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EP4 – Theresa Pham Beverage Entrepreneur with Social Impact

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BRETT COWELL (host)

THERESA PHAM (guest)

Brett Cowell: Hi, it's Brett Cowell, and this is the Total Life Complete Podcast. Today, I'm here with Theresa Pham from Holy Kombucha. Welcome, Theresa.

Theresa Pham: Thank you so much. Thank you for having me.

Brett Cowell: Great, and today hopefully we'll talk about beverages, community, and maybe a little bit about entrepreneurship. The first question I ask all the guests is, how do you introduce yourself at a party when people ask what you do?

Theresa Pham: I say that I'm an owner of a company, owner of our Holy Kombucha company, and I tell them that I ... I mean, I do wear many hats, but I have more recently carved out some departments that are more dedicated to me. But before I was just a co-founder. That's the easiest way for me to describe what I am, because usually "co-founder" really means you're really figuring everything out.

Brett Cowell: Do whatever's required.

Theresa Pham: Whatever's required, yeah.

Brett Cowell: Now, when you talk ... When you say you work, Holy Kombucha, do people say, "What's that?" Or, how many people know what that is? And ...

Theresa Pham: Yeah. There's quite a bit of people up there that still don't know what Holy Kombucha is or kombucha is at all. They say "Kombuka, Kombuchi ..." They pronounce it all sorts of different ways. So there's still a whole lot of education



for sure to be done out on the market, but people who are pretty well plugged into social media ... Or, not social media ... Yeah, social media, as well as they care for their health. They're going to at least hear about it once from their friend, or if they go to Whole Foods, they'll see it.

Brett Cowell: Great, so I want to come back to building a community about a product, but please explain to the listeners, what is kombucha? And why is it so important and so popular at the moment?

Theresa Pham: Yeah. So kombucha for me, when I first found out about it, I opened the bottle and it was pretty disgusting at first. But Leo, he told me ... Who is also the founder of Holy Kombucha. He said, "You just got to give it a try. I know it smells horrible." We opened up in the car. I mean, I literally rolled down the window, but I fell in love with it. You have that first sip, it's a little strange at first because it's a semi-sweet, semi-tart carbonated product. And there's nothing really like that out in the market. Of course, there's sodas, there's beer, which beer is ... You know, has it's flavor. And of course soda is generally sweet. And so this, it was unique, for sure. But for most people, they have to get acclimated to it when you have original kombucha.

Anyhow, well what kombucha is is it's a fermented tea. And it's made by having at least black tea, you always have to black tea. You sweeten it with cane sugar, some people do honey, but we make ours with cane sugar. And you add in what people call a SCOBY, but all it is is a culture mixed in with bacteria and yeast, which is extremely beneficial for your gut. And when you use that initial culture to basically convert the sugars that you initially had put in, it converts it into all sorts of really great stuff for your digestive system including different enzymes, acids, additional bacteria that really helps your gut do what it's supposed to do because when you eat, things that we Americans eat ... We love to eat burgers, pizza, pasta, things that may not necessarily help with digestion, but rather the opposite. This really helps to clear you out, if you will. So it helps your body function, helps your body to get rid of stuff.

Brett Cowell: Okay, so this is kind of a health ... For want of a better phrase, a health beverage with pro-biotic qualities ...

Theresa Pham: Correct.

Brett Cowell: And my introduction to your company and product was up at a coffee shop on Lower Greenville, Mud Smith, that a few people know.

Theresa Pham: Yeah.



Brett Cowell: And my millennial colleague at a place I used to work at introduced me to this and said, "Oh, try this. It's a fermented pro-biotic thing." And I'm like, "NO. I do not one to try!"

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: "I don't want to try that." But it was good, and I tried it from time to time ...

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: Since then. Now, this is something that you could make at home.

Theresa Pham: You can, for sure.

Brett Cowell: And some people do, and I've read that ...

Theresa Pham: Absolutely.

Brett Cowell: Enthusiasts that do it there. But it seems like a very trial and error process to do that, and ...

Theresa Pham: It can be. For sure, for sure, yeah. I mean ... Kombucha's been around for as long as beer has been around. And you can make your own beer. Or, of course, you can have beer from different companies that are throughout the DFW area, international, other cities and states. Or, of course, you can make your own. Same, here's the case with kombucha. And a lot of people, when they make it, they find, "Man, I love your Holy Kombucha. How do you guys make it like that? I try to make it at home and it's just different. Sour, it's vinegary. And it's not quite like you guys." Well, you know, we made Holy Kombucha because of my ... My and Leo's very first impression of kombucha, which was very ... It was very pungent, it's very hard to consume. And so we knew that it's like ... Okay. I mean, this is a great product, it does great things for you. We felt really good when we drank it, but you can make something that also tastes good, too. So that's our sort of secret sauce, per se, that we make our product friendly and approachable not only in its taste, but also in the branding as well. And as well as our do-better-for-you social mission.

Brett Cowell: Okay. No, great. And we'll definitely come back to that later on.

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: So, let's go back to the point of quality. I mean, you've been making it for a number of years. The company's been around now for ...



- Theresa Pham: Five, six years, yeah.
- Brett Cowell: Five or six years. So can we go back to how it started? Why kombucha and were did the company start?
- Theresa Pham: Yeah, so at that time, back in 2010, '11 or so ... We were actually doing a coffee product that we brought in from Columbia. It was extremely fun, we were going to get to Shark Tank with that product. However, the manufacturer went out of business. They had to close their doors because they sent a huge shipment to Japan and they couldn't hold it because a tsunami hit. They couldn't hold the cash flow because the tsunami hit. And so unfortunately, we had to let Shark Tank know, "Hey, unfortunately we can't be on the show because there is no more ... "
- Brett Cowell: Oh, you literally were going to be on Shark Tank.
- Theresa Pham: We were literally going to be on Shark Tank.
- Brett Cowell: Right, right.
- Theresa Pham: We had to retract it. There were some quirks about that product at that time. It was a really unique product, we had some different marketing ideas for it. But because we were just a distributor, part-shareholder minority, obviously, we couldn't of course make some changes that we would have loved to see in the product because we're here in America and the marketing of the product needs to be a little different to kind of gear it towards us Americans. And so, during that ... Meanwhile, we just ... We did fall madly in love with kombucha. We took it to the farmer's market with us alongside with taking that coffee product. And the rest is history. We're like, "Well, this product really ... " Okay, well ... I lied. The product did not get a huge following, at first. In the first hour of at the farmer's market, but after that first hour, people walking around with that swing-top glass refill bottle ... And they tried it, they spit out at first, they walked around about an hour and they're like, "Gosh, this is very unique. I don't know what it is. I spit it out at first because it was completely a shocker, but I'm in love with it."
- And they just kept coming again, and again, week after week at the farmer's market. Of course, that's where we kind of did a lot of trial and error. We formulated to of course be friendly and approachable in its taste. But, yeah. So how we got started was out of the farmer's market. I mean, we just kind of ...
- Brett Cowell: In Dallas?



- Theresa Pham: In Dallas, yep. It was actually at the Green Spot local organic gas station that I believe they sold to the farmer's market out there. And we would just go week after week after week, did tons of trials, had fun with it. Tried different equipment to see what worked, what didn't work.
- Brett Cowell: No, that's great. I know that place very well since I ride my bike around White Rock Lake and stop up there for a coffee or something quite regularly. Okay, so how did you ... Was the company started in Fort Worth, is that correct? Or was it ...
- Theresa Pham: That's correct.
- Brett Cowell: Okay. So ...
- Theresa Pham: Yeah.
- Brett Cowell: You were trailing it here and refining the product here, but you were based out there?
- Theresa Pham: Yeah. Yep, yep, yep. Yes, we were actually in a commercial kitchen out in Fort Worth called Elixir Kitchen Space. There was a lot of baked goods made out there, anything you can think of, really. Foods and beef jerky, food trucks. So we kind of started up there had our gallons and gallons of kombucha there, just literally in the way of other people's space, but we grew. So eventually, of course, that's when we left that small commercial kitchen and went to our own space. Yeah.
- Brett Cowell: And was that still at Fort Worth, or were you in Dallas ...
- Theresa Pham: No. After that point we did go to Dallas. Yeah.
- Brett Cowell: Yeah, yeah. Okay. And we'll talk a bit about that later on.
- Theresa Pham: Sure.
- Brett Cowell: So, one of the burning questions is always, how did you and Leo meet? As co-founders. You worked on a coffee venture together and ...
- Theresa Pham: Yeah, we were doing the coffee venture together, but we're also together as a couple, too.
- Brett Cowell: Yeah. Okay.



Theresa Pham: So, you know, of course Leo's always the very interesting character bringing home new ideas and new adventures that we should look into and so this is one of things where I was like, "Okay, yeah. We could really try this one out." I mean, he introduced me to kombucha first, and I'm like, "Okay, this is really strange." But I fell in love with it as well, myself because I'm kind of a science nerd, if you will. And so it did intrigue me and I continued to get more involved, as well. Yeah.

Brett Cowell: Okay. So that was starting the business, and so was the first milestone kind of getting some demand for this? Farmer's markets and then being able to say, "Okay, we're going to make a move to a proper facility ... "

Theresa Pham: Right.

Brett Cowell: ...customers to buy it ...

Theresa Pham: Exactly.

Brett Cowell: To scale business up.

Theresa Pham: Right.

Brett Cowell: Okay.

Theresa Pham: Yeah, we were actually taking up too much of the square footage in that place and the owner was kind of a little frustrated because we kind of spilled kombucha all over the floor.

Brett Cowell: Right, right.

Theresa Pham: Which went into her off. And we just took up like all the square footage. It was like, "Okay, this is probably a business, now. So we could probably look for our own space." Besides that the owner was kind of like, "Yeah, you're really making a big mess here. This whole place smells sour. No new clients are coming in because it kind of smelled like vinegar." And, you know, we couldn't really contain ... Not any one more container there, so I was like, "Yeah, I think it's time. I think we're ready."

Brett Cowell: So what about the customers and the consumers of the product? Were they ready ... You'd had some direct contact with the people that liked the product in the farmer's market. What about taking that to retail stores? Did they know what you were talking about with this? Or was there a pent up demand for that?

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so for a while, we did kegs only like at restaurants like BuzzBrews Kitchen, but also of course the Green Spot Organic Gas Station on Buckner. And people



were like, "Hey, I love the whole refill growler, refill glass container idea, but I really want to take it to work. Can you make it more convenient?" So it was definitely built up consumer demand and we went to our very first retailer, Central Market, which I had a previous relationship with from the coffee product. So, they found our product really interesting. The category for them was a pretty hot category, and our product went in and sold, even though we made it in a barbecue sauce glass.

Brett Cowell: Right.

Theresa Pham: It was very interesting. I don't think people really cared that much that it was in a very interesting glass, if you will. But they purchased it, of course, and because they loved what we made. Yeah.

Brett Cowell: Producers obsess over the glass bottle as if it's the most important thing ...

Theresa Pham: Right.

Brett Cowell: And some would say that it is. So it's nice to hear that people liked the product so much that they didn't really care what the glass was in.

Theresa Pham: Yeah, thankfully because we didn't really have an option. As a small supplier, small manufacturer, the glass company aren't going to make a custom glass for you. So you just take what you can get. And at that time, for us, was barbecue sauce glass.

Brett Cowell: That's a great story. And I was also interested ... You know, the kind of influence of the craft brewing scene. And I'm thinking in the back of my mind as I'm hearing this about kegs and growlers straight away, that you went there first, and then went to individual bottles rather than the other way around.

Theresa Pham: The kegs was definitely a lot easier to get product out to the market, especially if we were at the farmer's market. 'Cause filling every single bottle, it's laborious and it did cost a lot. And so kegs was a great way for us to roll out without it being a huge financial impact for us because it was just mom and pop business kind of deal in regards to ready-to-drink bottles, you had to buy every single glass for consumers to drink 16 ounces. So, that's why we start out on the growlers and keg-fill program. 'Cause it was a lot more financially, economical for us.

Brett Cowell: And I see the growlers are appearing at retail at outlets still at the moment around Dallas, which is pretty cool. And you've been going now for five or six years or so, as you said. Does the company still feel like a startup or do you



actually feel like you're an established business now? Have you noticed a change in how that feels?

Theresa Pham: A little bit more. For sure, for sure. Yeah, I still wear several hats. Not all of the hats anymore, between me and Leo. But we definitely have some team members to help us out with ... There's some accounting work or calling the customers. But Leo and I, we still do definitely wear multiple hats. We don't have that big investment from Coca Cola or whatever. So we're still definitely scrappy and we still wear many hats and ... To be frank, we actually love that we get to dabble in a bit of each department, if you will, of a company because it's really made us who we are as individuals. I mean, we just become a lot more experienced in accounting, in manufacturing, and distribution, and marketing, and sales. So it's been really valuable. But of course, we're now a little bit more ready to hand off more hats to different people that we are starting to count on.

Brett Cowell: I know it's a big thing and I've talked about it in my blog and elsewhere about folks in a corporate job and they're thinking about a startup, and you know, "I couldn't do that because I don't know about X, Y, and Z." And obviously, when you do start a startup, you just have to do everything. And you realize you don't have to do a PhD in everything to get the job done. You just have to muck in and learn as you go.

Theresa Pham: Absolutely. Yeah, so when you're ... When you operate your own company ... People that worked in typical corporate America, you have your job and you do that job, and you only really do it from 9:00 to 5:00, or what have you, or a project basis. And that's about it. But when you own your own company, you're sustaining yourself. So you're going to make it work. So if you don't know something, you're going to figure it out, because if don't figure it out, then that job just doesn't get done. So, research, research, research is how we've taught ourselves to get the job done because if you don't know something, you learn how to do it and you make it work. Yeah, that's been our approach. So it's been really great because I've learned so much throughout the past five, six years. If I were to walk out of Holy Kombucha, I think I could get a really nice salary at any company I want to. But of course, I really enjoy starting up our own company and learning so much about the process so that you can become valuable for any ... Quote unquote, "department of your company." And I love that.

Brett Cowell: Earlier on you said that you were a bit of a science geek and what did you envisage your future might be after graduating? Did you see yourself doing this? Or what were you thinking about doing?

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so I've always wanted to help people some way. My path has been to become a doctor and ... The coffee thing, first of all, took me by storm. And the kombucha even more so. And I really, really love that during my path of studying



to become a doctor, kombucha technically found me. I am helping people, and it's a really great way. I appreciate doctors and what they do and they're amazing, but I love that what we do is ... We're helping people live a healthier lifestyle so that they don't have to make so many doctor visits. So they can live a much better lifestyle. I love that. That's just so cool for me. Yeah.

Brett Cowell: That's really nice that you say that kombucha found you, because I think a lot of folks might start off with a very dogged idea about where they're going to go, based on, "Oh, you know, I like this, so therefore I'm going to do this job and this job only." And then they realize there's a world of possibilities that might more satisfying or more ...

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: More possible.

Theresa Pham: Very, yeah, absolutely.

Brett Cowell: Let's talk a bit more about beverages, and where do you actually sell the product? Is it just in DFW area or is it around Texas, or nationally, or what's happening?

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so are in the southwest region, but we're also in different parts of the country, too. Just because there is a demand pull for Holy Kombucha in particular up in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Chicago, Florida. So our focus has been to really be in Texas. At first to really do great in Texas before we ever decide to go out. But as people fall in love with kombucha when they come and visit Texas, they bring with them such a demand and tell their friends. I think consumers are looking for quality kombucha. When they first have that first kombucha and they try it ... Different people have different palates, but when people try Holy Kombucha ... All their preconceived notions of kombucha before kind of goes out the window, and they are loyal Holy Kombucha fans moving forward.

Yeah, of course ... I'm sure the consumers are interested in trying all sorts of different brands, but they really do fall in love with Holy Kombucha. Is it important for it to be a local brand? Well, I believe that kombucha consumers, they are conscious of who makes their food product. Who makes this, who makes that that they consume? So they do care about it, but of course, if they find an amazing product like Holy Kombucha ...

Brett Cowell: Right, right.

Theresa Pham: I think they're willing to kind of wave that whole local concept. But I think, though, that America supports that businesses are put together by families and



whatnot, and they're supporting ... Not a large corporation, but that they're supporting families and supporting jobs. I think that's what consumers value.

- Brett Cowell: There's this messaging or characteristics of the product to say, "Look, this is a healthy pro-biotic drink," and ... People are mixing alcohol with it now. Is it ... Is being healthy and centered and getting a buzz on mutually exclusive or should those be combined?
- Theresa Pham: You know, people love kombucha now ... When they try their first sip, they love our kombucha. And people are mixing it with beer. They are mixing it with different alcohols because, you know, why not? As opposed to some high fructose corn syrup flavoring dabbled in with vodka. Kombucha helps with digestion, so I mean, we don't preach this, but I've had consumers say, "Hey, I had kombucha when I was out with my friend, we're out drinking, and it's really helped my hangover." So bartenders may decide to mix it on purpose because it tastes different, or they're maybe mixing it because they are finding that the consumers are receiving a health benefit out of it. It's up to all the bartenders, what they want to do with it. But we do see people have "better-for-you" cocktails, if you will.
- Brett Cowell: Yeah ...
- Theresa Pham: For sure.
- Brett Cowell: That's a nice idea, and I think there'd be a lot of people that would do anything to avoid the hangovers ...
- Theresa Pham: Yes.
- Brett Cowell: And to think they can offset the drinking. There's kombucha and the apple cider vinegar now, products coming out and other things. Is it a ... Going to be a warring factions of people that are loyal to each, or do people just going to consume all of these products because they see different benefits?
- Theresa Pham: Yeah, so that's a good question. The apple cider vinegar beverage is still in the growth mode. It's still very infant ... In it's infancy stage. Apple cider vinegar has been around for a long time. People do shots with it. It is kind of tough to swallow when you're doing shots in the morning. So it is easier to consume that, when you make a beverage out of it where you mix it with water or whatever you dream up to do. But I would say it's a cousin to kombucha. Apple cider vinegar's really great. I don't ... I think that both of those categories can coexist side by side. They're just different. They're just a little bit different in its taste profile, too.



Brett Cowell: Yeah, a lot of people I've read have compared ... It's like saying it's literally apples and oranges. We're going to say, "Well, look, I'm going to drink apple juice and I'm never going to drink orange juice anymore." I mean, you have your preferences.

Theresa Pham: Right, yeah. So it's today, I may have apple cider vinegar, tomorrow I might have kombucha.

Brett Cowell: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: How do people find out about your product? I'm not seeing a lot of billboards on the major freeways around town or TV advertising.

Theresa Pham: No, we definitely don't want to do any billboards, at least yet. 'Cause there's still a lot of education still to be done. A lot of the kombucha consumers, they get turned on because their friends talk about it. Kombucha is ... First of all, the world itself is like, "What? What are you saying?" When people hear the word "kombucha." So it's really unique, but they see a lot of buzz around it, so they'll ask their friends or their friends may tell them about it. They heard about it once, they're freaked out about it after they google what a SCOBY is. But they'll try it once and that's how we catch new consumers because their friends tell them about it. But we also place our product in strategic locations that we know where people go and have conversations like at a restaurant or a coffee shop. Local community locations, yeah. We don't want to put it in like typical chain franchises 'cause ... That might be fine and all, but we love to be in other local businesses, too. Local business supporting local business ... And local people local businesses. So I think that's where a huge buzz has been around Holy Kombucha.

Brett Cowell: Yeah, just as an example, I know going to your website ... There's not pages of videos and testimonials and stuff like that, it just tells you where to buy it.

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: It's like, well, if you're coming to our website, then you must already be interested. So there you go.

Theresa Pham: Right.

Brett Cowell: I thought that was really, really interesting because a lot of mainstream corporate beverage brands, it's completely the opposite. Everywhere at the airport and it's in your face, "Drink this because of this reason."



Theresa Pham: Right. Right, yeah. We love that people seek out our product. I think there is room for kombucha to be in airports and conveniences and all that good stuff as there's more consumer education, but we don't want our product to be on in a shelf where it's going to spoil. I mean, we still hand make our kombucha, so we want to ensure that the product is placed in locations where people really do want to have it, not just everywhere.

Brett Cowell: One of the things that I thought was quite interesting is the Instagram culture around brands, as well. Do you think, specifically for health food products, people lean more and engage more in things like Instagram rather than other types of social media?

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so I think there's a lot more conversations about our product on Instagram. I think that social media outlet is just more popular with specifically our demographic that drink our kombucha. It's a lot more easier to conversate about whatever topic you want to talk about because of the hashtags, honestly. And so ... Brands do develop a lot more traction on Instagram instead of Facebook.

Brett Cowell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Theresa Pham: Because Facebook, if you do want to get any audience at all, you do have to pay for every view, now. So it's ... You know, Facebook is there of course, but we definitely love to put our attention on Instagram, for sure.

Brett Cowell: Who are the main consumers of the product?

Theresa Pham: Our demographic is kind of wide. However, of course the core is our 25 to around 45 age group. People that are curious about other things that are out there, conscious about their health. Not necessarily set in their ways. People who are health conscious, socially conscious, mostly women ... But a lot of men, as well. I would call it a 55-45 split.

Brett Cowell: Oh, wow. Okay.

Theresa Pham: I don't think it's like 70-30, women to men. But I always think it's 55-45 because the women, they tell their husband, their boyfriends about it. And they become madly in love with it too after the fact, for sure. That's the experience that I get when I've done demos myself, or when I go to events, or whenever I hear about how someone fell in love with kombucha, it's because their wife or their girlfriend or their sister or their mother told them about it.

Brett Cowell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Theresa Pham: Yeah, yeah.



- Brett Cowell: I've flicked through your Instagram pages, I like to do for people I interview and there's lots of folks there taking photos, drinking the product.
- Theresa Pham: Yeah.
- Brett Cowell: I think that's really nice when ... It seems like people get more enjoyment out of it if they've taken a photo, they really want to share their experience and that kind of lifestyle that their experiencing ...
- Theresa Pham: They do.
- Brett Cowell: With kombucha as part of that, or your products as part of that.
- Theresa Pham: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And it's because kombucha ... People really do feel an inherent benefit from drinking kombucha. It tastes different. It's just different, right? So, it's like, "Oh my gosh. I'm doing this ... I'm drinking this product that I've never had before." And they really want to tell their friend about it. It's like their discovering this new way of being. And when you integrate it with your lifestyle, when you're really busy, it really does help for some people to go. To *go*. And some people, they do have issues with inflammation, celiac, right? And some people have found that kombucha in general could help with that because it helps, again, with their digestion.
- Brett Cowell: I went to the bank and the post office the other day, and I didn't take a selfie of myself to share on social media. I don't think so. So, whereas a lot of institutions would like us to believe that's all part of our life ... I'm like, I don't want to have a relationship with you, bank. Apart from just keep my money, don't lose any of it, and give it to me when I need to. That's all I want from you. I don't want a Christmas card or anything like that ...
- Theresa Pham: Right. I've found that people are more conscious about companies that make a social impact because ... You ask yourself, why are you here on this Earth? Is it to make a lot of money? That might be true, but a lot of people care more about like, what am I doing for me? What am I doing for my kids? What am I doing here on this Earth? How can I really create value that makes my life enriched? And people really feel good when they're helping someone else. Yes, you feel good when you get a raise, of course. In and of itself because you get to maybe buy a bigger house or afford this and that for your kids. But at the end of the day, how are you helping that person that needed the help? And it really didn't take that much time away, or money away from you to make a ginormous impact on somebody else.
- And if you can spend one, two, three, four, five minutes doing something to help someone else in a day ... Make a coffee for somebody, help them with their



health by teaching them a move in yoga where they had a back pain, and boy you've really impacted their life because they had that ... Just that throbbing pain, and you showed them this one move in yoga and that's it. There life is changed, right? Or you make an impact by merely helping a lady walk across the street. But we've chosen a different mission, but anyone and anyone can make an impact in someone else's life. And it makes you also feel great, too, but you also get to help someone else. So it's a mutually beneficial thing to help someone. It doesn't take that much, you know? To reach other goals.

Brett Cowell: Let's talk about the social mission, and maybe say what is and where it started. Is this something that's ... Was there right from the start? And what's it evolved into today?

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so ... I've always wanted to help people in some way. As I've mentioned previously, and for me and Leo, at first we had a previous partner that shed some light on this issue of human trafficking. And I thought, "Oh, yeah. It's just something that is just in India, over the seas." And we've benefited that non-profit, and as we researched more and more, our children ... Our girls and our boys, our women, our wives, our moms ... They're getting trafficked here in the United States because, unfortunately, we American men have the demand for it. We can pay for it, and so ... There's a supply. If there's a demand, there's a supply, unfortunately, for this kind of topic. And it's right here in the United States, and it's right here in Dallas, in Houston. It's along the southern belt of the United States because unfortunately there are people that are trafficked through South America, Central America, and to feed into where the demand is. And this crime is ... Really, goes along side with weapon and drugs.

Brett Cowell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Theresa Pham: And it's extremely hand in hand, right? So, I was like, "Wow." I was really astonished by it. I mean, it felt like, initially, that it was a very far-fetched issue that's across the globe. But no, it's here at home. Our kids, you know? And you hear a lot more news now that kids, they're getting followed by men in Ikea, for example. And it's really scary because you think you can just go shopping and what have you and ... But kids get kidnapped and they never get found again. And bodies aren't found, but ... Where are they? Where could they be?

Brett Cowell: Dallas is a leader in a lot of things, and unfortunately, one of them is human trafficking. I think it's one of the top cities in the ... Definitely in the top 10 in the US.

Theresa Pham: Yeah.



Brett Cowell: How does the social mission work? So you support human trafficking charities predominantly in Dallas. How do you support them? How does the model work? And how do you [pick them]?

Theresa Pham: Yeah. So, quarterly, we allow our social media fans to take a pick. And we do give a variety of options from local, national, and international non-profits. And we are a local company, so I think the trend has been a lot more local non-profits. So, but yeah, we let consumers take a pick, really. And of course, we they get to vote on it.

Brett Cowell: And do you donate ... Is it time? Or part of the profits? How does that work.

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so currently the model is through profits. And so as our team grows, I would love to plug into all these different non-profits and spend time there. Now, however, I do know that some of these non-profits, they operate a little differently where it's kind of top secret ...

Brett Cowell: Right, right.

Theresa Pham: 'Cause this kind of stuff works alongside with FBI, CIA, kind of deal. 'Cause I've asked them, "Hey, how can we get more involved." And they're like, "Well, it's really secret. You can't meet the girls. You can't even go to the safe houses." I'm like, "Okay. That's cool. That's fine. I mean, you guys are doing great work. Of course continue that." But, so yeah ... A lot of these non-profits ... So after the girls are rescued, they don't really have resources to basically get plugged back into the community. So they don't have to go back into this world that they know. So they're taught ... Some of them are taught other trades or some of them are ... Literally, they just need a safe home so that they can recupe[rate] from the trauma and what have you. So this isn't the only social mission we're also benefiting.

So through our other line that we've created, called Yerbucha which is Yerba Mate kombucha, it's energizing. We've partnered up with Rainforest Partnership. So we want to do good in all sorts of different ways. Of course, we can't help everybody, but we help where we can. And so Rainforest Partnership is another non-profit that we also benefit as well. Which, of course, they help with anti-deforestation.

Brett Cowell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Theresa Pham: In South America. Yeah ...

Brett Cowell: Wow.



Theresa Pham: It's really cool. I mean, we need the forest. We need the trees to continue to breathe and let out oxygen. We need it for diversity of our vegetation. It's critical for our species, it's critical for climate. As you can see, recently, Las Vegas, Death Valley ... Flights couldn't take off because it was 130 degrees. Has that ever been seen before? No. Could we humans be making an impact? Probably yes. So, we got to take care of our own home, this Earth is our home. We got to take care of it. If, we want our kids to have a place to live, otherwise we're just going to scorch. Yeah, or flood. Who knows.

Brett Cowell: So we're sitting here in The Grove social co-working space in downtown Dallas here. I heard a quote the other day from one of the co-founders of Twitter saying, "The future of marketing is in philanthropy." And I think there's been an explosive reaction to that one way or the other to say that maybe the basis of that was ... No one's going to listen to advertising and marketing anymore. They're going to listen to what you actually do and then react to that, as opposed to what you say.

Theresa Pham: Yeah ...

Brett Cowell: What's your view on that in terms of how social businesses should approach their market and making an impact?

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so it's pretty interesting. In the investment world as well, there's actually more funds that are being raised with social impact. They have to have a social impact cause in order for them to get funds. It's really interesting because the consumer has a lot of pull nowadays. Consumers care that they are helping in some way, shape or form. Whether the money can be used for a good cause ... A company that is helping other topics, other social impact topics, or a company that is merely for making profits and that alone. I think consumers are very interested to see that their money is helping something, someone else. Right? I think it's big. Yeah. I definitely think that people care a lot more about where their money is going. So that's why you see a lot of local businesses really thriving now. Whereas franchises, chains ... Yeah. Some of them are really going to work because they got great concepts. But I think a lot of these businesses ...

I mean, it's basically money going back to local community instead of sending jobs overseas or penny pinching for every single cent at the sacrifice of employing your neighbor. So, yeah ...

Brett Cowell: Right.

Theresa Pham: It's a vicious circle.



Brett Cowell: And it has been cyclical as well. I know there's certainly been a long push to ... Globalization ...

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: Which no doubt will continue, but there's also a big push to localization and there was that horrible term, "glocal," around for a while. And hopefully that's gone off in a corner and died somewhere ...

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: But I think people are just getting more educated, both business people and consumers.

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: In, "Okay, if I spend this money here, if I buy product A on the shelf, that money's going to go back into my local community ... "

Theresa Pham: Right.

Brett Cowell: "And we're going to have money for roads and schools and ... "

Theresa Pham: Right.

Brett Cowell: "Fighting crime and helping the poor," and whatever it is.

Theresa Pham: Exactly, exactly.

Brett Cowell: "And product B, it's not going to do that. It's going to go elsewhere. And product B might be more flashy and whatever, but when it comes down to it, it's a for-profit business and it doesn't impact the community."

Theresa Pham: For sure. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah, and I think that food is where you see a lot more local concepts that have a huge play. I think clothing and shoes and all these other different industries, they're also seeing some impact, too, but we want to know what kind of food we're eating and where is it coming from? I think that's probably everyone's first and foremost concern before it's shoes and watches. Those are, of course, luxuries, so you got to take care of your necessities first.

Brett Cowell: Let's talk a little bit about Dallas as a city. And I always try to ask my guests how to explain Dallas and what it's about, from whatever point of view they want ... Is it from a business, from a lifestyle point of view. To people that might be



listening to this podcast around the world in different places. What is Dallas? How do you explain it? What's it all about?

Theresa Pham: Yeah, so ... I think ... I feel like Dallas definitely has a lot more local businesses. Just like any other cities. I think Dallas is a really great place to start a business. I think a lot of people have seen Dallas as being very ... Obviously, a very fashion-forward city. A lot of corporations. But guess what? A lot of really cool businesses are starting up from here, too. People are people. I think through social media, a lot of people are aware ... Become a lot more aware of local causes and local businesses. And they're supporting a lot more no matter where you are. Literally, in this world. But it's a great hub to start out. There's a lot of banks here ... People are willing to spend their money here, and they have money to spend. So I think it's a great city. I love it. I mean, a lot of people may have felt that Dallas is lacking culture. I think that's actually far from the case. We make ... We reap what we sow, and I think us Dallas folks really care about what are we eating, who is making our product? Just like any other city like Austin and San Francisco.

Brett Cowell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Theresa Pham: They just happen to have a lot of tech companies up there. But Dallas is becoming just like any other city that really has an awesome, cool vibe. Dallas and Fort Worth, honestly. I think Fort Worth is much more smaller community, but even more local there, honestly than even Dallas. So, I love this city. I wouldn't move for the world. I wouldn't move, not to New York, or San Francisco, even though I love those cities so much. Yeah. I love it.

Brett Cowell: My last guest, Randy Meyer, quoted, "The business of Dallas is business." But I think a softer maybe approach on that is clearly Dallas is a business city is ... There's a new wave of businesses starting up that are combining artisan lifestyle startup ... Social causes into their missions and being successful at it in Dallas. And I think that could be ... Rather than "the business of Dallas is business," being written in concrete ... I think it's getting a little bit more organic there to actually say, "Well, look. It is business. And if you want to startup, we're sitting in a co-working space full of social impact entrepreneurs here that are all trying to make a difference," a case and point.

Theresa Pham: Right.

Brett Cowell: But maybe the meaning of that will evolve in coming years to be a positive statement that ...

Theresa Pham: Yeah.



- Brett Cowell: Actually if you want to do something that is a for-profit business, or also has a social mission, then this is a good place to try and do it.
- Theresa Pham: Oh, absolutely. I think Dallas is really making a name for itself. That's why you do see all these different companies coming ... Flocking from other states. I mean, it's a great place to start a business. If you're small businesses, honestly, I think it's really friendly. Probably more so than some other cities.
- Brett Cowell: Current projects that are ... Either your personal projects or with Holy Kombucha, what are you working ... What are you guys working on? And what should people watch should people watch out for?
- Theresa Pham: What projects we're working on?
- Brett Cowell: Yeah. With the business or personal, other things that you want to let people know about.
- Theresa Pham: Yeah. So, currently, we're outgrown our facility and we're working to move into a much larger facility. Four times the size. So, we're super excited about that because we can make more without running out. We can bring more people in for jobs. We can do tours, probably, finally. I know people wanted to do that here, but honestly, it probably wouldn't be safe because it's literally just stuff everywhere. But we're also extending out to other states. Don't want to say yet, I want to keep the audience kind of at their toes, but we're definitely going to other states intently. And we're super excited about that because we've been extended this opportunity because we've done enormous here in the state of Texas. And they're really excited to see what we'll do in the other states that we'll going out to. So we're super excited. Yeah ...
- Brett Cowell: Right, and what about tips for entrepreneurs? People thinking about starting a business, or doing something different in their life and career? What ... Any key lessons that you want to share with people?
- Theresa Pham: Yeah. So there's never the right moment to start a business. It's all about mindset, honestly. If you're ready to start a business. Because the amount of time you'll put in will be way more than any 9:00 to 5:00 job you've ever had. So if you're not ready to put in like a 100 hours a week for your own company that will benefit you, then you might not want to dabble into it. But otherwise, it's going to be hard, hard work at first. It was so hard. My family asked me the question all the time, "Why aren't you going to back to school to go to become a doctor? Your life would be so much easier, you wouldn't have to sweat and go to all these farmer's markets." But, you know, it's really paying off because I get to run my own company and create the culture that I want and make an impact that I want. And yeah, I work a lot now in hopes that we won't have to work that



hard later on because we get to really create this awesome company that is not only making great kombucha, but also making an impact on the community. Something that really, really makes me happy at the end of the day. Yeah, so ...

Brett Cowell: That sounds great.

Theresa Pham: If someone can find that mission, that passion that really drives them, you're going to make it. But it does take a lot of grit, a lot of grind, a lot of passion. And the will to push through when there's tons of walls that are going to basically cave you in. That's going to happen every single day. So, you just got to be ready to fight them.

Brett Cowell: And I had a question, you know, folks that say, "Look, I want to start a business to have more flexibility or make loads of money" because I think making loads of money can be ... I don't know whether that'll keep you going when things are difficult.

Theresa Pham: Right, no, yeah.

Brett Cowell: And whether ... Every possible sense in trying to find partners to work with and all of that sort of thing because typically you don't start making money on day one or even maybe day 300 or so ...

Theresa Pham: Yeah.

Brett Cowell: But eventually the ... Hopefully that will come. But if that's your only motivation, then ...

Theresa Pham: Right, right.

Brett Cowell: Okay. So I think we're almost up to our time. So any final words that you want for the listener?

Theresa Pham: Well, I appreciate you guys for supporting our kombucha all these years, and if you haven't tried it yet, you got to give Holy Kombucha a try because everyone makes their kombucha a little different. So if you tried kombucha once upon a time ago, try it again. If you're thinking about creating a business that you really want to, but you're afraid to, hopefully you can overcome that fear and really break out of that and just go, because it's going to be rewarding. You're going to be tried, and you're going to be like, "What am I thinking?" But if you just push through that, "What are you thinking" mindset, it's going to happen. So, wish the best of luck to all entrepreneurs.

Brett Cowell: Theresa Pham, thanks so much for joining us today.



Theresa Pham: Thank you so much for having me.

Brett Cowell: Okay, and for listeners, you can find the transcript of today's show on www.totallifecomplete.com.

Glossary:

SCOBY - Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast