its about being as transparent as possible to get solutions on the table for backpack manufacturing problems as quickly as possible.

Wu' Flu as its also known here in China has knocked logistics on its head too. Airplanes, Boats, Cruise Ships, Trucks & Trains are under tighter and tighter measures. Rest assured though, whilst people maybe facing increased restrictions, stock and cargo mostly isn't. For one this virus isn't going to be living inside a carton for 45 days while it sits in a cold damp wet container on the pacific ocean. Logistics companies may well be putting in place some measures for controlling staff exposure to risk, which of course may directly affect timelines on stuff, but the bottom line remains the same. Your goods leaving China will arrive at your door. Currently travel inside China, so thats delivery from factories to ports is taking a couple more extra days than normal. Customs clearance too is running a little slow, but the rest of it in between and there is business as usual.

Finally as a closing note. Let's be honest. There are much more serious threats out there in the world right now. Ebola has killed 2000+ since November alone and It hardly makes the front page. HIV and the common cold do much more damage annually than Corona has done. Whats dangerous is how quietly it moves, but if there is one thing to be sure of is that the world still turns, day becomes night and night becomes day. Just make sure you have toilet roll. Here at the IdeaLabGZ we are open, we are still here. We are working closely with our manufacturers to keep everything as clear as can be. And for that thank you everybody for your continued patience and trust.

If you have any questions shoot them over to me at richard@banfa.co.uk

check out our website at https://www.idealabgz.com

eBook on manufacturing in China, with some pretty useful information available at https://www.idealabgz.com/product-page/10-secrets-to-making

$20 OFF our eBook with IDEALAB2020

Thanks again, Rick

BLOG 13

Denim: A [short] Biography

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Unleash the dragon

If you are looking to manufacture denim like the above dragon jeans in China, then we probably need to cut the conversation short here. Just kidding, but it got your attention. We figured it would be a good idea to go through and illustrate some of the more popular fabrics, where they come from (as in their derivatives) and talk about their production and uses. So in part one: Denim.

A popular and go to choice for apparel manufacturers is of course denim. Everybody at some point in their life has rocked either a denim jacket or denim trousers aka jeans. Hopefully not both at the same time; that would be double-denim and a big no no except for those stuck in the 80s or guys with mullets. Those two by the way are often linked. Check your record collection and your wardrobe, revert back and keep reading.

Most people are familiar with the history of Denim really gaining recognition in the United States when miners and surveyors needed a pair of durable pants. I think wikipedia will confirm that a fella called Jacob W. Davis, a tailor from Nevada manufactured the first pair of denim pants with rivets. It was here, so the story goes that denim was born. Word spread fast, far and wide and before poor old Jacob knew it, he was getting orders left right and centre for denim pants with rivets in them, what we know now today as jeans. He then reached out to the Idea Lab to help him expand his demand and looked at out sourcing production to china in the hope of finding a good reliable clothing manufacturer. Sadly, neither China had the capacity and the idea lab hadn't really happened yet so he went to another good fellow by the name of Levis Strauss. A deal was truck, profit shared agreed upon and manufacturing was set up, not in Guangzhou South China, but San Francisco. Nowadays the story of denim is firmly in the past but as custom clothing manufacturers for small orders dealing with a range of private label sellers online on platforms such as Amazon and Shopify its a fabric we have come to know and love.

Denim is actually best described as a cotton based textile, with the weft [where the threads loom over and under with other threads passed through to make the cloth] This weaving process, although not unique, but specific produces Denim. The blue white colour contrast is itself an effect of the manufacturing process in which the warp thread is dyed [indigo] and the weft [thats the over and under] is left white. So when you flip the inside of your jeans to find that coin hanging in the bottom of the pocket you see the colour differences. This process of manufacturing which is so unique to denim also helps create that fading look, which has come to dominate the industry, as well as paying more money for rips, which frankly i've never understood as a foot always gets caught and ruins it. Happens every time!

There are variations in the mix and denim comes with its own creations. Dry Denim or as it sometimes is know, Raw denim is denim that is not washed after having been dyed during production. Of course given time and enough wear [go on, how often do you wash your jeans] the denim will fade in the areas where it receives the most stress. Generally speaking denim after being made into an article of clothing it should be washed to make it softer [aka more comfortable to wear] and reduce shrinkage [ thinking you've put on a few pounds overnight, when its just your denim post rinse]. Believe it or not, wikipedia spat out a technical term for this too. It is sanforization. Put that in your request for quotation to the idea lab.

"I'd like 200 pairs of jeans size S,M,L & XL. All of them must undergo extensive sanforization."

While we are on the technical terms, there are a few more that might [or not] interest you. Selvedge is the word given to the edge of the fabric when it comes from the loom. These are usually woven or knit so that they will not do the usual irritating things of fraying, unravelling or curling. Generally this can only be achieved when using a shuttle loom. The plot thickens however as when making denim with a shuttle, it produces a much narrow fabric, only 30 inches, which is typically half the width of other looms which don't use shuttles. This means of course that more fabric is used to make a pair of jeans from selvedge. So yep you guessed it, if you ask for selvedge denim jeans they are going to be a bit more expensive than the standard fare.

Definitely wanting to keep this short, to max 3 minutes so will wind it up here. Hope that little nugget of information was atleast mildly interesting and you might have learnt something. And of course if you are looking for clothing manufacturers in china, you are in the right place and on the right website and probably speaking to the right person. Guangzhou, South China is absolutely the place to do private label apparel manufacturing and hosts some of the best clothing suppliers in China. In fact the China garment manufacturing industry should be the first port of call for anyone [except those doing 10s of thousands of pieces, in which case Bangladesh] looking to get ahead with outsourcing some production to China.

In all cases we are a point of contact first, so feel free to ask us any questions, big or small and we will give you a reply.

If you are looking to get a quote on anything denim related then shoot us an email at

richard@banfa.co.uk

enquiry@banfa.co.uk

Follow us on instagram:

the\_idea\_lab\_guangzhou

website:

idealabgz.com

and we have a youtube HERE now, but its off to a slow start as for sure I won't find enough time to make videos.

THANKS AGAIN FOR READING, NOW GO OUT AND BUY SOME DRAGON JEANS.

BLOG 14

We are adding Garments to the list.

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

The birth of the factory starts here

We've taken backpack design, development and manufacturing really seriously. And we absolutely love it. Nothing beats the feeling of working with someone's idea and bringing it into the world to be put into the hands of their loving customers.

We have done most of this through google, facebook & instagram so big thank you to all of you who have put your trust in us over the years and been well rewarded.

We've experienced some pretty mental growth after hacking the world of online digital marketing and we are taking it to the next level. We want to go into oem clothing by being a conduit for factories in china that make clothes.

In fact we have just bought ourselves a handful of industrial sewing machines that are hopefully going to work toward being one of the best clothing manufacturer in China, through our commitment to quality and customer service.

Our focus is to service the needs of clients who sell online and want to get involved with clothing manufacturing from China in small quantities. So if you are looking for shirt manufacturers, t shirt manufacturers in China, gym clothing or activewear or even children's clothing manufacturers then talk to us so we can help you get started.

How does it all work?

Well first of all you need to know a little bit about our operation. We are not set up just yet to handle massive orders. But we can confidently do somewhere around 200-300 pieces (in a variety of sizes). But hopefully this is part that will appeal to our customer base.

We want you to use clothing suppliers in china more regularly, but buy less. This way YOU are in control, have limited excess stock and can see the growth happening quicker. Through our research most online businesses fail because of start up costs. Money nowadays is better spent on advertising and client out-reach than it is on stock.

Stock can be turned around quickly, whereas a lot of time is needed to adequately test and refine your advertising budget to get it fully optimised. A Sewing factory in China once set up with your product can pretty much work to your schedule, preparing product as and when you need it.

Private label clothing manufacturing has changed a lot since the days of mail order catalogues and department stores. Everything is shifting online, which is why depth of range is more important than quantity in stock. After all, when the relationship between dollars spent online equates to garments sold, you have better control over how much and how fast you sell your product. A small quantity clothing manufacturer in china should be your first choice when exploring out sourcing to the Far East.

A short note on quality

Getting clothes made in China does not mean it needs to come with the stigma of "being made in China." Far from it. China has now well and truly shaken its reputation as that place where all our crap comes from. China produces consistently good quality products at a competitive (not cheap) price in a good time frame. The days of stories where clothing manufacturers in Guangzhou China, would take your money and disappear are pretty much gone.

Now the key to finding a good clothing manufacturer in China, is about relationships and looking in all the places nobody else is looking. In fact some of the best clothing manufacturers are so good that they are not even online. They have built their business through their reputation alone. A good example of this is both jeans and women's clothing manufacturers in China. There is literally a whole market dedicated to it, where you can choose the materials, the zippers, the fabric before confirming your order with the clothing production companies based around the market.

Obviously it goes without saying that quality is always something to be wary of. Anywhere in the world, when you buy something you buy with intent. Here it is the same with oem clothing manufacturers and generally getting any clothes made in China. The first step is getting samples made.

This is important when dealing with any apparel manufacturing companies in china as it sets the standard for production. A sample might not be 100% perfect in design, but if the quality is up to scratch and the fabric is right then you have a good baseline to work with when you finally come to getting your clothes made. Sometimes smaller factories will possibly even outsource clothing manufacturing to another smaller factory, which presents even more problems for quality control. So it is important to make sure the factory can handle the order they say they are doing and it is not being outsourced to other Chinese garment suppliers.

Production

We are set up here in South China to take you from design and development, to getting clothes made in China. We have manufacturing capabilities to handle production of about 20-30 pieces a day, meaning we can do somewhere around 200-300 pieces a month (as you need about 10 days per order to check quality, go over stitching and pack the goods into final shipment ready cartons) We take production very seriously and as we know how hard it is finding a clothing manufacturer in China we are setting up to give you transparency, clarity, peace of mind and complete flexibility. If you need 50 pieces, then you can have 50 pieces. As an OEM clothing manufacturer we want to let you do do one thing. "getting clothes made in China." When you grow, we grow. But for now we are happy to start off small.

Shipping

When the order is finished and packed up we have to organise shipping. This pricing is separate from the manufactured pricing we give you as:

1) We don't know where everyone is based and shipping costs vary depending on whereabouts you are in the world.

2) There are different shipping methods that have different pricing. Sea freight is much more affordable than airfreight, while airfreight is much quicker.

3) Some countries we are able to offer inclusive to the door including taxes and duties. Currently these include: Canada, USA, United Kingdom, Australia.

4) Pricing of shipping varies depending on the quantity and the overall weight of the box. Heavier boxes will cost more. But if a box is too light, it will be charged at the volume weight - not the actual weight.

We do all shipping at cost with our freight agent and will work to facilitate it at cost directly with the freight agent so you get the most affordable fees for direct transportation of your goods from the made to order from the clothes manufacturer to your door.

To learn more email us at

enquiry@banfa.co.uk

https://www.facebook.com/TheIdeaLabGuangZhou/

or on instagram

BLOG 15

Supply Chain Transparency

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Often many of our new customers are hesitant about placing orders and sending money to someone the other side of the world they have never met. It is daunting and of course you are risking not just your entire idea, but more often than not a big chunk of change to go with it.

So we thought what could we do to show you what we do is real and legit. That we do actually make stuff here in the far east, and don't just take your money and sit around with it clunking in our pockets.

So we teamed up with a good friend who runs a video production company in China. SLA. Check them out, they do good things. And we asked kindly if they would make a short supply chain transparency video for us giving you an insight into how a day for a factory visit goes down.

It usually starts pretty early as we hurtle to the airport to catch a plane to either Yiwu or Quanzhou. Two of the main backpack manufacturing hubs in China. The first plane out of Guangzhou to Yiwu is at 7:35 and we usually catch that one, as it means we can be in the market by 9:30 am.

Backpack & Garment Manufacturing Solutions in China

The trip from the airport into Yiwu Futian market takes approximately 30-40 minutes and then you are in the thick of it. The world's largest small commodities market, worth 60% of Christmas comes from here. People ask me, ok so what does Yiwu look like?

How does it work?

Well you can think of Yiwu as loads and loads of small booths crammed into a massive building. To buy one of these bad boys can go for as much as $10 mill, so they are literally worth their weight in gold. Competition for places in the market is so intense that you rarely ever see an empty booth. Yiwu is a crazy place where money talks and the day is gone before you know it. Every booth is specific to a determined niche. And each area services a general area. So there is an entire floor dedicated to "backpacks" with different booths selling school backpacks, bumbags, kids bags and so forth. The trick is to find one that has something that you need and take it from there. As we have been working in Yiwu for nearly six years plus now, we sort of have that bit all dialled and know exactly where to go for what. But that being said, it never gets boring to walk the market and get new ideas.

Yiwu loads and loads of booths that front for factories

But as most of my clients are running small to medium online businesses selling on Amazon or shopify the advantages of a place like Yiwu are fantastic. Firstly and foremost, if you buy off the shelf, the MOQ is 1 piece. If you want to create a custom product, that MOQ rises but compared to elsewhere in China it is still incredibly low. Backpacks for example start at 200 pieces per design.

Yes I drive in China. Yes it is like this

After we walk the market and talk about our orders with our suppliers the next step is to head to the factory to check on production. Possibly what we envision a factory is and the reality of a factory are two very different things. It is not Foxconn or Walmart. 95% of garment and backpack factories in China are families and friends working in a room on sewing machines. It is all local, low key with lots of hard work. This is why sometimes things don't always go to plan.

Whilst we never compromise on quality, sometimes because of the human factor lead times do take a nudge. A 4 week proposed manufacturing schedule can quickly become 6 or 7 weeks if problems occur or someone is off sick.

Factory Boss & I

This is the chap that runs the factory up here in Yiwu. It's his factory, I talk with him directly and he helps me with everything. If i have a problem I come to him, talk about it and we make a plan about how to get it done. Typical problems usually include making minor alterations to the design, restructuring the way the fabric is cut to get a clean finish.

I usually select all the fabric and materials myself in the market with the supplier at hand. This allows me to make sure that the quality of material is good, there are no issues there but fundamentally it allows me to keep pricing transparent, which of course we are able to directly pass onto the end consumer.

You can see the whole process below on the video and if you want to develop a greater insight and understanding on how to develop your backpack idea then reach out to us at enquiry@banfa.co.uk

BLOG 16

To Ship by Air or by Sea?

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Part 1. The issue of shipping your manufactured backpacks by Air from China to your home country.

The Idea Lab are backpack manufacturers based in South China. We take your ideas and we bring them to life through drawings, sketches, scribbles and technical drawings. We work with a large network of great suppliers who match our quality needs and pricing requirements. We know China. I personally speak both Chinese and Cantonese and have been living here since 2009. Pretty much China is my life & it is all I know. If i wasn't 6ft 6 with a Yorkshire accent, I could probably sometimes get away with being Chinese. There is however one thing I have absolutely zero control over. Shipping & the prices that go with it.

Once your backpack manufacturing order has been completed and passed its quality control, the balance released and packaged ready for export, in many ways it becomes out of our control, not completely but in terms of how things move.

Logistics and freight often moves a lot slower than we imagine it to. DHL sometimes seems to take forever as it goes via Singapore, the Congo, France and Germany before re-routing back to Korea and then the next day arriving on your doorstep. Ocean freight which will discuss in part 2 is even more of a behemoth in terms of delays and things running slow. What takes 5-7 days with DHL can be up to 45 days by sea if you are in the states. Although arguably it is much much more affordable. Or is it?

It is up to the client to choose how they want to ship their goods to their destination country. A local backpack factory in China will often never supply the goods under any other shipment term than EXW, so we will base this blog off working with absolutely no assistance from the supplier (as in EXW) and then at least you have a better idea how worse case scenario works. EXW stands for Ex-Works and it is best described as one of the many incoterms (see the below infograph for a closer read)

In short, an incoterm sets out the terms of delivery. As in the point where the goods are transferred "in ownership" from the factory to the client. EXW is the main one we will be dealing with as most backpack factory orders are under 1000 pieces.

What basically happens is the factory finishes the goods and then makes them available for collection by the buyer. We have to arrange a shipping agent to come and collect the customized backpacks and deliver them to port for shipping. It is here that the method of shipping diverges and we have two options.

Air.

To ship something by air we have to first package them in shipment ready cartons. Typically for backpacks we will use a carton sized as 40cm x 50cm x60cm, although it varies.

And depending on the size of the backpack on the order we can usually get somewhere between 10 & 20 backpacks per carton.

Let's say each backpack for ease of calculation weighs 1 kg. If you had for example 10 backpacks in a carton, the absolute weight of the box would be 10kg. But the volume weight is something different. The volume weight is calculated to give you an accurate weight of the carton according to its dimensions. Using our above dimensions let us work one out together to see what is the difference.

40cm x 50cm x 60cm = 120,000.

We then divide this by 5000 (this number varies for different shipping companies) but 5000 is a good benchmark.

120,000 / 5000 = 24.

So the volume weight of the shipment is 24kg. Even though the parcel only weighs 10kg, the actual chargeable weight is 14 kg heavier than the absolute weight.

If say the average cost of shipping to the United Kingdom is $4 per kg then the difference in shipping cost between the volume weight and the actual weight is $56.

24kg \* $4 = 96 USD

10kg \* $4 = 40 USD

The difference is $56 USD.

So if you have 10 backpacks in each carton, thats a shipping cost of $9.60 USD per backpack.

If you have 15 backpacks in each carton, thats a shipping cost of $6.40 USD per backpack.

So you can see that even when you are manufacturing your backpacks and the unit ex works cost is relatively affordable, say a mean price of $10-12 per backpack is a good start, there will be an extra 50% that needs to be allocated on top for shipping fees.

Unfortunately it gets worse. Yes I am the bearer of more bad news. There is a little thing called import duties which if not taken care of can you ruin even the most happy go lucky traders of days. Import taxes vary depending on the country and the declared value (sorry, we can't under declare the value of goods - thats a big no no) and you should consult with a local shipping agent to find out exactly how much they will cost in taxes. We are backpack manufacturers and exporters, we work in the realm of backpack design, custom backpack manufacturing and export. So we have little, in fact no capabilities to assist with import...but we wish we did. It would make everyones lives a lot easier.

So there you have it a short and sweet summary of how to move your backpacks from the factory in China to your front door and have a rough idea how it all works.

Any questions reach out to us via email

richard@banfa.co.uk

or via our instagram

@the\_idea\_lab\_guangzhou

If you want to learn more about backpack manufacturer you can find us here at

https://www.idealabgz.com/backpacks

You can also find me on linkedin

https://www.linkedin.com/in/richard-ward-0a665556/

BLOG 17

What is Chinese New Year!?

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Its Year of the Pig, but Dragons are just way cooler

Probably my 10th Chinese New Year since living in China, and to be honest I still don't get it. But it's that time of year and it's probably good for my SEO to write about it. I try to write the blog and get it out on a wednesday as thats the day I take myself for an afternoon coffee and just sit down and write. But it's been a frenetic week with Chinese New Year, so alas its Saturday the 9th of February and doing it albeit a little bit of a rice wine hangover.

To some people Chinese New Year means fireworks, others it means local festivities in your town. To Chinese people it means massive train journeys home, seeing relatives, giving out lucky money and generally wishing for a prosperous new year. To traders, backpack manufacturers, and backpack design companies, e commerce heads, dropshi\*ters, sorry I mean shippers it is dead time. Time and hours lost.

Even though the official holiday only lasts for the best part of a week, China's manufacturing world locks down for a month. Even more infuriatingly so, is that the date moves each year. As a company involved in the manufacture of backpacks, or any product for that matter some orders run with a degree of time managed efficiency that would make Northern Rail blush (if you don't like in England, you might struggle to get that joke). But our railway network is in disrepair. So it is hard to say to your client.

"Sorry, I don't know if I can finish your order before the end of January as there is a month long holiday that I think starts on the 6th February, but not too sure, and it lasts a month and people will be leaving the factory from the first week of January."

Well that is the honest reality of what it looks like on the ground floor here in China. There was a guy from California making custom book bags, as in he was purchasing raw stock here and then adding his personal touch to each bag in the US. He ended up flying it all in because we just missed the dates. So the lesson is this, be prepared for the unexpected. We are here working with backpack factories to facilitate what we hope is a painless, or at least heavily sedated novocaine induced approach to manufacturing. We try to take the sting out of the problems. But there are some times of the year when we need you to work with us, and that time is now!

Quoting backpack sample manufacture takes time

"Design a Backpack" services as in the super amazing tech drawings we create take a little longer

Backpack manufacturer takes ALOT longer.

However when we do all trundle back into work shuffling our feet and holding our stomachs from all the overeating in the beginning of march, we do so with a new vigour. Free for the best part of a year for another monumental holiday that shuts down the country. Speaking about shutting down the country, something's absolutely have no words.

That is Guangzhou South Station and I think I took the video on thursday or friday afternoon. It pretty much sums up the state of the country right now. Everyone is going somewhere and they have got something to do and it is eating, sleeping, drinking, laughing, chatting., watching movies, but it certainly ain't backpack production.

However we are pleased to announce that backpack factories come back online around the 14th February, so we can resume quoting and sampling then. In the meantime if you want to read about how we handle backpack development and the kind of services we offer head over here:

https://www.idealabgz.com/backpacks

If you want to check out our instagram, which at the moment is pretty quiet given there is no work for us to do then you can head over here.

@the\_idea\_lab\_guangzhou

For our facebook, to be honest I am struggling to get my head around what to do with it, but for now I think I just like the idea of the page as a place to post my blog posts. Anyway that's over here. Feel free to like the page or share some comments, I think this is all good for SEO too.

https://www.facebook.com/TheIdeaLabGuangZhou/

Totally we have zero interest in twitter, so thats a no go.

However if you want to email us you can do via

enquiry@banfa.co.uk

BLOG 18

Customize your own backpack

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Something we are looking at doing for our customers is for example personalized draw string bags. In other words we will put your design or image on a particular bag for you and do small quantity runs.

Our business has gone through some changes over the years. We sort of found our feet supplying hotels, cruise ships and other big companies with their promo merch & it was great. To be honest I never really toyed with advertising or blogging because well it just didn't seem to yield any immediate results. In the beginning of 2018 I started working with google and facebook to explore marketing my business to the clients that run online shops and niche stores. More out of growing something organic and building relationships with people than anything else. And well it's been great but we have now realised upon something else. There are a heck of a lot of you out there with the same problem.

I want to buy bulk backpacks but not that in bulk. Ah I see, like 20 or 30 pieces bulk but not 300 pieces bulk. YES! Screamed the email. We noted that down and kept on working.

I want help with the concept "design your own backpack." Well that we can do no problem. Actually that is something we do really well and we really I mean really enjoy doing that. Head over here to learn more about that.

https://www.idealabgz.com/blog-1

Some of the common enquires we got from potential clients on facebook and via google were:

"I want to buy cotton drawstring bags for a promotional campaign I am running"

"...hmmmm. Let me check back with you on that one. "

"I want custom drawstring backpacks so I can sell to order to my clients here in the states."

"Again. Let me take a note and get back to you."

"We need 50 printed drawstring bags with our logo on shipped to this address."

"Ah, unfortunately we only can handle MOQs of 150. "

AND THEN IT SORT OF SUNK IN.

The penny dropped in total silence and I think at last we finally heard the thing. I think it even rolled a bit before it fell over. So it definitely was a lucky penny.

We need to be offering people access to lower quantity custom backpacks with logos. And we can do this in two ways.

1) Bring in some stock in small quantity and hold it.

2) Get a good printer that we can use to print in house.

How did we get there?

As you run your business and watch it grow, it hardly ever grows in the direction you intended it to. Much like a stream headed down a mountain (waa nice little nature metaphor there) it finds its own way to the bottom, guided by gravity, in this case both online advertising and the customer.

So in late 2018 we started to reach out to our suppliers and talk to them about how they could help us work with smaller quantities of promotional backpacks, personalized kids backpacks and custom backpacks with logo. Unfortunately, not many of our suppliers could help. It's not that they didn't want to, its just that they literally couldn't. They don't have the capacity, time or the resources to re-direct their business to plug this gap. So we started to check around with the idea that we would supply drawstring bags bulk and offer a solution to clients looking for custom drawstring backpacks.

If you are an entrepreneur, in the promotional drawstring bag business or an importer who sells online then we are looking to partner with you. And our business model is quite simple.

We are accumulating stock of some common bookbags and promotional backpacks, in low quantity to start with and we will sell them direct to you as the end client in order quantities that you need. Be it 30 pieces or 50 pieces we can do it. But there's more.

Usually the MOQ of custom backpacks with logo is wrapped up in the long time issue of printing. Its a pain yes and it's hard to explain, but certain high level factories don't use the kind of printers that you and I perhaps associate with, (think T shirt sublimation). The truth is there is nothing wrong with these kind of printers but the lead time on doing a print when you have 300 or 400 pieces makes it very difficult for these suppliers to do a run of 50 personalized kids backpacks. The quality that comes from a larger print operation or a smaller one is legitimately almost indistinguishable. In fact I would go so far to argue that with smaller print operations you get a better quality finish because they don't have to rush through them all to finish on time. When an operation is brought in house which is what we are planning to do the control over the quality is vertically integrated and that value is attached to, well our business. In other words what I am trying to say is that we have to do a good job to keep our clients. I know you are thinking "well surely the other large scale suppliers do too." and yes they do, but the reality of it is that if they need to print 300, they print 350 and throw the 50 extra in as collateral if something goes wrong. You and I are not moving in that circle. No doubt for you as an importer want your custom backpacks with logo to be printed 100% of the time every time. Anchorman anyone?

So here's the deal. If this interests you and you want to learn more about how to get promotional drawstring bags (much like the one below) and how to print on them in small quantities then make sure you shoot us an email:

enquiry@banfa.co.uk

Just let us know what is you want to print.

What kind of personalized backpack or bag you are looking for.

And how many you are looking to purchase.

BLOG 19

Choosing bag manufacturers in China

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

A bread and butter post, outlining some of the things to look for when scoping out a custom backpack manufacturer in China.

This is one of the big boys in the china bag factory making world. In fact they are one of the top backpack manufacturers in China. They are an urban factory for backpacks for some the USA's most recognisable brands. They are positioned on four floors. The bottom floor is where they keep their material. It's raised off the floor in a well ventilated dry room. It is all clearly labelled and wrapped up to protect it from the elements and they have enough of the stuff to wrap half of Ohio up in a carpet blanket. You remember, when you lay down on the rug and your mum or dad would roll you up like sausage roll? No? Ok. Just me then...Anyway. They have a lot of the stuff.

On the second and third floors are for the creative products developments and well the rest of it is just rows and rows of sewing machines.

Laid out in neat rows with each row clearly marked out as a relevant process. The backpack manufacturing process here is for want of a better word - truly professional. The top floor is reserved for backpack storage, warehousing and sampling.

Sounds great right? Well it is. But sadly unless you are putting in orders for 1000 or 2000 pieces chances are this place is not going to make it onto your backpack manufacturers list. In fact as a backpack producer they are so exclusive that it is hard to even get to visit unless the company you represent sponsors a sports team or has a logo that everyone can pronounce. So there in lies the question.

HOW DO WE MERE MORTALS FIND BACKPACK MANUFACTURING COMPANIES?

and what are the options for those of us running online stores, amazon shops, retail outlets and niche product lines who need a custom backpack manufacturer. The answer is many things, but it is definitely not alibaba.com

Whilst you will find many companies who are involved with backpack production, chances are few of them are tooled up with the knowledge and skillset to offer you exactly what you really need:

1) Clear, precise and mutually intelligible communication

2) Solutions to your problems. Problems are not ping pong balls that bounce back and forward in an email string.

3)A commitment to quality. Everyone makes a dogs dinner of it every now and again, its called being human. It's ownership of the problem and addressing it that make things easier.

Alibaba.com offers you a window into what seems like an endless list of bag manufacturers in China. And some of them are superb. But once again the issue of MINIMUM ORDER QUANTITIES will probably put you off.

WHY ARE THEY ASKING FOR A MILLION PIECES I HEAR YOU ASK!

Confused.com? Well stay away from Alibaba!!

Well the answer to the problem is quite straight forward. For a company to be registered & visible on Alibaba.com they have to have paid some membership fee which allows them to appear as a backpack producer when you search. This is not cheap. So by the time a backpack factory appears on Alibaba chances are they are already established and doing some steady business. You can imagine with the backpack manufacturing process, as you grow (as in take on more and more orders) you need more and more people. More and more machines. More and more space. More and more access to backpack material suppliers. The success of backpack manufacturing companies is driven by the space they occupy. So that means that they can no longer afford to make smaller quantity backpack orders. It simply isn't financially viable for them. Damn I hear you say!

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Well away from the hiking backpack manufacturers and the famous backpack brands is a whole world of manufacturing that you as the importer can tap into. I call it the underbelly of backpack production and it consists of a network of suppliers who in their tiny factories on the 5th and 6th floor of old industrial blocks work with their sewing machines turning out bags round the clock. This is where we belong. These are in my opinion the best backpack manufacturers. They have a craving to do business, they are hungry for it. They are malleable in that you can push them relatively hard to yield the results you want. Sure they will probably not get the sample quality you want the first time round. But with the possibility of another order, they are usually well driven to improve their game.

There are two ways to be involved with these companies. The first way is through a market town like Yiwu. Yiwu houses more backpack manufacturing booths than you will probably find on alibaba.com and it is just huge. Actually, scrap that its bigger than huge. You couldn't and wouldn't want to walk it in a day. It goes on for miles. And at the end of the day you can have an epic curry like the one below:

that building there, the bottom floor is all backpacks

Chicken Dopiaza with Butter Naan

But for Zhejiang province this is where you find some of the top backpack manufacturers.

The best and most practical way to enter in this underbelly of bag manufacturers in china is through a backpack manufacturing agent like us. We are driven to service your quality needs through good manufacturing. Our profit margin and our business survival depends on your satisfaction, so if you are looking to get started in the world of backpack manufacturing drop us an email. We won't let you down.

ITS FREE TO TALK ANYWAY. SO GO ON DROP US AN EMAIL.

richard@banfa.co.uk

Carrier Pigeons - Look for the canton tower and then down and left. Its the second window top right (red plant pot on balcony)

Snail Mail - See you next year

insta: the\_idea\_lab\_guangzhou

twitter: yeah right!!

BLOG 20 Are you looking to design a backpack but don't know where to start?

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Learn everything you need to know about how to design your own backpack online. Richard@banfa.co.uk

Backpack Designs

Some of our Handy Work!

If you've struggled with the online giants such as Alibaba and Made-in-China you will know it can be a mean feat to try and convey what you want to a backpack supplier half way across the world who doesn't speak your language.

As a bespoke backpack development company we specialise in taking your ideas and bringing them to life. In fact we assist with all areas of the design and development process such as:

1) Interpretation of design & technical drawing.

2) Initial sampling prior to manufacturing.

3) Pre-Production final samples.

4) Overseeing mass production of final order.

5) Quality Control and export.

This short blog post is designed to give you an insight into how we take a backpack idea and turn it into a shelf ready product. Whilst it might all seem very complicated it really isn't.

The Idea Stage (The Eureka Moment)

Every backpack designer will have the moment where the idea comes into their mind. It could be a bookbag, a camera bag, a leather laptop bag or a bag for camping with, the process of design realisation is an epiphany that we can all relate to. If you can somehow put this idea into a rough sketch, drawing or scribble then we are half way there. You don't need to paint us the perfect picture for us to begin work.

Even if it is as bad as the below drawing, it's ok. We can work with it.

An example sketch from client

An example sketch from client

The cost of creating a technical drawing is very reasonable, and we start as we mean to go on. Providing affordable pricing options for our clients to develop their ideas. We charge only $250 USD for a full complete manufacturer ready technical drawing. And that awesome price includes unlimited revisions and we will have it done in 7 days.

See some amazing examples of our work below:

Get started on your custom backpack technical drawing today by emailing us at enquiry@banfa.co.uk

And of course, remember we you offer unlimited revisions on your design until it is absolutely perfect, so don't worry you won't have to settle for anything other than the absolute best.

When your drawing is finished and you are happy with the work. We can begin the next stage; which is sampling.

Sampling is a little more complicated than the drawing and the length of time it makes to create a sample can vary. Often it is not shorter than 14 days, but sometimes it can be as long as 21 days. And unfortunately whilst we are unable to give you an exact timeframe for how long it takes to sample, we do guarantee that you will be satisfied with your the attention to detail and care taken when manufacturing your backpack sample.

The sample we manufacture from your technical drawing will be a little different to the final pre production sample that we confirm the order against. Why?

Well when we manufacture samples we do not have the purchasing power with a deposit of an order so quite often we have [if we cannot find the identical fabric] to use close or very similar fabrics, silver zippers instead of black ones, standard labels instead of your custom labels. The key components of sampling are good construction and visual identity. As in the product looks like you expect it to.

Our sampling fees are also fantastically priced and start at $200 depending on the backpack design and how complicated it is. That price also includes registered courier of your backpack sample to your door. So for a total of around $450 USD you can visualise your backpack as a tech pack and get a finished sample sent to your door via registered courier.

To get started and enquire about sampling fees reach out to us at enquiry@banfa.co.uk

We keep our development fees as low as possible because we want to encourage people to be creative and develop ideas. Too often factories and suppliers artificially inflate these costs to keep out new businesses out (as in those with limited start up capital). We think this is wholly unfair which is why we try and keep everything as low as possible.

What happens after I receive my sample?

Receiving a sample is always a big step forward in bringing your idea forward through the development stages. We pride ourselves on satisfying our customers needs and giving them the confidence in our samples to move forward to order with us. We are pretty sure you will love your sample.

When you do receive your sample, it is normal to want to change some aspects of the design. Maybe an extra pocket, or a waterproof zipper etc etc you get the idea. This is totally fine and totally normal. Usually at this point we will arrange a quick phone call via whatsapp to go through your idea and talk about the changes you want. With these final changes to your design, a clear path regarding materials and initial order quantities we can begin to take your backpack to the factory floor and start manufacturing.

If you have got this far, then the chances are you are probably debating about who you should contact to discuss your backpack idea with. Well it costs absolutely nothing to talk to us and we promise to give you some honest clear cut advice about the most affordable and practical solutions to bring your idea to market.

richard@banfa.co.uk

@the\_idea\_lab\_guangzhou

...don't do twitter

BLOG 21

Backpack logos

Updated: Feb 1

The Idea Lab in China takes a look at some of the most popular backpack logos and what the future holds for backpack manufacturing worldwide. If you are in the process of designing or producing backpacks in the Far East then this should be a worthwhile read for you.

This industry creates around 6.1 million jobs and accounts for around $650 billion a year. The widespread use of backpacks as both a recreational and functional accessory used in life every day.

In this short blog post I want to explore some of the backpack logos in circulation, introduce a little bit of background to the companies and why in the end, if you can't decide on your logo, it's not the end of the world.

Without a doubt one of the most recognisable brands making backpacks. Founded in 1968 by Douglas Tompkins North Face began life in San Francisco. They operate over 70 retail outlets across Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. The North Face company combined with JanSport manufactured nearly half of all the small backpacks sold in the United States.

Their logo is in essence quite simple. Three small words and a simple graphic. The name evokes imagery of cold northern facing mountains, suggesting that they are making equipment suitable for some of the most formidable environments.

Another company born in California in 1974 and has come to be one of the market leaders in unique and innovative backpack design, manufacturing backpacks to some of the highest quality.

In my opinion the logo is not as memorable or immediate in triggering a response as say the North Face backpack logo, but the name has become synonymous with long lasting durability, as opposed to being fashionable or being affordable. Whilst the logo is not particularly evocative, the name certainly is. When one thinks of an Osprey you think of a mighty eagle that eats and swoops on fish and not just that lives in some of the harshest environments, but succeeds very well there. A summarising comment would be, given the backpack logo is not particularly impressive the company has still managed to do very well and establish itself over 40 years of trading.

Jansport has become so popular over the years it has developed into a style as much as it has a brand. As far as backpack logos go, this one screams college kid, skater, urban wear basically anybody under the age of 30 probably owns a Jansport backpack and has it hiding somewhere in the house.

The company began life in 1967 in Seattle, Washington. Having being founded by a guy called Murray Pletz and now sharing its office space with sibling company North Face. As mentioned earlier Jansport and North Face at some time were responsible for nearly half of all the backpacks manufactured in the United States.

As a logo and a name, personally I find it quite uninspiring and often difficult it seems to pronounce, but the level of recognition now associated with its logo is well known. Perhaps even better is the style of the day pack that it has come to represent.

But what is the point here and why am I introducing to you these three backpack logos. Well there is a point to be made. Firstly all of their logos are rather unremarkable and nothing special. So don't let that put you off that logo that you have scribbled away, and certainly don't lose any sleep over it. Don't worry about factories in China stealing it away from you, as they are only bothered about corporate and intellectual property when it can make them some real money. Furthermore if you want to call your company Dryoff Hikes, why not? The name means something but again as evident with Jansport not very much. The company is named after his wife....

Finally all these backpack companies are producing their kit where? You guessed it. China. China has now successfully positioned itself as one the world's best places in the world to manufacture backpacks. So abandon this idea as China being cheap and poor quality. Those days are long gone, China has risen as a reasonably priced solution to manufacturing high quality finished goods.

If you are somebody who has a great idea for a backpack, you have sort of got a logo done, but not really sure where to start or what the next steps are, talk to us. We make a lot of backpacks, we can talk you through the design process clearly, illuminate your design and help you to realise your backpack manufacturing dreams.

We are really easy going and would love to hear from you. To get started email us

at enquiry@banfa.co.uk

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Camera Backpacks With The Idea Lab

Updated: Sep 21, 2020

Exploring a great Camera Backpack design by a local Guangzhou company.

Crowding Out of Decent Camera Backpacks By the Crowdsurfers, sorry...sorcerers..sourcers.

Whether you run an online shop, an amazon store, sell on ebay or just want to browse for new and interesting backpack designs, this blog is a place to get real up to date information on what is in the market place and what it costs. Anyone that has spent any time on kickstarter will see that recently the wheel seems to be coming in an awfully large number of useless shapes and sizes, as well as being rather over priced. A backpack needs to tick a number of boxes.

1) Fulfil a job or a purpose.

2) Be lightweight / easy to use.

3) Be affordable.

A Camera Backpack by its very nature is designed to carry your camera and its component parts and protect them from every day knocks, splash damage as well as allow you to carry them easily. The backpack design we will outline below does all of that and at an EXW price that will probably really surprise you. Put it this way if you wanted to buy one piece off the shelf direct from the supplier in China it would probably cost you $17 USD or £15 (shipping not included). If you are interested in buying just one, get in touch with The Idea Lab Guangzhou. Whilst we are a manufacturing company we often keep extra stock and so should be able to get our hands on one for you.

It's design as a Camera Backpack its very versatile with the inner compartments being completely removable so you can it functions as a normal backpack. The backpack manufacturer that produces this design has clearly thought to design it as a product that appeals to a broad range of people, not just niche camera owners, but people who may travel and have photography as a side hobby. The images below demonstrate how much space is created by removing the camera backpack compartments and having it function as a normal carry backpack.

Technical Information

First and foremost let's address the colours available. Currently this backpack comes in four colours. Red, Green, Purple and Orange. As pictured below.

The material is a waterproof nylon that measures 31cm by 18cm and 44cm weighing approximately 0.70 kg. The sizing means that it also holds a laptop quite comfortably in the back shock proof pocket, built up in four layers of Nylon and PE sheet. There is an extra fixing on the side that allows you to fit a standard sized tripod The side rig allows you fit a standard sized tripod

If you are an online seller either on Amazon, eBay or another platform who has a shop selling camera and camera related equipment then this is a backpack we would definitely recommend for you. It is a well priced item with great mark up potential.

There are a few drawbacks or limiting features which are not available but more prevalent in other camera backpacks. For example the design and structure is quite simple. There are no fancy pockets or ultra secret compartments or fixtures that arrange your cables neatly. The inner layout of the lense compartments is quite straight forward and rigid, meaning you can't customise your pockets for the number of lenses you are carrying, which is often the case with other pricier options that you see on the market place. However as a company with a specialist interest and passion for backpacks, this is a great item.

Attached below are some pictures from the factory during a site inspection made earlier in the year.

As a backpack manufacturer based in Guangzhou we can also help you to customise this product somewhat. Minimum order quantities start at around 100 pieces, but if we have stock it is possible to perhaps accommodate lower orders although we may need to be flexible on colours.

A word on logo printing. Typically logo printing needs an MOQ of 500 pieces at around 0.5 - 1 RMB ($0.07 - $0.14 USD), but if your minimum order is really stuck on 100 pieces, we can just pay 5x the cost of printing for the 100 pieces, meaning perhaps we might have to pay around $1 USD per logo print on a bag.

As far as lead times go, if there is stock in the factory which there often is, stock can be ready to go very soon indeed. A matter of days. If the order quantity is low say 100 pieces, then the lead time has to take a hit. Typically somewhere around 30-40 days is the norm to get anything ready. Larger orders of around 500 or 1000 pieces actually need a similar lead time (this is owing to preparing the materials and having more production lines open in the factory)

In summary The Idea Lab in China would give this product a total of 4 out of 5 stars. The main drawback being the simple design layout of the features that make up the camera backpack compartments. However it's solid Nylon structure and padded laptop and iPad compartment are the redeeming features, coupled with its transformation into a great everyday backpack that you can take to work or travelling.

For more information either contact us by email at enquiry@banfa.co.uk or head over here to drop us a line via our contact form.