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ABRAÇO SOCIAL IMPACT FIELD LAB

UNLOCKING NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH STRATEGIC REFLECTION AND INNOVATION: HOW CAN ABRAÇO ENHANCE ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTATION SERVICE INTO A SUSTAINABLE REVENUE STREAM?

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Abstract

Abraço is a Portuguese non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting individuals affected by HIV, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections, while also promoting public health and social initiatives. This work project examines innovative strategies to strengthen Abraço's operational and financial sustainability by enhancing existing revenue streams and introducing a new one. Therefore, the scope of the analysis consists of improving the psychological consultation and food service units, alongside developing a go-to-market strategy for a new business unit: a soft skills training programme to meet community needs while generating sustainable income.

Keywords

Social Impact, Financial Sustainability, Psychological Consultation, Food Service, Cafeteria, Catering Service, Non-Profit Organisation, Social Inclusion, Soft Skills, Market Analysis, Benchmark, Value Preposition, HIV, AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Partnerships, Pricing Structure, Website Optimisation, Capacity, Revenue Diversification, Market Positioning, Go-to-Market Strategy, Human Resources Management, Employability, Lisbon, Business Unit, Corporate Social Responsibility, Feasibility

Abbreviations

ACSS: *Administração Central do Sistema de Saúde*

AIDS: *Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome*

CAAP: *Centro de Atendimento e Acompanhamento Psicossocial*

CAGR: *Compound Annual Growth Rate*

CHULN: *Centro Hospitalar Universitário Lisboa Norte*

COGS: *Cost Of Goods Sold*

EMDR: *Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing*

GAT: *Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamento*

HIV: *Human Immuno-deficiency Virus*

INE: *Instituto Nacional de Estatística*

LGBT: *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender*

LPCS: *Liga Portuguesa Contra a Sida*

NGO: *Non-Governmental Organisation*

NWC: *Net Working Capital*

PTSD: *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*

SAD: *Serviço de Apoio Domiciliário*

SME: *Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises*

SNS: *Serviço Nacional de Saúde*

STIs: *Sexually Transmitted Infections*

STP: *Segmentation, Target and Positioning*

UR: *Unidade Residencial*

WACC: *Weighted Average Cost of Capital*

WHO: *World Health Organisation*

Executive Summary

Founded in 1992, Abraço has become a cornerstone in supporting individuals affected by HIV, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as promoting public health and social initiatives across Portugal. Despite its critical role, Abraço faces significant challenges in achieving financial sustainability due to its reliance on government funding and donations. This dependency creates financial instability and limits its ability to scale its impact. Additionally, underutilised business units - such as the psychological consultation and food service units – lack the necessary optimisation to generate sufficient revenue. Abraço also struggles with limited income diversification, leaving the organisation vulnerable to fluctuations in external funding. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring Abraço's long-term sustainability and its ability to continue meeting the growing needs of its beneficiaries.

To address these issues, this project proposes a dual approach: optimising existing revenue streams and creating a new and sustainable business unit. The psychological consultation service, currently underutilised despite offering an affordable and valuable service, will be improved to increase efficiency and attract a broader client base. Similarly, the food service, which includes both cafeteria and catering operations, will be enhanced to better utilise its capacity and reach. Furthermore, a new business unit – a soft skills training programme – will be developed. This initiative aims to equip individuals with essential interpersonal and professional skills, addressing a significant community need while also creating a new and sustainable source of revenue. A comprehensive go-to-market strategy will ensure the effective implementation and scaling of this programme.

Financial factors have been thoroughly examined by identifying the main costs and revenues of the recommendations. The financial projections for the new soft skills training programme demonstrate its progression over time and Abraço's capacity to repay its financing.

In conclusion, this project is critical for securing Abraço's long-term sustainability and expanding its capacity to serve those in need. By addressing operational inefficiencies and diversifying revenue streams, Abraço will not only achieve financial resilience but also deepen its social impact.

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1. Context

1.1 Overview

To conduct a comprehensive and accurate analysis of the challenges presented in this work project, it is important to first comprehend what Abraço is, what they aim to combat, and the nature of STIs, HIV, AIDS, and viral hepatitis. Additionally, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of its mission, vision, and values, as well as social activities and business units. Finally, a thorough examination of the market landscape will provide a comprehensive understanding of this organisation. This section will delve deeply into these aspects to gain insight into the problems addressed in this work project.

What is ABRAÇO and what does it aim to combat?

Abraço is a private Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that provides support to people infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. It also carries initiatives focused on viral hepatitis and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Abraço, n.d.).

The organisation was founded on the 5th of June 1992, in Lisbon, by Margarida Martins and a group of volunteers. Motivated by the loss of a fellow group member to AIDS, the volunteers wanted to provide comfort to those infected and raise awareness about the disease, which was poorly understood at the time. Abraço originated from efforts that began in the previous year at *Hospital Egas Moniz*, to support people living with STIs.

Nowadays, Abraço provides support across the country with branches in *Lisboa, Porto, Vila Nova de Gaia, Aveiro, Braga, Setúbal,* and *Funchal.* To achieve its goals, Abraço promotes initiatives, activities, and projects in the fields of health and research, prevention and screening, social action and support, quality of life promotion, advocacy and pressure on political action.

In line with UNAIDS' goals to "eliminate AIDS by 2030", all of Abraço's current projects are extensive and present in several cities across Portugal. However, Abraço has broadened its mission to address other areas of public health and social action, reflecting its commitment to improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations.

Currently, Abraço's mission is defined as "to provide support to individuals infected or affected by sexually transmitted infections, including viral hepatitis, with a special focus on HIV and AIDS. Its work covers prevention, screening, healthcare access, treatment, quality of life, training, research, and advocacy for rights" (Abraço 2024). Building on its mission, Abraço aims to establish itself as a leading civil society NGO in its areas of intervention over time. The organisation seeks to develop tailored social and health responses to meet the needs of the population while contributing to the development of new policies and guidelines within its areas of intervention.

According to Abraço's website, the organisation operates based on a set of core principles and values, including "respect for confidentiality, ethical conduct in all circumstances, recognition and appreciation of individuality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination based on age, ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual orientation, religion, social status, marital status, family situation, disability, chronic illness, or political or ideological beliefs, unless they directly conflict with the organisation's objectives, social responsibility and cooperation, and integrity and transparency" (Abraço 2024). These values form the foundation of all Abraço's activities ensuring that its work is inclusive and ethical.

It is important to clarify that the organisation has two different groups of individuals, referenced throughout this document: beneficiaries and members. Beneficiaries are individuals affected by STIs who require social, psychological or economic support. They represent the core focus of Abraço's mission and are the primary recipients of the organisation's efforts.

Members, on the other hand, are individuals or entities who choose to support the association's objectives and commit to the payment of an annual fee set by the General Assembly. There are three membership levels, each with a distinct price and associated benefits, such as merchandise offers and discounts on psychological consultations. For entities, the fee is divided into two categories: one for small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and another for large companies. A shared benefit across all membership levels is access to discounts from partner brands (Abraço, n.d.).

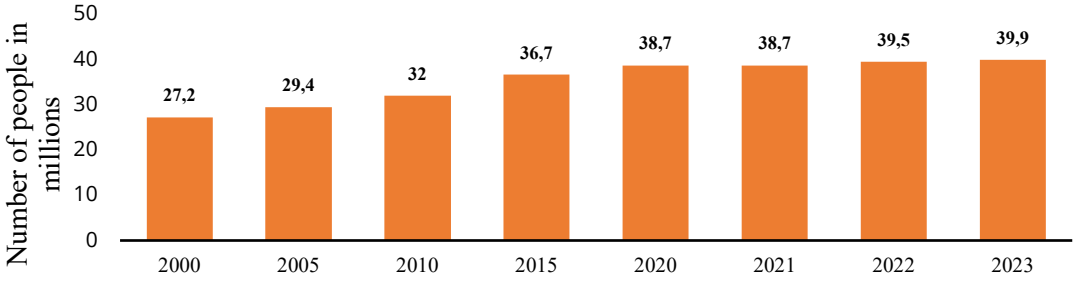
Currently, Abraço employs 85 individuals and supports 1034 beneficiaries, actively participating in its social programs. To amplify its reach, the organisation has some key partners, including *Pingo Doce*, *Missão Continente*, *Durex*, *Vila Galé Hóteis*, *EGEAC Lisboa*, *JCDecaux*, and more (Abraço, n.d.).

What are sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and Hepatitis?

World Health Organization (WHO) defines **Sexually Transmitted infections** as “more than 30 different bacteria, viruses, and parasites known to be transmitted through sexual contact, including vaginal, anal and oral sex". Some STIs can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. STIs have a profound impact on health and, if untreated, they can lead to serious consequences including neurological and cardiovascular disease, infertility, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirths, and increased risk of HIV (WHO 2024b).

Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the body’s immune system, and **Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** occurs at the most advanced stage of this infection (WHO 2024a). HIV is a disease transmitted through blood and sexual contact and it attacks the blood cells responsible for defending the body against other infections and certain cancers, compromising the immune system. Despite significant progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS, the epidemic continues to have a devastating impact globally, with one death occurring every minute from HIV in 2023. In the same year, 39.9 million people were living with HIV, including 1.3 million newly infected, with women accounting for 53% of those infected (UNAIDS 2024).

Graph 1 - Number of people living with HIV worldwide from 2000 to 2023 (in millions)



Legend: *Steady increase from 27.2 million in 2020 to 39.9 million in 2023 for the number of people living with HIV worldwide (Statista 2024)*

In Portugal, according to data from 2023, 804 cases of HIV infection diagnosed in 2022 were reported, including a 56% reduction in the number of new infections and a 74% decrease in new AIDS cases between 2013 and 2022. Additionally, 151 deaths were reported among people living with HIV, and in almost 30% of those cases, more than 20 years had passed since diagnosis. Furthermore, stigma frequently affects people living with this disease, as a recent

study conducted in Portugal reported that 38% of participants had experienced social discrimination in the past (SNS 2023).

According to the WHO, **Hepatitis** is defined as "an inflammation of the liver that is caused by a variety of infectious viruses and non-infectious agents leading to a range of health problems, some of which can be fatal". This condition is primarily linked to five main strains of the hepatitis virus, types A, B, C, D and E, and while they all cause liver disease, they differ significantly in the modes of transmission, severity of the illness, geographical distribution and prevention methods (WHO, n.d.).

What is Abraço's portfolio of services?

Abraço operates several services and projects across the national territory funded by different government funds (Appendix 1). Firstly, the projects funded by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security include *Centro de Atendimento e Acompanhamento Psicossocial* (CAAP), *Centro Dr. José Luís Champalimaud*, *Creche NIDO Montessori*, *Qantina* (cafeteria) and *Projeto ABC - Ser Criança* (Abraço 2024).

In greater depth, **CAAP** primarily provides social support and assistance to individuals living with HIV and/or viral hepatitis, as well as their families in Lisbon. Its services focus on ensuring access to essential resources and healthcare, including basic needs like showers, laundry, meals, and medical care. Additionally, CAAP offers psychological support, nutritional guidance, legal advice, among other services. In 2024, CAAP is expected to assist approximately 100 beneficiaries and their families.

Similarly, ***Centro Dr. José Luís Champalimaud*** offers home support services to up to 60 individuals per month affected by HIV/AIDS and Viral Hepatitis in the Lisbon area, providing multiple levels of care, including palliative care.

On a different note, ***Creche NIDO Montessori*** has been operating since September 2022, and is managed by Abraço. As the first Montessori nursery in Portugal, it caters to babies and children aged 0 to 3 years and was previously a revenue stream for Abraço through the sale of children's uniforms and monthly daycare fees. However, following recent legislation changes, it is now fully financed by the state under the programme *Creche Feliz*, making it a non-revenue-generating activity.

Moving on to ***Qantina***, Abraço's cafeteria**,** which in 2023 provided an average of 50 meals daily, was established with the purpose of addressing the food and nutritional needs of individuals living with STIs in Lisbon (Abraço 2024).

Lastly, ***Projeto ABC - Ser Criança*** is based in Funchal and supports children and young people by offering educational assistance, basic necessities, and psychosocial support to promote stable personal and social development. It also helps with medical appointments, housing, and family reintegration, encouraging long-term growth and stability.

Furthermore, other projects including *Centro João Carlos, +Abraço Centro Comunitário,* and *Passo a Passo*, are funded by Ministry of Health (Abraço 2024).

Starting with ***Centro João Carlos***, in operation since 1998, provides a set of specialised and tailored responses to the northern region, especially in Porto, through three main services. Firstly, through the Psychosocial Counselling and Support programme that provides support to approximately 90 individuals, in coordination with health and social services. Furthermore, the *Unidade Residencial* (UR) is open year-round in Porto and supports 8 beneficiaries with high physical dependency and/or severe social vulnerability. Lastly, it provides home support in Porto through the *Serviço de Apoio Domiciliário* (SAD).

Additionally, the main goal of ***+Abraço Centro Comunitário***, located in Porto, Aveiro, and Braga is to promote and provide access to primary and secondary prevention of HIV, viral hepatitis, and other STIs, including free and anonymous testing, community consultations, personalised counselling, and distribution of prevention materials.

Moreover, ***Passo a Passo*** initiative in Vila Nova de Gaia supports individuals with a history of psychoactive substance use and social reintegration needs, offering personalised interventions, combining individual and collective activities, and working collaboratively with local partners to enhance the beneficiaries' well-being and autonomy. Since its inception, the programme has assisted 61 individuals, of whom 35 are currently active.

Lastly, some projects such as *Casa Abraço*, *Centro Médico Dentário Lisboa*, and *Centro de Rastreio Lisboa*, receive funding from various sources, including donations from companies, financial support from pharmaceutical firms, and payments received from certain external clients (Abraço 2024).

Firstly, ***Centro Médico Dentário*** is a dental clinic which focuses on the oral health recovery of individuals infected by STIs, as well as, for some individuals of the external community. It currently has around 40 volunteer dentists and one dental assistant working full-time.

Secondly, ***Centro de Rastreio Lisboa*** promotes access to the prevention of STIs, by offering free and anonymous testing and appropriate counselling.

Lastly, the aim of ***Casa Abraço*** is to provide temporary accommodation for minors and their parents and/or formal caregivers who are temporarily in Lisbon for treatment at the *Centro Hospitalar Universitário Lisboa Norte* (CHULN).

In addition to its core work, Abraço offers a range of specialised activities that enhance its mission. These include targeted efforts like **Hepatitis C screening** and **micro-elimination programmes**, modernising operations through the **digitisation of user files** in Lisbon and Porto, and fostering mental health care through "*Consciência Social"*, a dedicated space for clinical psychology and psychotherapy consultations (Abraço 2024).

Abraço remains dedicated to its efforts in the micro-elimination of Hepatitis C by **screening** vulnerable populations and ensuring access to treatment, including for those who have lived with the disease for years without receiving proper care. In 2023, support was extended to 20 entities across mainland Portugal and the islands, enhancing the ability to provide accurate diagnoses closer to key populations. Additionally, approximately 551 Hepatitis C screenings were conducted, further strengthening the reach of these initiatives.

In 2022, Abraço initiated a project supported by the **Gulbenkian Digital Shift to digitise user files**. The initial phase, carried out between 2022 and 2023, included the digitalisation of processes for CAAP and SAD services in Lisbon and Porto, along with the UR and Medical Dental areas. In 2024, the main objective is to fully integrate this system, establishing it as a core tool across most of Abraço's services.

This ***Consciência Social*** project focuses on promoting psychological well-being, and personal and professional development. It consists of a team of professionals that offer consultations in psychological assessment and psychotherapy, for Abraço's beneficiaries, as well as the general community.

Regarding business units, Abraço provides catering for some events, although this is something very occasional and based on a feasibility analysis of the service. Additionally, it offers

psychological consultations to the general public at a reduced price. Its dental clinic is also available to some external clients and staff members, with pricing adjusted according to each person's social tier (Abraço 2024).

How has Abraço positively impacted its beneficiaries' lives?

To better understand its overall perception within the community, Abraço conducted a survey among its beneficiaries. The aim was to collect honest feedback on all aspects of its services, including psychological support, the reception desk, the cafeteria, and other community engagement initiatives. By listening directly to the people it serves, Abraço sought to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Although the survey responses were limited to 14 participants and some answers were incomplete, they offered valuable insights into how Abraço's various programmes and services are meeting the needs of its community. The feedback from beneficiaries shows how important is Abraço's work. One particular comment - "**Abraço saved my life**" - illustrates the profound impact the organisation has on its beneficiaries. Whether through psychological consultations offering crucial support or the cafeteria providing a welcoming space, Abraço goes beyond delivering services: it fosters a sense of care and support. While there are areas that need attention, such as the reception service, the feedback highlights the dedication and compassion of Abraço's team. It is clear that Abraço makes a meaningful difference in its beneficiaries' lives and remains a source of hope for this community.

How is the market landscape?

When assessing an organisation, it is crucial to consider the market landscape. This involves identifying key players and analysing their existing services, as well as their attributes and advantages in comparison to others. It is essential to note that competitors include those whose services are either directly or indirectly connected to supporting individuals with HIV, AIDS and other STIs.

Starting with, ***Liga Portuguesa Contra a Sida*** **(LPCS)** is a private, non-profit organisation that since its founding in October 1990, has been committed to supporting people living with HIV, AIDS and other infectious diseases while promoting health education and awareness. Currently, LPCS operates *Espaço Cuidar de Nós,* which offers a wide range of services to support this population, including screening, nutritional advice, psychological counselling, social services, and legal support. It also holds weekly support meetings, creating a safe environment for

individuals living with STIs to share experiences and find support. Additionally, LPCS runs a *Linha SOS-SIDA*, a free and anonymous service handled by professionals with specialised training. Moreover, this organisation has a mobile screening unit and a daytime community centre called *Espaço Liga-te.* Furthermore, LPCS offers training courses, designed for volunteers, staff, and the general public (Liga Portuguesa Contra Sida, n.d.).

In 1993*,* ***Associação Positivo*** was founded to support people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as their families, friends, and partners in the Lisbon area. Through its centre called *Espaço Positivo Lisboa*, the association offers a variety of services, such as peer support, psychological and psychiatric counselling, nutritional guidance, social support, online assistance, and screening. *Associação Positivo* also collaborates closely with populations at higher risk of infection, particularly, sex workers, and migrants, creating specific projects to address their needs. Furthermore, it has developed a digital platform to raise awareness and promote HIV/AIDS prevention (Positivo, n.d.).

SER+ Associação Portuguesa para a Prevenção e Desafio à SIDA is a private non-profit social solidarity organisation, based in Cascais. It has a mobile screening unit that circulates in the Cascais and Oeiras municipalities, provides home support, and offers psychological counselling. In addition, the organisation runs a cafeteria open from Monday to Sunday and offers training courses related to STIs, its prevention, and stigma reduction. It also holds support groups and runs awareness campaigns (Ser+, n.d.).

Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamento (GAT) is a non-profit organisation, created in 2001, with a focus on promoting the health and rights of individuals affected by HIV, AIDS, and other STIs. The organisation provides a variety of services, including medical consultations, free and anonymous STIs testing, and the distribution of preventative supplies like lubricants and condoms. Additionally, GAT provides needle exchange services, supports vulnerable populations such as homeless and migrants, and conducts harm reduction programmes for drug users. Furthermore, GAT engages in activism, runs campaigns against stigma and discrimination associated with these conditions and advocates for legislation changes to guarantee equal access to healthcare (GAT, n.d.).

When comparing the services provided by these organisations to those offered by Abraço (Appendix 2), there are clear similarities but also notable distinctions. All five organisations deliver STIs screenings, psychological consultations, and nutritional guidance, reflecting a

shared commitment to supporting individuals living with these health conditions. However, LPCS, Ser+, and GAT set themselves apart by operating mobile screening units, which enable them to reach individuals who might otherwise have limited access to testing services.

Abraço stands out with unique offerings not found among its competitors, such as dental consultations and childcare services. Additionally, only Abraço and Ser+ provide cafeteria services. Abraço goes further by offering temporary housing through Casa Abraço and delivering a range of community-based programmes aimed at fostering long-term stability and well-being. This sets the organisation apart from competitors, who primarily focus on prevention and testing.

In conclusion, while all these organisations share the common goal of protecting and supporting individuals affected by STIs, Abraço's broader approach highlights a holistic commitment to addressing both immediate needs and the long-term well-being of its beneficiaries.

1.2 Financial Diagnostic

Historical Development

After conducting a thorough review of the income statement[1] over the past five years, it becomes evident that Abraço's primary revenue sources stem from subsidies and donations, while a significant portion of these revenues is allocated towards covering personnel expenses.

In 2023, 89% of total revenue came from subsidies and donations, while income from material sales and services contributed only about 5%. A significant portion of these subsidies - over 95% - was provided by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security, along with the Ministry of Health. Government grants are recorded at fair value when there is a high level of certainty that all conditions are fully met and the funds will be received. This is particularly crucial for organisations in the social sector, as they rely heavily on annual government budgets and policies (Hladká and Hyánek 2017), which can significantly impact both the organisations and the beneficiaries they serve.

On the expenditure side, personnel costs continue to be the largest expense, accounting for 72% of total costs. In 2023, Abraço employed 85 staff members, resulting in an average annual personnel cost of approximately €15,239. Additionally, 24% of the total expenses were allocated to supplies and external services, with support and expenses for beneficiaries representing the largest portion of this category. Other significant costs for the organisation include the cost of goods sold (COGS), as well as depreciation and provisions (Appendix 3).

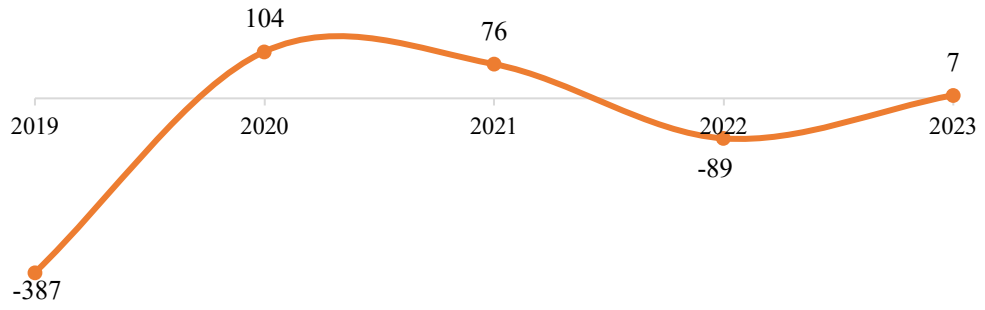
Furthermore, Abraço's total revenue has experienced a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.0%. Last year, revenue increased by 13.8%, outpacing the 10.1% rise in total costs. The CAGR is a valuable tool for tracking trends in both revenue and expenses over time, with the analysis spanning from the base year (2019) to the final year (2023). However, while useful for organisational planning, the CAGR does not factor in economic volatility, making it difficult to anticipate potential future risks the organisation may encounter.

In terms of net income, Abraço has experienced fluctuations over the years. In 2023, the organisation achieved a **positive net result of €7,498**, a significant improvement from the

[1] It should be highlighted that Abraço's pre-tax outcome aligns directly with its net result for the period. In accordance with the regulations governing IRC (Corporate Income Tax), VAT (Value-Added Tax), IMI (Municipal Property Tax), IUC (Single Circulation Tax), and ISV (Vehicle Tax), non-profit organisations (such as IPSS and other legally recognised entities) are entitled to tax exemptions across these categories,

negative result recorded the previous year. This positive turnaround is largely attributed to a 19% increase in subsidies received, along with stable costs of supplies and external services, which saw a slight decrease of 0.2%. This demonstrates the organisation's effective cost management strategy, especially in a year when Portugal faced an inflation rate of 5.26%[2].

Graph 2 - Annual Net Income (k€)



Legend: Abraço's net income tends to be volatile over the years

Liquidity Assessment

The short-term financial stability of an organisation is indicated by the appropriate balance between the liquidity of assets and short-term liabilities. This analysis is particularly crucial for Abraço due to its non-profit status, as ensuring daily operational sustainability is vital for its survival. Net working capital (NWC), which represents the difference between current assets and current liabilities, is a key indicator for assessing an organisation's short-term financial health. Over the past two years, Abraço has consistently reported a negative NWC, indicating that its current liabilities surpass its current assets and suggesting challenges in fulfilling short-term obligations. In 2023, the NWC was approximately -€248,531, primarily due to a decrease of 72% in cash and cash equivalents. Additionally, the NWC has exhibited a troubling downward trend, with a growth rate of around -60%, which raises significant concerns about the organisation's future financial stability.

Liquidity is essential for an organisation's survival and growth. Evaluating liquidity typically involves various financial ratios that determine the ability to meet short-term debt obligations. A ratio above 1.0 is generally considered favourable, indicating that Abraço can cover its

[2] Banco de Portugal estimated an inflation rate of 5.26% (Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices) for 2023 (Banco de Portugal, 2024)

current liabilities. The current ratio serves as a fundamental measure of overall liquidity for non-profits, assessing the organisation's capacity to meet short-term obligations.

Meanwhile, the quick ratio offers additional insight into short-term liquidity by measuring the organisation's ability to fulfil obligations with its most liquid assets. Furthermore, the cash ratio specifically evaluates liquidity by calculating the proportion of total cash and cash equivalents to current liabilities, providing a clear picture of the organisation's ability to pay short-term debts using available cash resources.

Over the past two years, all the described ratios for Abraço have remained below 1.0, indicating its struggle to meet short-term obligations with available cash and assets (Appendix 4). A comparative analysis with peer organisations – such as *Positivo, Liga Portuguesa contra a Sida, Associação Sol, Associação Ser+*, GAT– reveals that these entities have a stronger to fulfil their short-term liabilities. In 2023, the average quick ratio for these peer organisations was approximately 1.39, exceeding the 1.0 threshold.

In summary, the analysis of Abraço's financial health reveals that both the **NWC** and **liquidity ratios** indicate its difficulties in meeting short-term obligations. It is essential for the organisation to balance current assets, reserves, and donor resources—both restricted and unrestricted - to secure its future sustainability.

1.3 Organisational Assessment

Abraço operates as a cohesive and purpose-driven organisation, deeply committed to supporting vulnerable communities affected by sexually transmitted diseases and the associated discrimination and stigma. Its structure ensures the whole association is operationally efficient and allows Abraço to reach the desired social impact. At its core, the General Assembly, the Supervisory Board, and the Board of Directors provide the foundation for accountability and governance, while the Executive Board, includes the President, the Vice-President, and other project leaders, that drive the daily operations and implement initiatives (Appendix 5).

Abraço's culture emphasises inclusivity and collaboration, which reflects their commitment to embodying their mission from within. Every member of the organisation is guided by shared values, transparency and respect, ensuring strong connections between employees and stakeholders, which creates a cohesive image. Communication flows mostly openly across departments, creating an environment where challenges are addressed collectively. The synergy between the leadership team and the functional departments – such as IT, Finance, Marketing and Communication, and Human Resources – drives the execution of projects and ensures outcomes.

Even though it cannot be represented in an organogram graphic, at the heart of Abraço's structure, decision-making and success is its focus on people, with every project being designed to create meaningful change and impact. All of their efforts have resulted in a significant impact across Portugal, with operations extending to 6 different cities – *Braga, Vila Nova de Gaia, Porto, Aveiro, Lisbon, Setúbal, and Funchal* –, and a strong presence through its diverse initiatives. In 2023, from their annual report, it is possible to observe that they successfully managed 15 distinct projects, benefiting a total of 1,034 individuals.

These projects include initiatives such as *Abraço Aveiro, Passo-a-Passo, Qantina Abraço*, *Centro Médico Dentário* and various screening centres, which are the result of the dedication of their workforce composed of 85 employees and service providers, supported by a dedicated network of 40 volunteers and 90 paying members. Beyond its core projects, Abraço also engages with the public through three major events and campaigns, including the *Gala Abraço*, the 0.5% IRS Consignment, and the *Feijoada Solidária* – a solidarity dinner in Funchal, Madeira –, generating not only awareness but also providing critical funding to sustain the organisation's mission. (Abraço 2023).

1.4 Scope of the Project

After several meetings with Abraço's employees to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenge presented by them, it was concluded that the focus should be on unlocking new revenue opportunities through strategic reflection but also innovation.

Currently, the organisation is facing significant challenges across financial areas and seeks assistance in identifying the issues and developing a new creative solution. The main objective is to improve the operational and financial sustainability of some revenue sources while establishing a new, profitable stream to drive the organisation's overall improvement. Therefore, the project will focus on the **psychological consultations** and **food service** existing business units, while creating a new **soft skills training programme.** It is important to note that, although Abraço provides services in various regions of Portugal, this analysis focuses specifically on its operations in Lisbon.

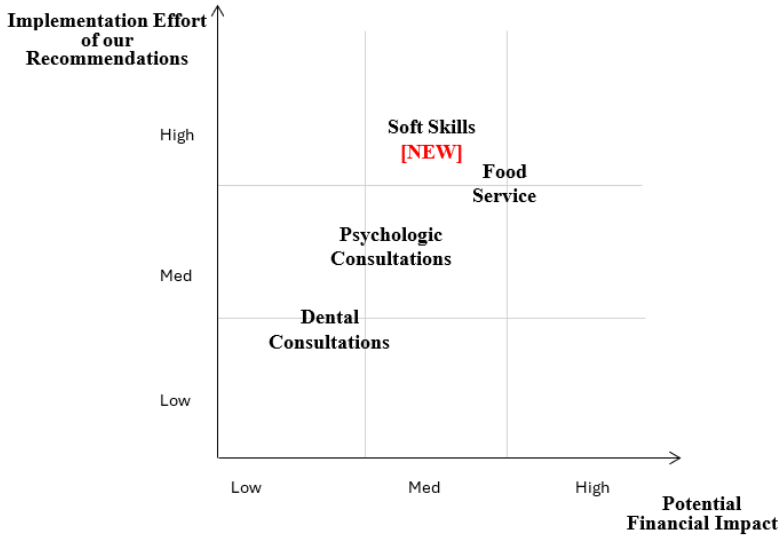
Initially, Abraço provided psychological support exclusively to its beneficiaries, however, in 2024 they decided to start offering these consultations to the general community, with prices varying between beneficiaries, members, and external clients. However, despite the efforts, they had no appointments. The aim is to understand the reason behind this problem and turn it into a profitable revenue stream.

From a financial sustainability perspective for the food service, Abraço created in 2014 a catering service, in addition to the existing cafeteria, where they provide meals to beneficiaries and some community members with prices adjusted according to their social tier. However, despite the success of both projects, they remain relatively small due to the lack of understanding of their service capacity based on the available human resources, space, and equipment. The aim is to provide them with insights about their service capacity, as well as the potential growth and improvements for this business unit.

Lastly, regarding the soft skills training programme, Abraço identified a significant lack of soft skills among individuals in the community based on their experience. Even when beneficiaries found employment, they often struggled to succeed due to the soft skill gaps. To address this and extend support to the general community, the aim is to offer workshops covering various soft skills, led by experienced professionals who will share insights and practical advice. Each session will have 3 blocks of 50 minutes with both theoretical and practical activities.

After examining Abraço's business units alongside the proposed one, a matrix – Graph 3 – was built with the criteria for potential financial impact and alignment with the organisation. The potential financial impact was based on the predicted improvements in these areas following the proposed changes. However, this is an initial projection, made prior to conducting any specific calculations to quantify the effects of these changes. On the other hand, the implementation effort of the recommendations is based on the extent of anticipated changes each area will undergo.

Graph 3 – Business Unit's Priority Matrix



Legend: Comparison of the implementation effort with the financial impact of the recommendations. Due to low impact of dental consultations, it was decided not to analyse this business unit further

The food service stream has the greatest potential financial impact but also requires substantial implementation effort. Following this is the proposed stream of soft skills workshops, which has the second-highest potential financial impact and the most intensive implementation effort since it was created from scratch. Psychological consultations offer a moderate potential financial impact with relatively low implementation effort. Lastly, dental consultations present the lowest potential financial impact and lower implementation effort. Therefore, was decided to focus the analysis on the food service, psychological consultations, and soft skills workshop streams, as these hold the best potential for financial impact.

As an NGO, Abraço faces several challenges when it comes to its revenue streams as it heavily relies on donations and government support. This dependency poses risks to the long-term sustainability and growth of its services. In this analysis, the main goal is to identify inefficiencies and organisational challenges in their revenue streams, while also establishing a

new one, that, if addressed, could significantly enhance their performance, supporting Abraço's main objective of providing essential services to the community.

2. Psychological Consultations

How to attract a wider range of clients for Abraço's psychologic consultations branch?

In the following section, Abraço's psychological consultation service will be explored in detail. The main goal is to conduct a strategic evaluation, identifying key challenges and opportunities within this service area, and the proposal of actionable recommendations to enhance its performance and contribute to the organisation's overall financial sustainability. A thorough overview of Abraço's current model will be provided, focusing on its operations, team structure, capacity and delivery channels. This will help identify potential constraints and areas for improvement.

Next, the 7P's framework will be applied to analyse Abraço's current value proposition of the psychological consultations service. This analysis provides a holistic view of the service, encompassing its product offerings, pricing strategy, promotion and distribution channels, the people involved, the process efficiency and the physical environment. (Kotler and Keller 2016). By studying these elements, strengths, weaknesses, and most importantly opportunities for optimisation will be identified.

Additionally, a market analysis will be conducted to identify trends and evaluate Abraço's position within the competitive landscape through benchmarking. This analysis assumes the identification of key competitors, their strategies, and the assessment of the potential market size and target audience. By analysing market trends and competitive dynamics, strategies will be developed to differentiate Abraço's services, attract more clients, and address identified challenges, culminating in a comprehensive strategic plan to enhance the overall service.

Ultimately, the main goal is to transform the psychological consultations service at Abraço into a sustainable revenue stream that contributes to its long-term financial stability.

2.1 Psychological Support Insights

Psychological support can help address a wide range of life challenges, offering guidance and tools to navigate them effectively. It might focus on areas like personal development - enhancing emotional intelligence, communication skills, or building stronger relationships; career counselling - managing workplace dynamics, planning career paths, or adapting to change while maintaining work-life balance; or stress management - developing healthy coping mechanisms, building resilience, and finding peace amidst the chaos of daily life. These are just a few examples of how psychological consultations can make a meaningful difference.

Focusing on a specific context, a significant portion of individuals seeking psychological support are dealing with anxiety and depression. In fact, the rise in mental health issues, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic – Graph 4 - underscores the growing need for such services. The following graph illustrates a substantial increase in cases of major depressive disorders and anxiety disorders globally in the post-pandemic period. Anxiety disorders, in particular, show a more pronounced increase, with 76.2 million new cases compared to 53.2 million for depression. Researchers attribute more than a 25% rise in depressive and anxiety symptoms to the pandemic (Reutter et al. 2024). This surge in mental health concerns has significantly fuelled the growth of the market, emphasising the ongoing demand for psychological services (Appendix 6).

Graph 4 - Number of additional cases of major depressive disorder and anxiety disorders worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (In Millions)

***Legend**: Additional global cases of anxiety disorders (76.2 million) and major depressive disorders (53.2 million) due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, compared to baseline cases of 298 million and 193 million, respectively (Statista 2023c)*

For people living with HIV/AIDS, mental health is especially critical in managing their illness and maintaining a good quality of life. The ongoing stress of living with a chronic, stigmatised condition increases the risk of mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Recent studies show that people with HIV are more likely to face mental health challenges than the general population, due to factors like stigma, discrimination, and limited access to mental health care (NIMH 2024)**.**

Stigma and discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS remain major sources of psychological distress. In some cultures, HIV/AIDS is not only seen as a serious health condition but also as a taboo topic, leading to social rejection and judgment (UNAIDS 2021). This can isolate individuals, causing feelings of shame and guilt. Over time, they may internalise this stigma. This makes people often hesitate to seek both medical and psychological support, further worsening their situation.

The next part explores Abraço's psychological consultations, shedding light on their purpose, operations, and the challenges they face in supporting their beneficiaries and extending their reach to the broader community.

2.2 Service Model Overview

Abraço's psychological consultations are a part of the "*Consciência Social*" project, as they provide accessible psychological support to their current beneficiaries. At the start of 2024, Abraço set new objectives for its psychological consultation service, deciding to expand it to the general population. However, as of today, no new clients have expressed interest or used it. This service model is designed to ensure that everyone has access to quality psychological support, aiming at the prevention, protection, and promotion of mental health in its various dimensions, without economic barriers limiting the accessibility - "At Abraço, we believe this is a right for all." (Abraço, n.d.).

Consultations are offered in both in-person and online formats, catering to the diverse needs and preferences of clients. In-person consultations take place at Abraço's Lisbon office, while online consultations provide a flexible and convenient option for those unable to attend in person. The service caters to individuals of all ages, from adolescents to the elderly. The psychological team provides personalised consultations, tailored to the

unique needs and circumstances of each client. This individualised approach ensures that clients receive the most effective support possible.

Recognising the financial barriers that can limit access to psychological consultations, Abraço has implemented a tiered pricing structure. While the standard fee for a consultation is €37.50, discounted rates are available for Abraço's beneficiaries and members. Additionally, the organisation is committed to exploring further options to make its services accessible to individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Currently, the service is delivered by two psychologists, and they cater to a total of sixteen Abraço beneficiaries. However, as of today, with one psychologist set to depart, Abraço is actively seeking a new, experienced team member to fill the vacancy. The ideal candidate will possess a deep understanding of the organisation's mission and a passion for providing compassionate and effective psychological support and care.

Building on the insights of Abraço's psychological consultations service, the next step is to analyse the current value proposition of these consultations. This will highlight how the service is perceived, its strengths, and areas for improvement, ultimately guiding the strategies for future growth and development.

2.3 Current Value Proposition

Abraço's psychological consultations offer a valuable service that addresses the growing need for psychological support. This service is designed to be accessible and flexible; meeting client needs through a combination of in-person and online sessions.

The current value proposition is evaluated using the Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning (STP) framework, which highlights how Abraço segments, targets and positions its psychological consultation services. The STP framework helps organisations tailor their strategies to align with the needs of their target audience (Royston 2024).

Segmentation at Abraço considers three dimensions: demographics, psychographics, and behaviour. Demographically, the service targets adolescents, adults, and seniors seeking affordable psychological care, addressing a broad spectrum of mental health needs across all age groups. Additionally, individuals living with HIV or other STIs represent a specific health demographic. Psychographic segmentation focuses on individuals who value

mental health care and seek stigma-free, empathetic support. This includes first-time therapy seekers and those seeking consistent, tailored care. Behaviourally, the service caters to clients needing ongoing therapeutic sessions or one-time psychological evaluations.

Targeting focuses on two primary groups. The first comprises individuals already supported by Abraço, such as those living with STIs. The second includes individuals outside this group who value accessible and professional psychological support.

To better understand the current value proposition, the 7P's framework will be applied. This model includes seven key elements: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. While the overall analysis considers all seven elements, each section focuses on the P's most relevant and suitable to them. By expanding on the traditional 4P's framework, it offers a more holistic view to marketing, enabling organisations to make informed and strategic decisions (Allen 2023).

Abraço's **product** consists of two main offerings: psychotherapy or clinical psychology consultations and comprehensive psychological evaluations. The psychotherapy service provides clients with sessions designed to assess, discuss, or address a person's emotional, cognitive, or behavioural concerns. These sessions involve personalised therapeutic techniques tailored to individual needs. Psychological evaluations, on the other hand, involve a structured assessment through interviews, questionnaires, and tests. The purpose of these evaluations is to provide insights into clients' psychological well-being, identify conditions, and inform personalised treatment approaches. These services are designed to be inclusive and cater to a broad audience.

In terms of **price**, Abraço employs a tailored pricing strategy to ensure affordability. Beneficiaries pay between €0 and €15 per session based on an assessment of household income. Members pay €30 per session, while external clients are charged €37.50. Psychological evaluations cost €50 for all clients, except for beneficiaries, whose fees are determined by their income tier. This pricing model ensures that Abraço's services remain accessible to individuals with varying financial capacities.

Abraço's services are available both in-person and online, increasing convenience and accessibility. Currently, 20% of sessions are conducted online via platforms such as Teams, Zoom, or Google Meet, while 80% take place at their Lisbon headquarters. This

hybrid approach allows clients to choose the format that best suits their needs, reflecting Abraço's flexible and client-centred service design. This reflects their approach to **place** in the 7 P's framework.

However, Abraço's **promotion** efforts are currently minimal. The organisation relies primarily on a single Instagram post, information available on its website, and word-of-mouth referrals. However, these efforts have not led to the acquisition of any new clients to date. This highlights a significant gap in their marketing strategy and underscores the need for a more proactive and targeted approach to effectively reach a broader audience.

The **people** driving Abraço's services include two part-time psychologists. One psychologist currently works 24 hours per week, while the other, who is transitioning out of the role, works 5 hours per week. Their schedules are highly flexible, allowing them to alternate between morning and afternoon consultations as needed. This adaptability ensures they can balance client sessions with administrative responsibilities. Additionally, one psychologist specialises in LGBT issues, offering inclusive care that addresses the unique challenges faced by this community. Abraço is also in the process of hiring a psychologist due to the restructuring of its team and to also serve a broader client base, including individuals outside their usual demographic of STI-affected individuals.

Abraço's service **process** is designed to provide a seamless experience for clients. Beneficiaries can access consultations through referrals from Abraço's social workers. The general public can book appointments via phone, email, or walk-ins at the Lisbon office. Once an appointment is scheduled, clients typically wait one week before being assigned to a psychologist. The process begins with an initial intake and assessment, followed by the creation of a personalised treatment plan. Regular sessions, ongoing feedback, and follow-ups ensure that care is both comprehensive and tailored to individual needs.

This approach ensures that every client receives care tailored to their needs, while also supporting Abraço's mission to offer accessible, affordable, and empathetic psychological support services. By doing so, Abraço helps break down the stigma surrounding mental health and plays a vital role in supporting the well-being of the

community. An overview of the psychological consultation service capacity will be addressed in the next part.

Capacity overview

Currently, Abraço employs two part-time psychologists with differing schedules. One works 24 hours per week, dedicating 22 hours to consultations and 2 hours to administrative tasks such as supervision, reports, and session notes. The other psychologist, who will leave the organisation in December, works just 5 hours per week. Starting in January, a new hire will join the team, working 17.5 hours weekly, split between 15 hours of consultations and 2.5 hours for administrative responsibilities. Based on the assumption that each client attends one session per week for a year, the combined capacity of the two psychologists totals 148 hours for consultations per month. With 13 slots already occupied by current beneficiaries per week, this leaves space for **96 consultations per month,** translating to the potential for 24 new external clients annually.

Having established the current capacity of Abraço's psychological consultations, it is important to now examine the market dynamics, including a competitor benchmark to better understand how the service can expand and attract new clients.

2.4 Market Analysis

The market for psychological consultations in Portugal is growing rapidly (Appendix 7 and 8), driven by increasing awareness of mental health and a shift away from the stigma traditionally associated with seeking help (Sintra 2022).

This analysis looks at what is driving the growing demand for psychological services and how the rising number of mental health concerns is shaping the market. It also segments the market by demographics, areas of intervention in the psychological support landscape, and preferred therapy methods, highlighting the diverse client base. A key focus of this analysis is the competitive landscape, examining providers such as *Psinove, PsicoLab, Clínica Dra. Rosa Basto*, and the *Serviço Nacional de Saúde* (SNS). For this competitive landscape analysis, an extensive search was conducted across psychological clinics in Lisbon to understand the range of services offered. To ensure a diverse and representative view of the market, particular attention was given to selecting five clinics with distinct

characteristics, including varied service portfolios, different session formats, targeted audiences, and diverse pricing structures.

To estimate growth potential, the analysis looks at the prevalence of mental health conditions and the rate of help-seeking behaviour, providing an overview of the potential client base. The analysis concludes with a SWOT analysis, summarising Abraço's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within this market, to offer strategic recommendations for the development and positioning of its psychological consultation services.

Competitor Benchmark

Psinove is a multidisciplinary clinic offering services for anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and personality disorders. They provide individual therapy sessions for €60 and couples or family therapy for €85 (90 minutes), pricing them within Lisbon's standard to upper-mid private therapy market. Their 15-member team specialises in clinical psychology, psychiatry, vocational guidance and art therapy, ensuring personalised care for a broad demographic, including children, adolescents, and adults. Centrally located in Lisbon, Psinove offers both in-person and online sessions, adding convenience for clients with busy schedules or those preferring remote care. Client reviews on Doctoralia praise their compassionate, professional approach, though testimonials are limited. Psinove's reputation for quality care and accessibility makes it a trusted option in psychological support services (Psinove, n.d.).

Psicolab provides clinical psychology and psychotherapy for children, adolescents, and adults, charging €55 per session. Their services include individual therapy, family therapy, and psychological assessments, addressing issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, and emotional challenges. This variety allows clients and families to access comprehensive support within a single clinic. The clinic employs 4 highly qualified professionals who adhere to evidence-based practices. Their inclusive approach creates a welcoming environment, especially for clients from the LGBTI+ community, highlighting Psicolab's commitment to diversity and personalised care. Psicolab is located in Amoreiras, Lisbon and they offer both in-person and online sessions (Psicolab, n.d.).

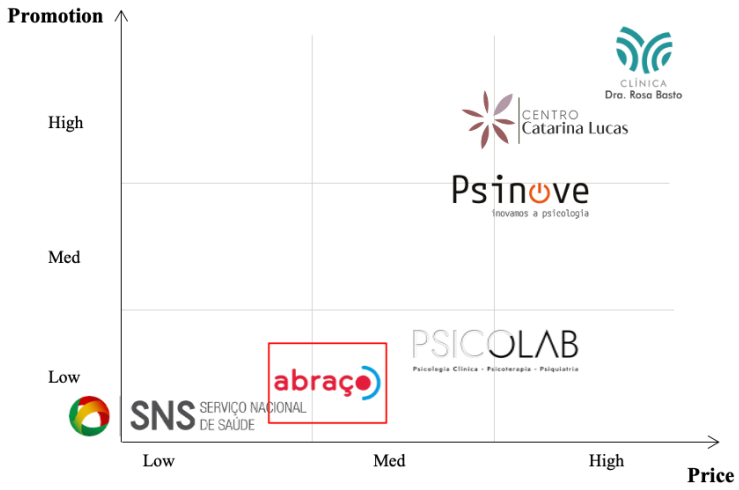
Clínica Dra. Rosa Basto stands out in Lisbon's psychological services market with its premium pricing of €80 per session, reflecting its specialised services and strong public image. The clinic offers therapies such as hypnotherapy, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), and neurofeedback, catering to clients seeking alternative treatment options. With a team of 7 psychologists, the clinic focuses on anxiety, panic disorders, and trauma, attracting clients in need of specialised care. A major strength is its strategic promotion, which sets it apart from competitors. The clinic's prominent public image, bolstered by its visibility in the media, is a key factor in building trust and attracting clients. Located centrally in Lisbon and offering online consultations, the clinic is easily accessible to both local and remote clients. Its website effectively communicates its services, making it a strong tool for engagement (Clínica Dra. Rosa Basto, n.d.).

Centro Catarina Lucas offers a wide range of psychological services, including individual, couples, and family therapy, as well as specialised treatments such as EMDR, clinical hypnotherapy, animal-assisted therapy, and neuropsychology. With a team of 29 psychologists and psychiatric consultations available, the clinic provides multidisciplinary care for diverse psychological needs. Their unique therapies set them apart by addressing specific issues like anxiety, addiction, and vocational guidance. Sessions are priced at €70, offering a personalised and evidence-based approach to care. With locations in Lisbon and Cascais and the option of having online consultations, the clinic ensures accessibility and flexibility for clients across Portugal, catering to those seeking convenient or remote options (Centro Catarina Lucas, n.d.).

Serviço Nacional de Saúde (SNS) is Portugal's public healthcare system. According to the public price tables of *Administração Central do Sistema de Saúde* (ACSS), the SNS offers psychological consultations under the designation "*consulta não-médica*" for €11.40 per session. These services are part of SNS's broader mental health offerings, which primarily focus on individuals with severe or long-term mental health conditions. While this price is highly affordable, accessibility is a major challenge due to the system's limitations. With only 601 psychologists available nationwide, the SNS struggles to meet the high demand, resulting in long waiting times and restricted appointment availability. The SNS provides psychological counselling through its free, always available SNS 24 hotline, offering immediate emotional support from trained professionals. This service is a lifeline for those needing quick psychological advice, especially for individuals facing long waits or obstacles to in-person care. While valuable for guidance and relief, it

complements rather than replaces regular, in-depth therapy within the broader SNS system. The professionals working within the SNS are highly qualified, ensuring reliable care. However, the heavy workloads and limited resources often hinder the system's ability to provide the personalised and tailored services that private clinics can offer. Accessing these consultations typically requires a referral from a general practitioner, which adds complexity to the process and further delays treatment for many individuals. Geographically, the SNS ensures broad coverage through hospitals, health centres, and psychological care services, providing significant reach across urban and rural areas. Yet, the concentration of specialists in certain facilities can still pose challenges for patients. Additionally, the SNS does little to promote its psychological services, relying primarily on referrals and public health campaigns, which limits public awareness. The facilities themselves are functional and practical but lack the welcoming atmosphere often associated with private clinics, which may influence patient satisfaction. Combined with a more bureaucratic and less streamlined journey for patients, these factors make the SNS a less attractive option for those seeking timely and personalised care (SNS24 2024).

Graph 5 - Positioning of the Psychological Consultations Service



***Legend**: Positioning of Abraço in terms of promotion and price, showing it as a low-cost service with minimal promotional efforts compared to other providers*

The key takeaways from this analysis, summarised in Appendix 9, reveal both strengths and challenges for Abraço's psychological consultations. Firstly, the range of therapy options offered by competitors contrasts with Abraço's more limited selection and positions Abraço in a disadvantageous place, in terms of product. In terms of place (or

session formats), Abraço is equal to most competitors, offering both in-person and online consultations. However, their price is their strongest point. Abraço offers one of the lowest prices among competitors except the SNS, making it a key advantage for attracting budget-conscious customers (Appendix 10).

Lastly, promotion is an area with major growth potential since Abraço positions itself as a **medium-low priced** provider with **low promotion** efforts in the psychological consultations sector – Graph 5. Many consumers may not even know that Abraço has the psychological service available, and most competitors have a regular social media presence and are referenced in some platforms with reviews. Therefore, they could significantly increase their visibility by enhancing their promotion efforts on social media and review platforms.

Having identified key areas for improvement and growth opportunities through the competitor analysis, the next section shifts focus to understanding the market potential for Abraço's psychological consultations, a crucial step in planning for future expansion.

Market Sizing

Before introducing or expanding a service, it is important to understand the potential market size, which includes the total number of clients or revenue that could be generated within a specific period, typically a year. This estimation is critical for assessing feasibility, projecting revenue, and making informed resource allocation decisions.

For Abraço, analysing the market size for psychological consultations is essential as they consider extending their services beyond beneficiaries. While Abraço is based in Lisbon, the inclusion of online consultations allows the organisation to consider the broader Portuguese market, reaching individuals outside the Lisbon area. This analysis will help identify potential demand among a broader population and support strategic planning for sustainable growth.

The market size for Abraço's psychological consultations was estimated by focusing on the population residing in Portugal who may require psychological consultations but lack adequate social support. A systematic, step-by-step approach was followed. First, the total resident population of Portugal (**10,347,892**) was retrieved from the 2021 Statistical Yearbook published by the *Instituto Nacional de Estatística* (INE). From this, the

population aged between 15 and 64 (**6,711,383**) was extracted, as represents the primary target group for adult psychological services.

Additionally, data from the OECD's 'Health at a Glance 2018' report, indicates that approximately 23% of adults in Portugal experience mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, or substance-related issues was used. However, according to the World Health Organization, the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by 25% during the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO 2022). Based on this, a current prevalence rate of 29% for mental issues in Portugal is assumed.

It is also important to consider that psychological consultations are often sought for reasons beyond diagnosable mental health conditions, such as stress management, life transitions, relationship issues, or professional development. Taking these additional factors into account, a prevalence rate of **40%** is assumed. This percentage was applied to the sample population of individuals aged between 15 and 64 residing in Portugal to estimate the number of individuals potentially facing mental health challenges, resulting in approximately **2.7 million**.

Recognising that not everyone with a mental health condition seeks professional help, an assumption on the help-seeking rate for psychological services was incorporated. For estimation purposes, it is assumed that **20%** of the individuals previously identified seek psychological help. This detailed approach to estimating the potential market for psychological consultations ensures that Abraço can make data-driven decisions. By combining demographic insights with prevalence rates and help-seeking behaviour, the analysis provides a robust framework for understanding the potential reach and impact of expanding their services

Based on this analysis, the estimated market size for psychological consultations in Portugal is approximately **536,910 individuals**. This figure represents the potential number of clients who may seek psychological support from providers like Abraço. It is important to note that this market size estimation relies on available data and involves certain assumptions. The actual number of individuals seeking psychological consultations may vary depending on factors such as evolving societal attitudes towards mental health, economic conditions, and accessibility of services.

Abraço's ideal market share in the psychological consultations market, based on its maximum capacity of serving 37 individuals per year, is approximately **0.0069%** of the potential market of 536,910 individuals. This modest market share reflects Abraço's limited role in meeting the mental health needs of the Portuguese population, emphasising the current capacity constraints. It highlights the growth potential, which could be achieved by increasing resources, hiring more professionals, or optimising operations to serve more people.

Abraço has a unique opportunity to expand its impact by broadening its psychological services beyond its current focus. With a trusted reputation and a specialised approach to care, the organisation is well-positioned to address the growing demand for mental health support in Portugal (Baltazar 2024). However, limited resources and low awareness of its services present significant challenges. By increasing capacity, enhancing visibility, and positioning itself strategically in the market, Abraço can not only reach more people in need but also secure its financial sustainability. The path forward lies in leveraging its strengths while addressing its limitations with a clear and focused strategy.

2.5 Recommendations

Through the analysis of Abraço's psychological consultation services, several key insights that will guide the strategic recommendations were identified. While Abraço already offers psychological consultations to its current beneficiaries, the findings from the previous analysis suggest that the organisation has the resources and available time slots to expand this service to a broader external audience. In this section, aiming at improving both internal operations and external visibility, practical, actionable recommendations will be presented. These strategies are designed to ensure that the service remains sustainable and impactful over the long term.

However, challenges such as a small team of psychologists and limited outreach efforts currently constrain the service's growth. To overcome these challenges and capitalise on growth opportunities, Abraço should implement a well-rounded strategy that optimises operations, enhances its value proposition, and increases market visibility. These efforts should focus on three core objectives: expand the reach of its psychological consultations, improve client satisfaction, and ensure the service remains financially sustainable. By addressing these priorities, Abraço can make a meaningful difference in the mental health landscape while securing its long-term viability. To transform Abraço's psychological consultations service into a widely accessed and impactful one, the priority must be expanding its reach.

The **first year** will centre on raising awareness and creating a seamless experience for clients. Abraço will launch the "*Um Abraço à Sua Saúde Mental*" promotional campaign to tackle the stigma around mental health and highlight the organisation as a safe, accessible space for psychological support. With the ultimate goal of attracting new clients, increasing retention, and generating sustainable profit, the campaign focuses on raising awareness while staying true to Abraço's mission of inclusivity and care. As part of this effort, the campaign will combine social media strategies tailored to different audiences, targeted advertisements**,** Google Ads**,** and strategic partnerships to increase visibility.

As Peter Drucker famously stated: *"*The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits them and sells itself*"*. Abraço's marketing efforts should prioritise a deep understanding of its audience – individuals who may need

therapy but hesitate due to stigma, lack of awareness or concerns about affordability – and craft campaigns that genuinely resonate with their needs and circumstances.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn are powerful tools, each serving different purposes and target audiences. Instagram is well-suited for younger audiences who prefer engaging visual content. Through posts, reels, and stories, relatable testimonials and success stories can be shared to foster greater engagement with Abraço. Facebook, on the other hand, appeals to a broader audience, including older adults who may be seeking reliable psychological support. Finally, LinkedIn offers an opportunity to connect with professionals interested in personal growth and mental health. By sharing expert advice, programme highlights, and content addressing workplace challenges, Abraço can build trust and demonstrate how their psychological consultations can support individuals in their professional lives.

The first recommendation is to prioritise creating **targeted campaigns** for these social media platforms. These campaigns could include relatable mental health content and anonymous client testimonials, particularly on Instagram and Facebook, using posts that humanise therapy and make it feel less intimidating and more approachable. On LinkedIn, the focus would shift to professional topics, such as understanding the causes of burnout and sharing practical tips for maintaining productivity. Additionally, a dedicated **"Stories Highlight"** on Instagram is proposed to showcase the psychological service and provide easier access to relevant information. This highlight could feature stories with client testimonials, pricing details, brief descriptions of the consultations, introductions to the psychologists, and information about the purpose and format of the sessions (online or in-person), as well as location details. Once the social media content strategy is aligned, it is recommended to incorporate **social media advertisements** to further promote the psychological consultation service. These ads are particularly suitable for health-related marketing, as they allow for targeted outreach, ensuring the message reaches individuals who may benefit most while maintaining a non-invasive approach.

Another recommendation related to the previous efforts would be complemented by a comprehensive **improvement of Abraço's website**. This would involve creating a dedicated page for their clinical services, particularly the psychological consultations section. This page should provide clear and comprehensive information about the services offered, and respective price details, as well as a visual showcase of the physical space

through photos or videos. Additionally, introducing a section featuring the team of psychologists with brief descriptions of their expertise will improve transparency and build trust. It is important to maintain content consistency between the website and Abraço's social media platforms to ensure coherence across communication channels. This includes using similar language, visuals, and examples to establish trust and create a unified brand identity.

Furthermore, to maximise visibility during the initial months of implementation, it is recommended that Abraço use Google Ads to target individuals actively searching for mental health solutions. Carefully selected keywords, such as "*Consultas Psicologia Lisboa*" or "*Apoio Psicológico Barato*," will help capture a broader audience. The pay-per-click model of Google Ads ensures controlled expenses, as Abraço will only be charged when users engage with the ads. Investing in these strategies over the first year is expected to boost website traffic, improve online engagement, and, ultimately, increase bookings for consultations.

It is recommended that Abraço **establish partnerships with platforms** such as MindMatch – which connects people in need of psychological consultations with a trusted psychologist, based on criteria such as willingness to pay, location, and format to ensure the best possible match between psychologist and client (MindMatch, n.d.). Additionally, establishing connections with LGBTQ+ organisations such as Casa Qui and ILGA Portugal would serve as a bridge, referencing Abraço as a trusted provider of psychological consultations for individuals struggling to find tailored and accessible care for their specific needs.

Additionally, one potential strategy involves **establishing partnerships with companies**. These partnerships would serve as a means of promoting the services by enabling companies to offer their employees access to psychological consultations. This initiative addresses a growing need in today's workplace environment, where burnout is increasingly prevalent and proactive mental health support is highly valued (Siddiqui et al. 2023). Under this model, employees would have no cost for the consultations, as the company would cover the full fee for each session (€37.50). Abraço should consider, in the future, creating packages, if there is sufficient demand, offering more affordable rates per consultation.

For employees, the benefit lies in improved mental health, which directly contributes to greater workplace efficiency at no financial cost to them. For companies, while this involves a financial investment, the benefits are substantial. Firstly, it supports employee retention - a significant challenge in the current labour market. By fostering mental well-being, companies can enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty, reducing costly and time-consuming recruitment processes. Secondly, such an initiative transforms the workplace into a more supportive environment, which boosts morale and productivity. Additionally, companies align themselves with a social cause by collaborating with an NGO, enhancing their reputation and demonstrating a commitment to corporate social responsibility as all the revenues are directed to Abraço's mission. Finally, the service is offered at a significantly lower cost compared to the market average, making it an economically attractive option.

The target for these partnerships would primarily be SMEs located in central Lisbon that are interested in providing this type of benefit to their employees. While the initial aim is to start with one or two partnerships, this number should be flexible and adapted based on both the demand for the service and Abraço's capacity. The programme would then gradually expand in subsequent years, ensuring that growth aligns with these factors. This gradual approach helps maintain the quality of the service and prevents the team from becoming overstretched.

To reach potential partners, it is recommended that Abraço compile a list of at least 30 SMEs in central Lisbon. Once the proposal is fully developed, these companies can be contacted to introduce the concept. Initial contact could involve tailored emails or calls, followed by scheduling in-person or virtual meetings to discuss the partnership opportunity in greater detail. During these meetings, it would be crucial to present the benefits for the company and its employees, as well as Abraço's mission and social impact. In addition, attending relevant business events may open doors to potential partnerships. Furthermore, offering testimonials or case studies demonstrating the effectiveness of similar initiatives in other companies could help build trust and credibility.

The primary objective of these partnerships is to encourage companies to invest in the mental health of their employees, fostering a positive impact on their lives while advancing Abraço's mission to support the community.

Although Abraço has not yet offered services to external clients, the consultation price is set at €37.50 and is recommended to remain at this level initially. This pricing is strategically positioned well below market benchmarks to provide a competitive edge and attract a broader customer base. After the first year, the **price is expected to increase by 20%**, aligning with competitive rates for similar services while ensuring the service remains one of the most affordable options available. This adjustment reflects market trends (Benson and Song 2020) and supports the long-term sustainability of the service without compromising accessibility. Starting in year three, the **consultation price will adjust annually by 5%**, slightly above projected inflation, as further explained in the financial implications section.

To enhance the quality of its psychological consultation services, Abraço should implement several key operational changes that prioritise client needs and build stronger connections. To ensure the efficiency of the psychological consultation schedule and optimise psychologists' timetables, Abraço should **implement a maximum duration of one hour per session**. This measure prevents appointment delays and increases patient satisfaction. **Regular feedback collection**, through anonymous surveys or follow-up conversations, would ensure that the organisation continuously adapts its services to meet evolving client expectations and identify areas for improvement – crucial for ongoing growth. Abraço should also maintain a **regular email marketing strategy** to strengthen relationships with clients and establish its position as a "top-of-mind" provider in the psychological support market.

Having recommended an aggressive marketing strategy with several initiatives for the first year**,** the **second year** will focus on stabilising and maintaining the progress achieved in the first year, rather than introducing major innovations. Building upon the foundation established in year one, Abraço will prioritise improving the quality of existing services to meet growing demand, incorporating updates to the website based on client feedback from Year 1.

One of the key recommendations for the second year is the **integration of an online booking system** into Abraço's website. This user-friendly tool will simplify the process of scheduling consultations, making it easier and less stressful for clients to access psychological support. The online booking form will include fields for clients to provide their name, preferred form of contact (mobile phone or email), a choice between in-person

or online sessions, available dates and times, and a brief explanation of their reason for reaching out. This information will enable Abraço to assess the urgency and nature of each case, prioritising urgent situations and matching individuals with the psychologist best suited to their needs. After submitting the form, clients will receive an email confirming their submission, and Abraço will follow up to schedule the session once a psychologist is available. Importantly, the existing booking methods - via phone call, email, or walk-in appointments at Abraço's facilities - will remain available to accommodate diverse client preferences.

To support the implementation of the online booking system and maximise its adoption, **printed flyers featuring QR codes** linked to the platform will be distributed strategically in high-traffic areas such as libraries, bus stops, subway stations, gyms, and cafés. This cost-effective outreach method will raise awareness about the new scheduling tool while making it easily accessible to potential clients. The QR code will direct individuals to the online booking page, ensuring a seamless transition from awareness to action.

To further support clients between sessions, Abraço will introduce a **library of self-help resources on its website**. This library will include guides, recorded workshops, and articles, providing practical tools to promote mental well-being and maintain engagement with clients outside of formal sessions.

These initiatives aim to build upon the first year's achievements by improving operational efficiency and making psychological consultations more accessible to the community. By leveraging technology and strategic outreach, Abraço will continue to fulfil its mission of providing inclusive and tailored mental health support to those in need.

The **third year** will focus on Abraço growing its team and achieving long-term sustainability through diversification and efficiency. Abraço will expand its service offerings by introducing new therapy options, such as **group therapy sessions**, which can provide a cost-effective way to support multiple individuals at once while also fostering a sense of community among participants. This innovation in Abraço's services is inspired by best practices from competitors and will help create a supportive community.

This year will also be marked by automation, with upgrades to the booking system including features like **automated appointment reminders and self-service rescheduling**. These features will help reduce administrative burdens and improve client satisfaction. Additionally, **one part-time psychologist will join the team** or one of the current psychologists agrees to work extra hours, increasing consultation availability by 34%. This change will allow more clients to receive the necessary care promptly.

It is important to mention that these recommendations are intended as a guideline and should be **adjusted based on demand**. While projections suggest hiring an additional psychologist in Year 3 to meet anticipated needs, this decision should remain flexible and adapt to the actual demand observed over time.

All these recommendations would create a strong customer base for Abraço's psychological services, enabling the service to not only achieve financial sustainability but also to further support its beneficiaries effectively.

3. Recommendations for the Food Service

After a deep analysis of the food service's current state and its challenges, practical and realistic recommendations will be presented, combining creative approaches to offer valuable suggestions for cafeteria and catering services. These recommendations are designed to be practical and actionable, with their feasibility assessed as much as possible through testing with real companies and clients to ensure they are realistic and achievable.

This section will introduce a set of recommendations for the food service with the aim of gradually reducing reliance on government support. This unit can generate additional funding to support Abraço's mission, enabling the development of new projects and providing help to even more beneficiaries.

Cafeteria

The main goal of the following recommendations is to make the cafeteria a more dynamic and self-sustaining business unit that depends less on government funding while maintaining its core purpose: addressing the nutritional and dietary needs of people living with STIs or facing financial and social challenges. To achieve this, it is essential to broaden the group of people who can benefit from its services. However, Abraço has made it clear that opening the space to the general public is not feasible, due to seating limitations and the fact that the space also serves as a safe space for this community. Moreover, the nutritionist has expressed the importance of predicting demand as accurately as possible, to ensure everyone can be served.

With this in mind, the primary recommendation is to **establish meal delivery partnerships** with surrounding businesses, similar to the existing partnership with the elderly day care centre. Given the cafeteria's location is near to many office spaces, there is an opportunity to reach businesses looking for affordable, and balanced meals delivered conveniently. Therefore, the primary target of this recommendation is local businesses near Abraço that do not have a canteen service and are interested in practical and budget friendly meal options for their employees. These businesses are the key decision makers in establishing partnerships, and Abraço will contact them directly. On the other hand, the secondary target are the employees of these companies, who will be the end-users of this service and will be reached indirectly through their employers. Therefore, the

communication with each of these targets is handled differently: Abraço engages directly with the companies, and indirectly with the employees.

Focusing on operational details, the menu for the upcoming week will be emailed to the participating companies, including a meat and a fish dish for each day, in the form of a newsletter. Companies will share this menu with their employees at the beginning of the week - via an email routing system (a process to route emails to specific destinations based on defined rules) - allowing them to choose the meals for the following week. Employees must then email Abraço until the end of the day on Thursday, specifying their chosen days for ordering, the dish they would like, and the preferred delivery method - either take-away or delivery directly to their offices. This allows Abraço to know the exact number of meals required, ensuring the right quantities are prepared and reducing food waste. Employees will pay for their meals directly, through a pre-paid system, depending on the arrangement with Abraço. To simplify the process, it is recommended to use *Mbway* as the main payment method, although other options can be arranged with Abraço if necessary. *Mbway* is a Portuguese mobile application that allows users to perform immediate money transfers between mobile numbers associated with the service (Mbway, n.d.). The nutritionist will be responsible for organising all orders, verifying payments, ensuring the process runs smoothly, and making sure the limit on meals ordered is not exceeded. She will also serve as the primary point of contact with companies if any issues arise.

Regarding the distribution process, meals will be delivered directly to the offices by Abraço's driver each day before lunchtime. However, a take-way option will also be available, if the workers indicate this preference in the previously mentioned email. To promote sustainability, customers who bring their own reusable containers will not be charged the packaging fee. This approach not only reduces operational costs for Abraço but also aligns with its commitment to environmental responsibility by minimising single-use packaging waste.

The market benchmark with nearby restaurants highlights a lack of diversity in Abraço's meal options. To address this, it is recommended to provide two distinct meal options daily (one meat and one fish dish), rather than limiting this variety to Thursdays and Fridays. Each lunch menu would include soup, a main dish, and fruit. The menu price is proposed at €6, strategically set below the average benchmark prices of nearby restaurants

and similar service providers offering comparable options. This pricing not only ensures competitiveness but also allows the service to maintain healthy profit margins, as will be detailed in the financial implications section.

To encourage higher meal frequency and improve order predictability, Abraço will implement a "5-Meal Weekly Pack," which offers customers a 10% discount for reserving all 5 meals for the upcoming week in advance. This strategy is designed to achieve several key operational and financial goals. By incentivising customers to commit to a full week of meals, Abraço can establish stronger customer loyalty, positioning itself as a reliable and primary lunch provider for its patrons. For customers, the discounted price enhances the perceived value of the service, making it more attractive and reinforcing the affordability and convenience of Abraço's offerings.

This partnership offers a practical solution for employees without requiring companies to set up their own canteen services. Since employees pay for their own meals, there are no extra costs for the companies. Additionally, by offering an affordable delivery service employees gain access to a reliable and balanced lunch option. This convenience enhances employee satisfaction and is also seen as a valuable benefit that contributes to a more positive workplace environment. Moreover, the participating companies will be supporting a social cause, which enhances their corporate social responsibility.

The plan is to gradually increase daily meal production, starting with an extra 30 meals in the first year, rising to 45 extra meals in the second year, and reaching around 68 extra meals by the third year. However, the number of partnerships needed to achieve these goals depends on several factors, such as the number of employees at each company, the percentage of employees participating in the partnership, and the consistency of orders. These variables make it difficult to accurately translate the number of additional meals into a concrete number of partnerships. Therefore, Abraço will need to monitor demand and adjust the number of partnerships as needed to achieve the recommended number of additional meals for each year.

To gain insights into this expansion, some companies were contacted. The selection process focused on businesses located in Avenidas Novas, particularly within a 5-minutes' walk from Abraço. A search identified a list of 50 companies in the area (Appendix 17). To narrow this sample, only companies with 15 or more employees were

contacted, as larger teams are more likely to generate consistent demand for meals. It is important to note that the contacts made were only to gather feedback from the companies and no actual agreements were made on behalf of Abraço. Taking this into account, 11 companies were contacted. Some revealed the idea was not suitable for their context, citing reasons, such as already having a canteen in their building or not having a regular lunch hour every day, making it difficult to schedule a time for the service. Despite this, there was mainly positive feedback from companies that appreciated the idea and were interested in being contacted by Abraço to discuss a potential partnership. It is also important to note that the contacted companies were only examples, and Abraço should explore additional opportunities. In this way, Abraço should primarily reach out to companies for partnerships through email marketing campaigns.

To increase production capacity to support these new partnerships, several actions need to be taken to enhance efficiency in the kitchen. As mentioned in the capacity overview, the lack of high-quality equipment is one of the main reasons they are unable to increase production, beyond the 20 to 30 meals mentioned by the nutritionist. Therefore, the plan is to **acquire new equipment** over three years, considering its price and its priority for Abraço (Appendix 18). In the first year, purchasing an industrial freezer and a warming cabinet is the priority. In the second year, the focus is on buying an industrial hoven and an industrial fridge. Finally, in year 3, an industrial dishwasher will be acquired to simplify the process, as well as a refrigerated display case and a refrigerated workbench.

The kitchen staff will remain the same with two main cookers, one kitchen assistant and one cleaning assistant. However, it is recommended that they undergo **training to improve efficiency**. The goal of this training is not necessarily to improve their cooking skills but to optimise workflow and implement best practices regarding kitchen organisation. According to Ashurst (2024), a well-organised kitchen layout and efficient processes can significantly enhance productivity, reduce waste, and improve meal production.

The sessions will take place in Abraço's kitchen, ensuring that the training is specific to the available space and equipment. This training should focus on several key areas. Firstly, workflow optimisation to help streamline processes and ensure meals are delivered on time every day. Secondly, space utilisation by organising the kitchen to make better use of the available space. This training should also focus on inventory

management, to improve resource tracking and minimise waste, which helps to reduce costs.

These training sessions will be held by professional chefs in the Lisbon area who volunteer their time to help Abraço and its mission. Abraço can source these chefs through different approaches. For instance, Abraço can leverage its relationship with current suppliers like *Recheio*, a wholesaler distributor that works closely with restaurants and hotels (Jerónimo Martins 2024). *Recheio* could help Abraço identify chefs who are willing to provide these training sessions pro bono. These chefs could be also sourced through culinary schools, such as *Escolas Turismo de Portugal*, known for their culinary art programme (Escolas Turismo de Portugal, n.d.). Since this school collaborates with industry chefs, they could help facilitate training sessions with Abraço. Furthermore, chefs' associations like *Associação Cozinheiros Profissionais de Portugal* (ACPP), which frequently organises workshops, could serve as another source to train Abraço's staff. Another way could be leveraging mentorship programmes at Lisbon's culinary events, where renowned chefs often seek opportunities to contribute to social causes. By exploring these options, Abraço can build partnerships to improve its kitchen staff's skills.

In year 2**,** Abraço will have expanded its customer base, and the volume of meal orders may exceed the capacity of manual email management. Therefore, it is recommended to add a **new section on Abraço's website** that streamlines meal ordering for employees from partner companies. This section would allow employees to log in, view menus, select their meal for the following week, and make payments directly online. This will require weekly menu updates, therefore, it is essential for at least one member of Abraço's staff to have the necessary knowledge to perform this task.

In conclusion, by establishing more delivery partnerships, similar to the existing one with the elderly daycare centre, Abraço can diversify its customer base, while maintaining control of the number of meals prepared each day. Investing in kitchen equipment and staff training is essential to increase meal capacity, which will be crucial for securing even more partnerships in the future. All of this will, along with the expansion of the catering services, further developed in the next part, will allow Abraço to rely less on government funding.

Catering

Currently, Abraço's catering services operate only very occasionally, with fewer than five events per year. Therefore, the primary objective is to increase this frequency. To enhance and expand this service, it is necessary to implement operational and communication improvements. These areas of improvement were identified through the market analysis, specifically, the competitor benchmark, which allowed for a detailed comparison with competitors. The focus will be on **streamlining processes, effectively managing staff, and improving visibility through marketing strategies**. All these improvements will ensure that the service is financially sustainable while continuing to support the organisation's social mission. On the other hand, Abraço's current pricing strategy and food diversity are considered its main strengths in the market, therefore, is recommended to maintain the same approach.

Regarding the recommended frequency of catering events, it is advised to initially increase to one event per month in the first year, with a subsequent increase to two events per month in the second year. This will ensure a smooth transition while increasing the frequency of events. By the third year, if everything goes as planned, the frequency should gradually rise to one event per week, with a goal of approximately 35 to 40 events in total by the end of that year. It is important to mention that this frequency is just a recommendation and is entirely dependent on the market demand. While increasing the number of events is encouraged, it is recommended to limit catering events to a maximum of 50 individuals to ensure quality and avoid defaults.

As previously identified, the biggest issue with the catering is that the entire process is currently overly complex and time-consuming. Therefore, the first step in **improving this service** involves simplifying and reorganising the current workflow. Preparation and cooking will be shifted to the afternoon after 4 PM on the days before the catering event, as the kitchen is typically unoccupied at that time since the cafeteria closes. This way, the overlapping processes that currently exist are eliminated and the current need to prepare meals for the cafeteria the day before is prevented.

Additionally, the preparation process will change to include tasks such as cutting and seasoning vegetables as well as cooking meats or other foods that require slower cooking times. The ingredients will be prepared two days before the event, and cooking and

assembly will take place the day before, with proper storage until the event. This process will ensure that on the day of the event, the team can only focus on the final touches, improving efficiency and reducing pressure. Furthermore, it is also crucial to train staff and divide tasks in the first year, maintaining this structure in the next years. Each person will be responsible for a specific part of the menu, with one focusing on the main dishes, another on the complementary items and a third in assembling. This specialisation ensures clarity in roles and reduces errors and disorganisation during catering execution. To complement this, introducing standardised checklists and a clear timeline for each task will help maintain consistency and improve workflow.

Another recommendation for streamlining processes is to create three levels of predefined menus- Basic, Standard and Premium- for each event type (e.g., lunch, coffee break). The variation between these two levels would be based on the diversity of food offered. Each menu would have corresponding prices, allowing a provisional budget to be sent quickly by matching the client's details to the most appropriate option. To maintain the competitive advantage of wide diversity, these predefined menus could be further customised, providing a solid foundation for the pricing strategy and improving the efficiency of the budgeting process.

A further vital recommendation is **addressing the staff's needs**. Hiring a new chef with experience in catering events, particularly finger food, is crucial to ensure quality. This new team member will be hired as a freelancer for approximately 8 hours across 2 days per event: one day for preparation and another for cooking. Additionally, two cooking assistants will be needed to support the chef on both days. During the first year, as there will only be one event per month, it would be ideal to have the current kitchen staff working extra hours with the appropriate compensation, instead of hiring new team members. This approach will save money and time in the short term. However, as the service becomes more regular in the second year, hiring kitchen assistants will be needed. Therefore, the catering team will consist of three members initially, however, if demand increases in the future, staff numbers should be adjusted accordingly.

To complement these operational improvements, a **strong marketing strategy will** be implemented. In the first semester, the organisation's website should be updated with a dedicated section for the catering services, including detailed descriptions and photos of the available services. It is also important to add a specific contact form to simplify client

budget requests, similar to the competitors identified in the market analysis. This section should include the following mandatory information: the event location, the number of participants, the date and time of the event, the type of event, and any special requests that may be required. This information will facilitate the match of the client's needs to a predefined menu, enabling a faster and more appropriate response to the budget request.

Additionally, testimonials from past clients and short behind-the-scenes videos showcasing the team's preparation process should be included to build credibility and engagement. This website update is critical and will make it more accessible and appealing to potential clients.

At the same time, Instagram and Facebook accounts should be created for the catering services with client feedback, regular high-quality posts about the services offered, and highlighting the social impact of choosing Abraço's services. Using Instagram Reels and Stories to share dynamic and engaging content, such as menu highlights and food preparation processes, can help attract more attention. Implementing a hashtag strategy is essential, incorporating terms like *#SaboresComImpacto* or *#GastronomiaSolidária* to enhance visibility and engage the target audience. Short, creative videos could showcase "a day in the life" of the catering team or feature time-lapse footage of event setups. Within six months, a Google ads campaign should be launched using targeted keywords such as "*Serviços Catering Lisboa"*, ensuring the website appears higher in search results.

After the first year, it is recommended to approach small to medium-sized influencers, typically with a following of 10,000 to 50,000. These influencers could be ideal candidates to promote Abraço's catering services. In exchange for social media posts, the service could be offered for special occasions such as birthdays, creating a mutually beneficial partnership while showcasing the quality and versatility of the catering. This strategy will increase trust and visibility among customers.

Over the following two years, these promotion efforts should be expanded and refined. Social media content should be consistently updated with high-quality regular content to maintain public interest and engagement. Partnerships with influencers should be renewed at least every two months. Additionally, investments in marketing should gradually increase, including improvements on the website and a higher budget for Google ads, ensuring a better ranking position. Personalised email marketing campaigns

targeting event planners, businesses, and past clients could also be introduced, offering promotions or showcasing new services.

By following these recommendations, Abraço's catering service can simplify its processes, adapt its staff, and establish a strong marketing strategy. This approach will lead to long-term success and make the catering service a significant source of revenue, further enhancing its social impact in the community. In the following part, the financial implications of all food service recommendations will be evaluated.

4. Soft Skills Training Programme

How can Abraço develop a new business unit while creating a positive impact?

The following section introduces the proposal for a new business unit at Abraço, detailing its origins and development through various strategic frameworks. It outlines an internal assessment of the organisation's needs, an external market analysis to evaluate key players and benchmark competitors, a value proposition tailored to market demands, the financial implications associated and a detailed implementation plan for the project. The section begins with an overview of the new service, explaining the rationale behind its launch and the strategic considerations for entering this market.

4.1 Context

The new service proposed to be implemented by Abraço is Skills'ON, a soft skills training programme. Before diving into this programme, it is important to clarify the concept of soft skills, which according to the Cambridge English Dictionary are described as "people's abilities to communicate with each other and work well together" (Cambridge, n.d.). Elaborating on this concept, another useful definition is "Soft skills – also known as "people skills" or "interpersonal skills" – are a set of personal attributes and abilities that allow individuals to effectively interact with others in a professional setting. At their core, these include the ability to collaborate effectively, manage time and communicate with clarity, among others." (Monique 2024).

The development of this programme stemmed from Abraço's strategic interest in entering the soft skills training market, a vision articulated during one of the interviews conducted. This conversation offered valuable insights into the motivations behind the initiative, which closely aligns with the association's core mission: improving the quality of life for its beneficiaries. In this case, the organisation identified a specific and recurring issue among the majority of its beneficiaries: a lack of employability. As Joana Basto, a social worker at Abraço, explained, "We noticed that the problem is not that we cannot find jobs for them, it is that they are not equipped with the demanded soft skills.", highlighting how the absence of training in soft skills significantly conditions the beneficiaries' ability to

secure and retain employment. Recognising the importance of addressing this gap, instead of outsourcing it, Abraço decided to be the one to fill it and communicated their desire to offer their own solution, aiming to provide the necessary training and support to enhance employability among their beneficiaries.

During the initial development of a soft skills training concept for the beneficiaries, it became evident that this need extended beyond this vulnerable group. In fact, it could also be identified in the general working population, whether during a recruitment process or while performing simple daily professional tasks.

A 2019 LinkedIn global talent report conducted an analysis of behavioural data gathered from over 5,000 talent professionals on LinkedIn in 35 different countries, revealing key insights into the main workplace trends. Their findings evidence that 91% of talent professionals agree that soft skills are among the top four trends transforming the workplace and critical for the future of recruiting and human resources. Furthermore, the same report highlights that 92% of these professionals believe soft skills to be equally or more important than hard skills, which is even exemplified by a statement from Lydia Liu – Head of Human Resources (HR) at Home Credit Consumer Finance Co. Ltd. – who remarked, “While hard skills may get the candidate’s foot in the door, is soft skills that ultimately open it.” (Chanler et al., n.d.).

Through market research, an in-depth study of soft skills, discussions with Abraço, and a survey, it became evident that a soft skills training programme would benefit both its beneficiaries and the wider community. In response to this need, a structured programme is proposed, featuring interactive monthly lectures delivered by specialised speakers. This initiative will run as a one-year trial, focusing on various soft skills essential for personal and professional development.

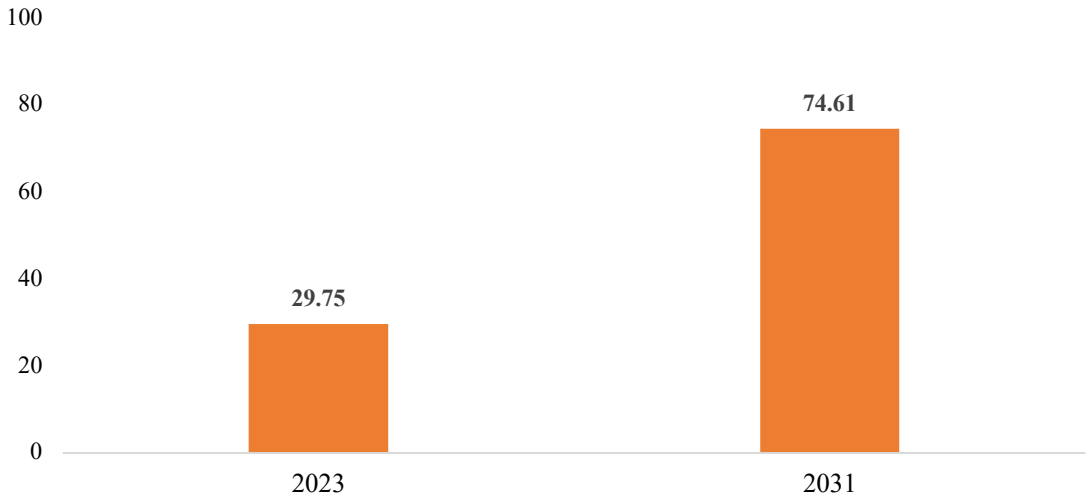
4.2 Market Analysis

The next section offers a detailed analysis of the Portuguese soft skills training market, examining its scope, key trends, and the factors driving its evolution over time. Additionally, insights from market studies will highlight future growth projections and emerging opportunities. Once this market landscape is understood, a thorough evaluation of its key players will follow, focusing on their operational strategies and target audiences.

This analysis will help uncover gaps in the market, providing valuable insights for developing a strategic market entry plan for Abraço.

The Portuguese soft skills training market aligns with global trends, bolstered by government initiatives encouraging companies to invest in programmes that enhance employee performance, productivity, engagement, and retention (Portugal2020 2021). The demand for skills like teamwork, leadership, and emotional intelligence is set to increase significantly over the next decade. According to this study, this trend spans all regions examined, with a projected CAGR of 12.8% - Graph 13. In Portugal, similar progress is anticipated as businesses focus on developing these essential competencies to maintain competitiveness and adapt to evolving workforce demands (ICT 2024).

Graph 13 - Global soft skills training market
(market sizing in USD Billion)



***Legend**: Global soft skills training market size in 2023 and projected growth by 2031, increasing from $29.75 billion to $74.61 billion, reflecting significant market expansion (ICT 2024)*

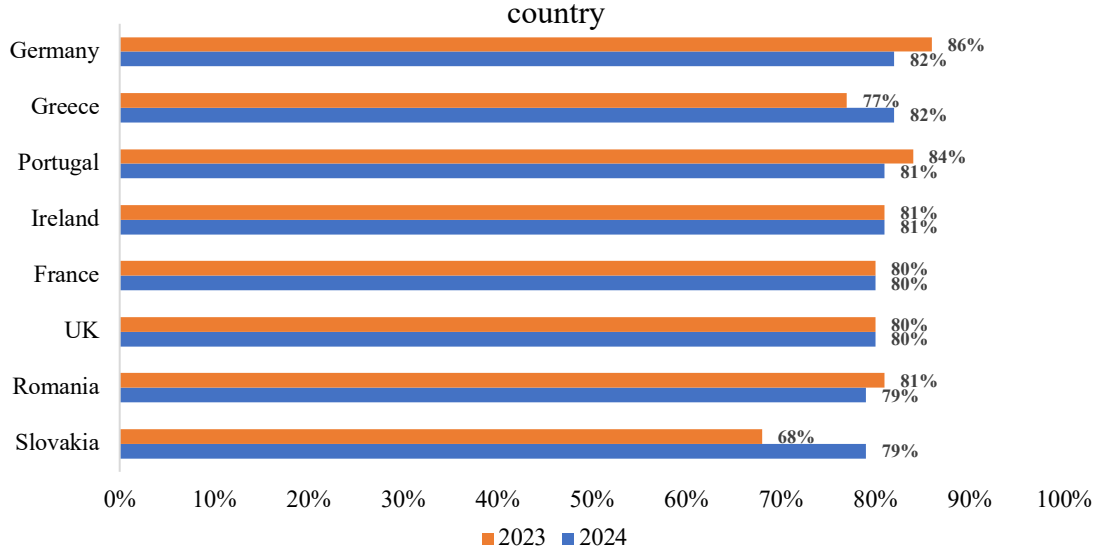
The increasing importance of soft skills in the workforce is driven by the rise of automation, as these human capabilities cannot be replicated by machines (Gupta 2024). Deloitte predicts that by 2030, soft-skill-intensive roles will account for two-thirds of all jobs, with companies benefiting financially by hiring employees equipped with these competencies, potentially increasing revenue by over $90,000 annually (Deloitte 2019). Research by Indeed further underscores this trend, showing that 67% of employers value soft skills more than formal qualifications when hiring (Mayne 2024). This shift

highlights the growing demand for training programmes that help individuals develop key soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and leadership.

As businesses expand globally and emphasise inclusivity, demand is rising for cross-cultural training and leadership development programmes that foster collaboration and empathy. Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are transforming the learning landscape by enabling personalised, adaptive training that tracks participant progress effectively (Parekh 2024). These tools are particularly useful for enhancing emotional intelligence and supporting mental health initiatives, reflecting a growing focus on holistic employee development.

While companies increasingly recognise the importance of soft skills, many employees are struggling to keep up with these growing demands. A study reveals that employers are dissatisfied with the lack of qualified candidates, despite significant recruitment efforts (Statista 2024b). Specifically, in Portugal, 84% of surveyed employers reported difficulties finding talented candidates in 2024 – Graph 14. This reflects a broader trend where employees are acknowledging the need for additional training in areas beyond hard skills, particularly those not covered in their academic backgrounds. This suggests a rising demand for accessible soft skills training programmes, as individuals seek to bridge this gap and better align with the evolving needs of the job market.

Graph 14 - Employer self-reported difficulty in finding talented candidates for open positions in Europe from 2023 to 2024, by country



***Legend**: Employer-reported difficulty in finding talented candidates for open positions in Europe, comparing 2023 and 2024. Germany and Greece show notable increases, while Slovakia reports the most significant improvement. (Statista 2024b)*

Taking this market analysis into consideration, it is possible to conclude that, organisations are increasingly recognising the importance of soft skills, appreciating their positive impact on employees' performances and viewing these training programmes as a strategic investment that will improve their overall performance as a business, as well as increase employee retention and organisational resilience. Since these skills are now taken into consideration in the recruitment process, candidates are also looking for ways to improve their soft skills literacy and capabilities. All the referred market trends and different demand motivations are contributing to this exponential growth of the market and creating space for new players to enter it.

Before divining into the market players and potential competitors of Abraço, it is important to segment it. The **segmentation** of the Portuguese Soft Skills Training market revealed four distinct segments: Corporate, Individual, Third Sector, and Academic. This division was based on three different aspects, the varied target audiences seeking to develop their soft skills, the underlying motivations driving this interest, and their ultimate goals for participating in a soft skills training programme –, factors often related to their age and employment status.

The first segment is **"Corporate**", and it includes every company that wants to invest in their employees' soft skills development, in Portugal. They are usually looking for service providers in this market that offer packages which include training on leadership, team cohesion and communication skills for a range of their employees, or even the whole corporation, without a very strict or limited budget. Their main goal is to train their employees, so they are better equipped to exercise their jobs, offering improved customer service, and ultimately maintaining or increasing their competitiveness as a business. This segment frequently includes companies in areas such as finance, technology and customer service, reaching employees from 25 to 65 years of age who work for any player in this segment.

The **"Individual"** segment would refer to all regular citizens, independent from their employment status, who wish to improve themselves either personally and/or professionally, as active citizens from 25 to 65 years old, in Portugal. Regardless of the specific soft skills, they feel the need to improve their ultimate goal is to invest in themselves and enhance their employability. It is an investment they are most likely doing

on their own, both financially and timewise, meaning that they mostly look for low-price offers with a high degree of personalisation and low commitment.

The **"Third Sector"** segment includes all non-profit or non-for-profit companies that offer support to vulnerable communities and recognise the need for soft skill development in their beneficiaries, from 18 to 65 years old, in Portugal. These associations are usually involved in social inclusion actions with few resources and low budgets and identify increasing their own beneficiaries' employability as an important part of helping them. These organisations are usually looking for low-cost, preferably, free soft skills development offers from companies that, if possible, are directly involved in the social impact area and/or might be interested in helping increase the employability of marginalised populations, such as immigrants, young adults with difficult backgrounds and people with chronic health conditions like HIV. All of these segments' efforts are directed at helping marginalised groups achieve better life quality, and they strongly believe that soft skills training can be an important part of that process, so if given the choice, they would prefer service providers in this area that share these values.

The last segment is entitled **"Academic"** and, as the name suggests, includes higher education institutions, such as universities and schools in Portugal that are increasingly incorporating soft skills as much as possible into their curriculum. They are also offering extra-curricular programmes to their students emphasising the need for additional skills training that are not included in the traditional education system, but they know, will be required of their students as soon as they leave the academic world in search of a job. Universities look for ways to fill this gap, either by outsourcing this type of training or providing it themselves, so they ensure their students, usually from 18 to 25 years older, are ready and prepared for the professional world.

Competitor Benchmark

The soft skills training market is composed of a diverse range of players, who will serve as either direct or indirect competitors as Abraço enters this field. These competitors have been carefully selected based on their target audiences, reflecting the varied nature of their offerings, and, most importantly, the market segment to which they belong. Following the segmentation analysis, the benchmark includes a representative player from each sector. Utilising the 7Ps Framework, a detailed examination of the Corporate,

Individual, Third Sector, and Academic segments will be provided, to analyse the unique characteristics and strategic approaches of each sector while presenting real examples.

The "Corporate" segment is represented by **Goodhabitz**, a leading online learning platform focused on empowering employees and fostering personal development within organisations. Their product offerings consist of a wide range of online courses covering skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership, designed for corporate employees across various sectors. The platform provides an engaging, asynchronous learning experience with multimedia content, offering 115 courses in a video gallery-style format. Pricing – communicated in an interview with the company – starts at around €6000 for the "Essential" package, which includes access to all courses for up to 100 employees over one year, equating to about €60 per person. Higher-tier "Pro" packages, starting at €24,000, offer additional features such as online coaching, but these are excluded from the benchmark. For promotion, Goodhabitz invests in Google Ads targeting HR managers and corporate leaders and maintains a strong social media presence on platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram, where they share infographics, testimonials, and course highlights to engage HR professionals. Their website, the primary communication vehicle with clients, is continually improved for ease of use and clarity, and they utilise email marketing to update clients on new courses and corporate training trends. The team consists of e-learning experts, including specialists in video production and interactive media, and the platform integrates seamlessly into clients' internal systems. Physical evidence of completion includes certificates and digital badges, which employees can showcase on platforms like LinkedIn, enhancing their professional credibility (Goodhabitz, n.d.).

The "Individuals" segment is represented by **Training House**, which offers a wide range of online courses focused on emotional intelligence, communication, personal development, and more. Their modular courses allow individuals to target specific skill areas based on personal needs, available in both synchronous and asynchronous formats, with the flexibility to combine both. Pricing for personal development and soft skills programmes is approximately €90, covering about 37 hours of content on a specific topic, or roughly €9 per 3-hour session. As a fully digital platform, Training House reaches users across Portugal, enabling convenient access to their courses. For promotion, they focus on digital marketing through social media, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and Google Ads, targeting individuals in job-seeking processes or those aiming to enhance

employability. They also partner with educational platforms to expand their reach. Their website prioritises user experience with a simple registration and payment process to convert visitors into students. Upon completing a course, participants receive a digital certificate, which can be added to their *Curriculum Vitae* (CV) and LinkedIn profiles, boosting credibility and job prospects (Training House, n.d.).

Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP) represents the "Third Sector" in this analysis, offering soft skills training as part of broader workforce integration programmes. Their offerings focus on essential skills like communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork, tailored to boost the employability of marginalised groups, particularly immigrants and unemployed youth. Training is delivered in person at strategically located centres across Portugal, ensuring accessibility regardless of location. Enrolment involves a personalised consultation with an advisor to match clients with suitable programmes. All training is free, reflecting a government-funded pricing strategy aimed at inclusivity. Promotion relies on partnerships with local councils, NGOs, and community outreach, alongside social media engagement on Facebook and LinkedIn. Unlike commercial players, their messaging emphasises public awareness and service access rather than sales. IEFP's team consists of experts in social work, psychology, and education, ensuring programmes meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Participants receive completion certificates, providing valuable credentials for job seekers (IEFP, n.d.).

The "Academic" segment is represented by the **Nova Skills Association**, a student club at Nova School of Business and Economics (Nova SBE) that focuses on enhancing students' soft skills through targeted training programmes. These programmes aim to improve interpersonal, communication, teamwork, and leadership abilities, preparing students for the workforce. The offerings include workshops that combine face-to-face sessions and training, typically lasting from one to five sessions, designed to complement academic education. The programmes are free for Nova students as part of their academic fees, while alumni or non-student participants are charged a nominal fee of €50-€100 per workshop. Held at the Nova SBE campus in Carcavelos, Lisbon, the promotion is carried out through campus channels, career services, and social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram, ensuring high engagement with their target audience. The association also collaborates with employability-focused events, further enhancing its reach. Workshops are led by a mix of faculty, industry professionals, and alumni, offering

both academic and practical insights. The registration process is simple, with participants advised on suitable programmes based on their career aspirations. Like other providers, they offer certificates and digital badges upon completion, helping students enhance their CVs and LinkedIn profiles (Nova Skills Association, n.d.).

The analysis of the soft skills training market, and respective competitors' benchmark, using the 7P's framework – Appendix 24 – reveals critical insights for designing Abraço's Skills'ON programme. Successful programmes prioritise aspects such as flexibility, accessibility, and practical skills development, with offerings tailored to specific audiences, from marginalised groups to corporate employees. Pricing strategies in this market, range from free services to premium packages, highlighting the need for Skills'ON to adopt a tiered pricing model to balance inclusivity and market appeal.

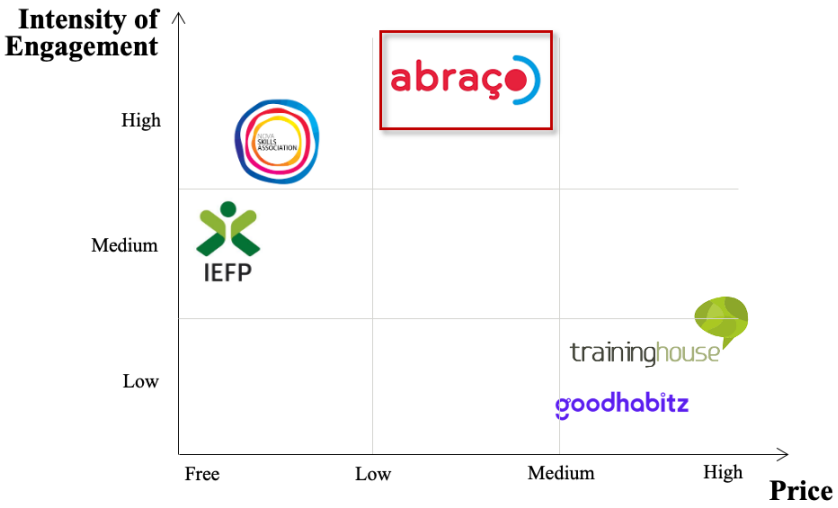
A hybrid delivery approach combining online modules and in-person workshops ensures accessibility, while a multi-channel promotional strategy leveraging partnerships and social media maximises the reach of the programmes. Expertise in education, psychology, leadership and facilitation in the speakers is essential, as well as providing seamless user experiences and certifications to enhance participants' credibility and employability. Based on these key insights it is possible to establish recommendations of best practices that Abraço should follow so Skills'ON can establish itself as an impactful, inclusive, and competitive player in the soft skills training market.

After analysing the soft skills training market in Portugal and its respective sectors, there were two key segments identified for Abraço to focus on: "Individuals" and the "Third Sector." This dual approach aligns with Abraço's values, mission, and objectives for the new programme. The primary **target** will consist of individuals aiming to improve their employability, along with institutions supporting vulnerable groups who could benefit from soft skills training. The demographic will include individuals aged 18 to 65, primarily from low to medium-income backgrounds, some of whom may belong to marginalised groups. These individuals are likely to prioritise accessibility, personalised offerings, and flexible, low-commitment options when making decisions.

Abraço's **positioning** should focus on two key factors: price and engagement intensity, as these are the most impactful parameters constituting Skills'ON's points of differentiation (POD), according to market analysis. The engagement intensity is

determined by the learning methods employed – whether In-person, online asynchronous or synchronous – as well as the degree of personalisation offered and the presence or frequency of human interaction throughout the whole process. As established in the Positioning Map – Graph 15 –, the recommended strategy is to enter the market with a low to medium pricing structure and a high engagement intensity, prioritising financial accessibility and personal interactions. This approach allows Abraço to stand out from competitors and effectively engage with its target audience, ensuring accessibility and personalised training experiences that align with its mission and goals.

Graph 15 - Positioning of the Softs Skill Training



Legend: *Positioning of Abraço in terms of price and intensity of engagement, highlighting it as a provider with a high level of engagement despite having a moderately low price compared to some competitors*

Market Sizing

The Skills'ON programme targets active professionals in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) who are motivated to enhance their social skills for career advancement. Based on 2023 data, the active population in LMA is approximately **1.13 million** people (Pordata 2024). Research indicates that **86.4%** of the active workforce believes behavioural skills training improves individual and organisational performance (Travassos 2019). Additionally, **46%** of this group prioritises developing soft skills, such as leadership, communication, and adaptability (Javaid and Barabas 2024). Therefore, the estimated potential market for the programme is approximately **448,511 individuals**.

Assuming Abraço reaches maximum capacity in every session, and the number of unique attendees varies between 50 and 600 depending on attendance, the estimated market share would range approximately from **0.01% to 0.13%** of the potential market of 448,511 individuals. This figure highlights the vast market potential Abraço can tap into, starting with local clients and expanding its reach as the programme gains traction and success.

4.5. Implementation Plan

The implementation of the Skills'ON programme will be divided into three distinct phases: **preparation, execution, and evaluation**. Each phase has specific objectives and tasks to ensure the programme's success.

The **preparation** phase of the Skills'ON programme will span three to six months and will primarily focus on laying a solid foundation for the initiative. The first priority will be assembling a dedicated core team within Abraço's structure, tasked with managing the programme's key components. Comprising two to four members, this team will oversee strategy, logistics, marketing, and human resources management. They will coordinate both internal and external resources, including recruiting volunteers for specific tasks, such as staffing the merchandising booth.

Once the team is in place, attention will shift to session preparation. The team will define the content for each session, ensuring alignment with the programme's mission of fostering personal and professional development. Session dates will be carefully planned, considering speaker availability, optimal times for participant engagement, and the broader programme timeline. Additionally, all session venues will be secured well in advance to ensure logistical requirements are met and to avoid last-minute challenges. A clear schedule for ticket sales will also be established, accompanied by well-timed marketing campaigns to generate interest and encourage early registrations.

A significant aspect of this phase will involve reaching out to and confirming speakers. Speakers will be selected based on their expertise, professional accomplishments, and ability to inspire. Personalised communication will emphasise the programme's mission and the importance of their contribution. This process will include formal invitations, comprehensive session briefs, and clear expectations to align speakers with the programme's goals. The outreach process will focus on personalised communication that highlights the programme's mission to create tangible social impact, emphasising how their participation can contribute to meaningful change. Each invitation will be accompanied by a detailed session brief, ensuring that speakers have a clear understanding of their role and the value they bring.

Additionally, Abraço will leverage its network of partners, alumni, and professional contacts to identify and recommend speakers. The organisation may collaborate with media platforms, such as local television stations or industry-specific programmes, to spotlight the programme and attract high-profile speakers interested in aligning their expertise with a broader social cause. Incorporating such media opportunities could also incentivise participation by providing speakers with visibility and showcasing their commitment to community-driven initiatives.

Finally, the preparation phase will address programme accreditation. Abraço will work toward meeting the national standards for education and training providers by submitting an application to DGERT. This will involve compiling detailed documentation outlining the programme's objectives, structure, and trainer qualifications. Once the application is complete, it will be submitted online with a €500 fee. Accreditation will certify the programme's compliance with quality standards, boosting its credibility and allowing Abraço to issue official certifications to participants.

By focusing on these core activities—team building, session preparation, scheduling, speaker engagement, venue confirmation, ticket sales planning, and accreditation—Abraço will establish a robust and strategic foundation for the Skills'ON programme.

The **execution** phase of the Skills'ON programme will extend over ten months, during which the primary focus will be delivering impactful sessions and ensuring the smooth operation of all related activities. This phase demands meticulous attention to logistics, participant engagement, and continuous improvement based on feedback.

Each session will be three hours long, necessitating meticulous logistical preparation to ensure a smooth experience for attendees. The team will finalise all venue arrangements well in advance, including seating, audio-visual equipment, and any materials required by the speakers. Coffee breaks will be coordinated with catering services to enhance comfort and engagement, keeping it simple to achieve the best service with minimal effort. The team will also manage on-site registration and check-in processes, streamlining entry and maintaining a welcoming, professional environment for participants.

Marketing activities will continue during this phase to sustain interest and attract new participants. Social media campaigns, email newsletters, and collaborations with local

organisations will amplify the programme's reach. To maintain momentum, testimonials from participants and highlights from previous sessions will be shared to showcase the programme's value. The marketing team will also provide real-time updates and reminders about upcoming sessions to ensure participants stay engaged.

A key feature of the execution phase will be the implementation of an effective feedback process to continuously refine the programme. Feedback will be collected through surveys distributed at the end of each session, with questions focusing on the quality of the content, speaker effectiveness, and overall participant satisfaction. To encourage honest and constructive input, surveys will be concise and, where possible, anonymous. Additionally, informal discussions with attendees and speakers will provide qualitative insights into areas for improvement. This feedback will be systematically analysed and discussed during team debriefs, ensuring that actionable recommendations are implemented promptly. Regular adjustments to session content, delivery style, or logistical arrangements will demonstrate a commitment to excellence and responsiveness to participant needs.

The programme team will also maintain clear communication with speakers, ensuring they are fully prepared for their sessions. This includes confirming presentation materials, arranging pre-session walkthroughs, and addressing any last-minute concerns. For participants, communication channels such as email and a dedicated helpline will be available to assist, answer questions, and ensure clarity regarding session details.

By focusing on detailed session logistics, strategic marketing, and a robust feedback system, the execution phase will uphold the programme’s high standards and create a rewarding experience for all stakeholders.

The final phase, **evaluation**, will last for one month and will focus on consolidating insights, measuring impact, and planning for future iterations of the Skills’ON programme. During this phase, data collected throughout the execution phase will be analysed, including attendance numbers, participant feedback, and financial performance. A review of the marketing strategies will also be conducted to determine their effectiveness in reaching the target audience and generating engagement.

A critical component of this evaluation will be assessing the impact on Abraço’s beneficiaries. This involves understanding how participants applied the skills learned

during the programme in their personal and professional lives and the resulting changes in their confidence, knowledge, and career progression. This will be achieved through surveys, interviews, and focus groups with participants, as well as tracking longer-term outcomes like job placements and ongoing participation in further training programmes. This assessment not only fulfils Abraço's mission, where beneficiaries are both the reason and the objective of the programme but also ensures that the programme's impact is meaningful and sustainable.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will also be introduced to measure the programme's success quantitatively and qualitatively. These will include metrics such as participant satisfaction scores, average session attendance, revenue growth, and social media engagement. Longer-term KPIs, like career advancements or employment rates, will also be tracked to assess the programme's broader impact. These indicators will provide actionable insights, helping Abraço refine future iterations of the Skills'ON initiative to enhance both its impact and sustainability.

A review meeting with the core team will be held to discuss the programme's strengths and areas for improvement. These insights will be compiled into a comprehensive report summarising the programme's outcomes, financial results, and the impact on participants. Based on this analysis, recommendations for adjustments to the next cycle will be outlined, such as expanding the curriculum to include new skills, refining content delivery methods, or enhancing marketing efforts, including exploring new partnerships or other strategies. This will ensure that the programme continues to evolve, meeting the needs of participants and aligning with Abraço's strategic goals.

This structured implementation plan for the first year ensures that Skills'ON will be effectively prepared, executed, and evaluated, providing a robust framework for the programme's success.

5. Overall Impact and Conclusion

This final section presents a qualitative analysis of the proposed suggestions for the three business segments examined. Additionally, the financial impact has been assessed to quantify the expected improvements in Abraço's financial performance, which will provide the necessary support for the other branches of the association.

The proposed changes for Abraço's **psychological consultations** focus on optimising operations, enhancing outreach, and increasing financial sustainability. By allocating dedicated consultation hours for external clients while maintaining access for beneficiaries, the service balances its social mission with revenue-generating potential. Streamlined scheduling and the introduction of administrative support ensure efficient operations, reducing bottlenecks and enhancing client satisfaction.

Additionally, a robust marketing strategy will elevate the unit's visibility, leveraging social media and targeted campaigns to attract a broader audience. Moreover, the development of partnerships with companies is key to expanding the consultation unit's reach. These updates, combined with the introduction of feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement, position the psychological consultations as a vital and dynamic pillar of Abraço's operations.

Through these strategic initiatives, the consultations can expand their reach and impact, contributing significantly to Abraço's financial independence while reinforcing its role in addressing critical mental health needs within the community. These measures not only ensure the unit's long-term sustainability but also deepen its alignment with Abraço's broader mission of social support and empowerment.

Moving to the **food service** and starting with the cafeteria, its recommendations aim to transform this business unit into a more dynamic and self-sustaining operation. By leveraging delivery partnerships with local businesses and implementing structured meal plans, Abraço can gradually reduce its reliance on government support while maintaining its mission to provide affordable, balanced meals to its target beneficiaries. Proposed initiatives like the 5-Meal Weekly Pack and diversified menu options enhance order predictability and customer loyalty while aligning with competitive market pricing.

Investments in kitchen equipment and staff training are essential to accommodate increased meal production, ensuring operational efficiency and sustainability. These improvements not only meet the demand of current beneficiaries but also allow Abraço to expand its client base without compromising its social mission. Through these carefully planned measures, the cafeteria has the potential to emerge as a significant contributor to Abraço's diversified revenue streams.

On the other hand, Abraço's catering service holds untapped potential to become a key revenue-generating unit while promoting its mission. Streamlining workflows, implementing predefined menus, and enhancing staff specialisation ensures greater operational efficiency, enabling a smooth transition to higher event frequencies. Additionally, targeted marketing strategies amplify visibility and customer engagement, laying a foundation for long-term growth. By focusing on quality, efficiency, and strategic marketing, the catering unit can evolve into a flagship initiative, showcasing Abraço's ability to blend social purpose with business acumen.

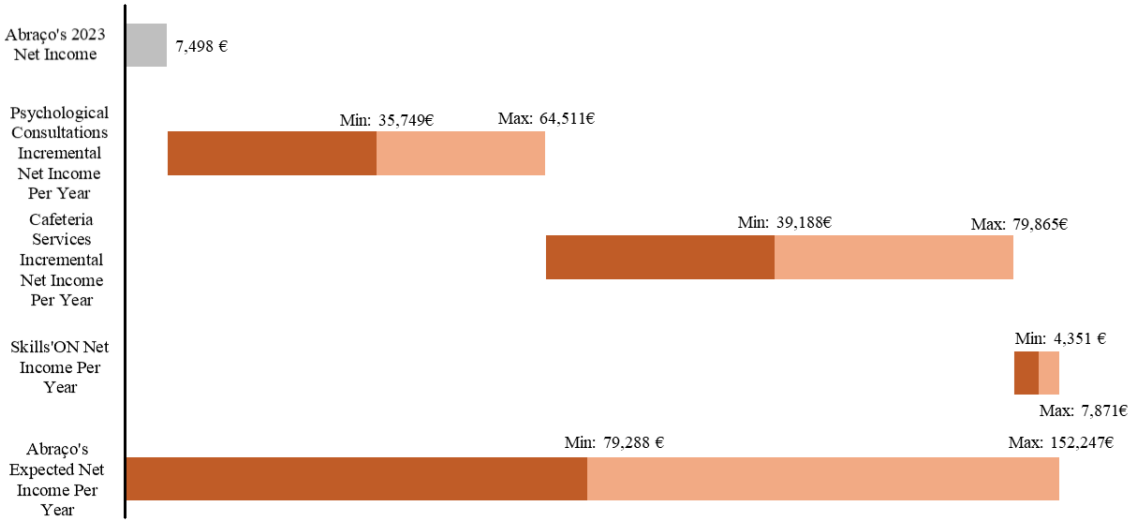
Lastly, the Skills'ON programme represents a well-structured initiative designed to enhance soft skills training, directly aligned with Abraço's mission of improving employability and supporting vulnerable communities. Through a curated schedule of 10 monthly sessions, the programme provides a progressive learning experience that begins with foundational skills like self-confidence and advances to workplace-oriented competencies such as teamwork and leadership. This chronological approach ensures participants build a solid foundation and develop holistically, preparing them for both personal and professional challenges.

Complementing the core sessions are innovative features such as networking opportunities, coffee breaks leveraging Abraço's catering services, and supplementary resources for continued learning. By integrating strategic promotional efforts, including social media campaigns and partnerships with community organisations, Skills'ON not only aims to generate financial sustainability but also to expand Abraço's visibility and reach across Lisbon and throughout Portugal. This blend of impact-driven education and thoughtful marketing ensures the programme appeals to a wide demographic, fostering growth and long-term success.

With an implementation plan spanning preparation, execution, and evaluation phases, Skills'ON is positioned to deliver meaningful outcomes for participants and reinforce Abraço's commitment to social innovation. This initiative is set to generate not just economic benefits but also a lasting positive impact on the Portuguese workforce, empowering individuals to thrive in their careers and contribute to a more productive and resilient society.

Through the implementation of the various recommendations across the three business units, Abraço can move from modest profits to an expected overall **yearly net income[3] of €125,336,** ranging from €79,288 in the worst-case scenario to €152,247 in the optimistic scenario. These projections were calculated taking into account the key drivers for each business unit - psychological consultations, the number of meals served, and the number of attendees for the Skills'ON programme. This approach not only strengthens the financial independence of the organisation but also enhances its reach, generating additional resources to channel into its most valuable investment: its mission to improve the quality of life of Abraço's beneficiaries.

Graph 19 - Yearly Financial Impact of the Proposed Recommendations



Legend: *Abraço should implement the proposed recommendations to optimise its business units, enabling the organisation to achieve consistent profitability while transitioning toward a more sustainable and impactful social-hybrid organisation*

[3] Yearly net income calculated as the sum of the averages of each business unit's projected net income over the first five years following the implementation of the recommended measures.

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Appendix

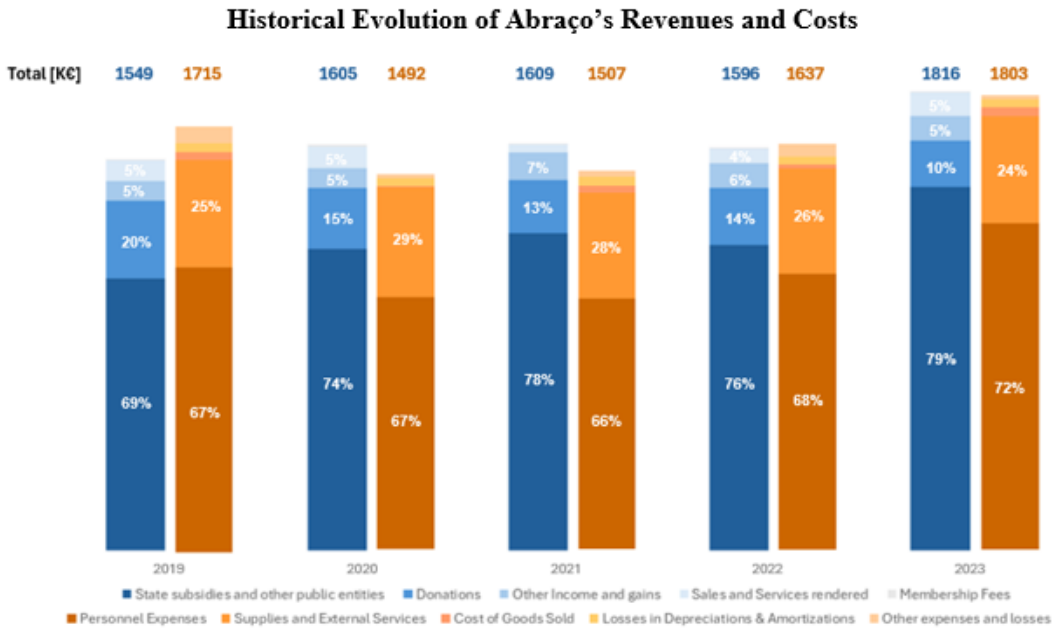
Appendix 1 - Abraço's portfolio of services and projects

Funded by Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security	Funded by Ministry of Health	Other sources of funding	Other activities
Centro de Atendimento e Acompanhamento Psicossocial (CAAP)	*Centro João Carlos*	*Casa Abraço*	Hepatitis C screening and micro-elimination programs
Centro Dr. José Luís Champalimaud,	*+Abraço Centro Comunitário*	*Centro Médico Dentário Lisboa*	Digitization of user files
Creche NIDO Montessori	*Passo a Passo*	*Centro de Rastreio Lisboa*	*Consciência Social* – phychological consultations
Qantina (cafeteria)			Catering
Projeto ABC - Ser Criança			

Appendix 2 – Market Landscape

Services / Projects	Abraço	Liga Portuguesa Contra a Sida	Associação Positivo	Ser +	GAT (Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamento)
STI's Screening Center	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nutritional guidance and Psychology Consultations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Day Time Community Center[1]	✓	✓	✓		✓
Cafeteria	✓			✓	
Home Support	✓			✓	
Dental Consultations	✓				
Nursery	✓				
Catering	✓				
Temporary Homes	✓				✓
Mobile Screening Unit		✓		✓	✓
SOS Support Line		✓		✓	
Soft Skills Workshop					

Appendix 3 – Historical Evolution of Abraço's Revenues and Costs

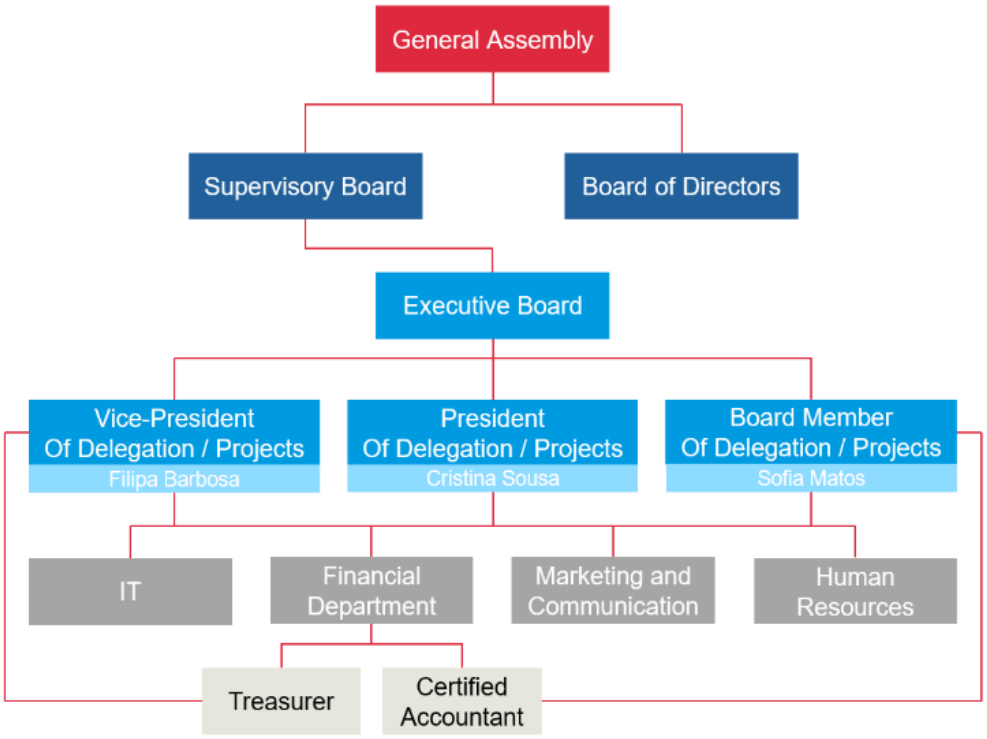


Appendix 4 – Historic Evolution of Liquidity Ratios

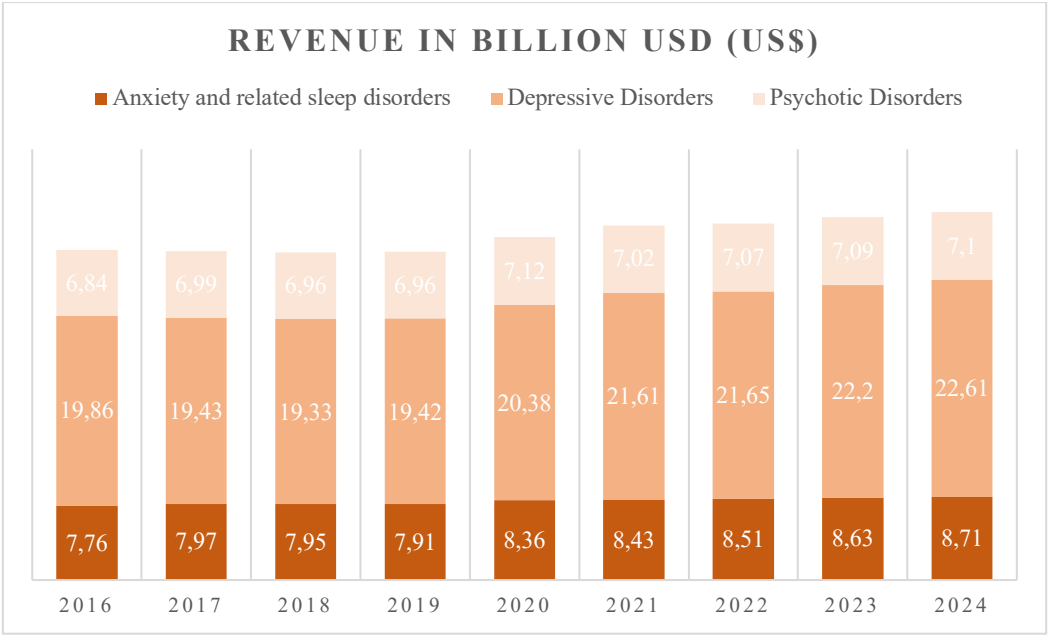
Historic Evolution of Liquidity Ratios

Liquidity Ratios	Abraço 2022	Benchmark 2022	Abraço 2023
Current Ratio	0.42	1.62	0.25
Quick Ratio	0.39	1.62	0.22
Cash Ratio	0.37	1.27	0.08

Appendix 5 – Abraço's Organizational Structure

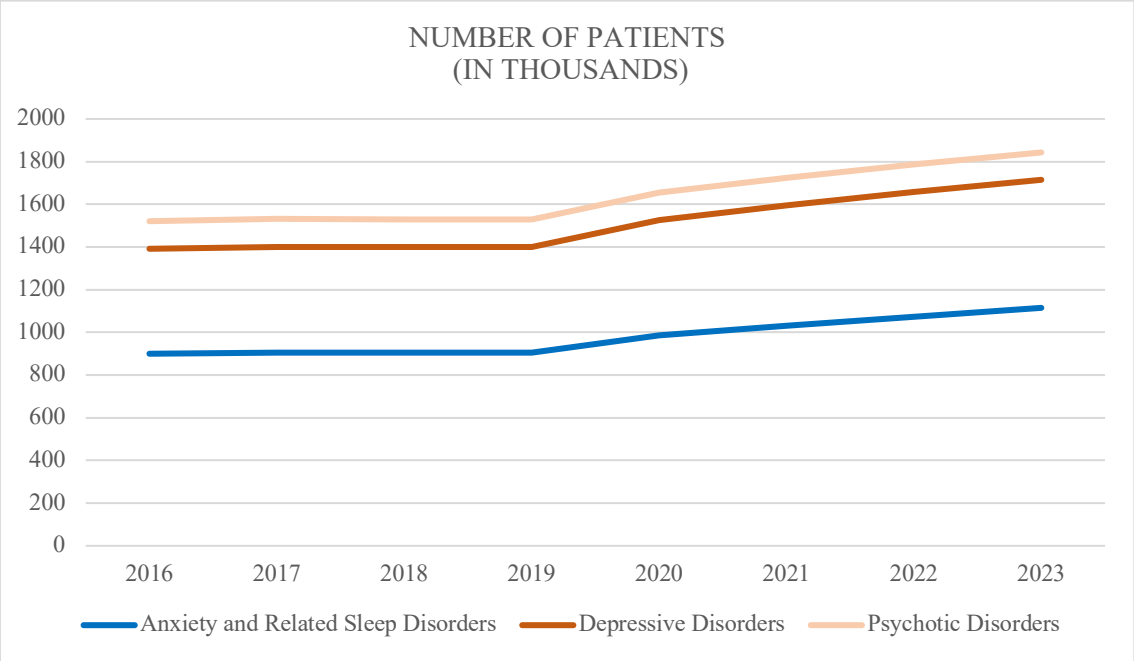


Appendix 6 – Revenue in Billion USD in the Mental Health Market



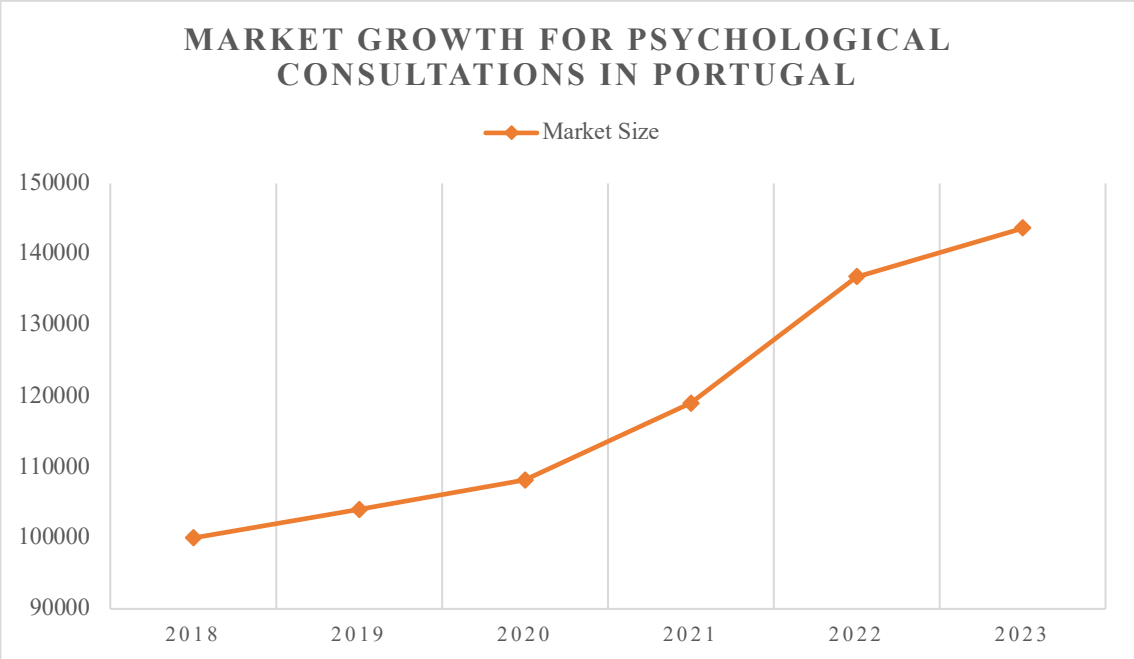
Source: Statista Market Insights | Mental Health

Appendix 7 – Number of patients (in thousands) in the Mental Health Market



Source: Statista Market Insights | Mental Health

Appendix 8 – Market Growth for Psychological Consultations in Portugal



Legend - Projected growth of the psychological consultation market in Portugal from 2018 to 2023, based on a 4% average annual growth rate and a 10–15% surge during the pandemic. Source: OECD

Appendix 9 – Psychological Consultations Competitor Benchmark Summary

Clinics	Price	Areas of Intervention	Target Population	Session formats	Promotion	# Psychologists
Psinove	€60	Art psychotherapy, Anxiety, Depression, Anorexia, Binge Eating, Bulimia, Personality Disorders, Borderline Personality, Bipolar Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	Children, Adolescents, Adults	In-person and online	Social Media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube Website Platforms (Doctoralia)	15
Centro Catarina Lucas	€70	Couples Therapy, Family Therapy, Clinical Sexology, Clinical Hypnosis, Neuropsychology, Animal-Assisted Therapy, EMDR Therapy, Vocational Guidance, Speech Therapy	Children, Adolescents, Adults, Couples, Families	In-person and online	Social Media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube Website Google Ads Platforms (Doctoralia)	29
Clínica Dra. Rosa Basto	€80	Depression, Anxiety, Grief, Phobias, Panic Attacks, Anorexia, Bulimia	Children, Adolescents, Adults	In-person and online	Website Social Media: X, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube Television and Radio	7
PsicoLab	€55	Depression, Anxiety, Prolonged Grief, Panic Attacks, Relational Difficulties	Children, Adolescents, Adults, Couples, Families	In-person and online	Social Media: Facebook, Instagram Website	4
SNS	€11,40	Comprehensive coverage across all psychological areas	Children, Adolescents, Adults	In-person, online and by phone	Website Referral Programs Social Media	601
Abraço	€37,5	LGBTQI+ sexuality, Personality and Mood Disorders (anxiety, depression), Personal development.	Adults (primary focus on individuals affected by HIV/AIDS)	In-person and online	Website	2

Appendix 10 - SWOT Analysis for the Psychological Consultations Service

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Strong reputation of Abraço as a trusted NGO within the community. • Specialised expertise of psychologists, particularly in assisting individuals affected by HIV/AIDS. • Safe and stigma-free environment for clients who might otherwise avoid mental health care. • Affordable pricing, increasing accessibility to mental health services. • Online therapy services offering flexibility and reaching remote areas.	• Limited capacity with only two part-time psychologists, restricting the number of consultations available. • Low awareness of the service outside the core audience of Abraço's beneficiaries. • Connection to HIV/AIDS may deter potential clients unaware that the service is open to all. • Risk of burnout and decreased service quality due to the limited team size.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Growing demand for mental health services in Lisbon and beyond. • Potential to partner with other organizations to improve awareness and referral networks. • Expansion of specialised services to underserved groups like LGBTQ+ individuals or low-income families. • Promotion of online therapy services to reach a broader audience, especially in remote areas. • Rebranding to emphasise general mental health services and reduce stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.	• Competition from other private and public mental health providers. • Economic constraints impacting clients' ability to pay for services. • Regulatory changes in healthcare that could affect Abraço's funding or operational model. • Dependence on a small team, increasing vulnerability to staff turnover or burnout.

Appendix 11 – Financial Plan for Psychological Consultations Business Unit

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Price Per Consultation	37.5 €	45.0 €	47.3 €	49.6 €	52.1 €
Price Increase (%)	0%	20%	5%	5%	5%
Number of Consultations Per Week	15	23	35	39	43
Number of Consultations Per Month	60	92	140	156	172
Number of Consultations Per Year	720	1104	1680	1872	2064
Number of Consultations Growth (%)	0%	50%	50%	10%	10%
Total Revenues	27,000 €	49,680 €	79,380 €	92,875 €	107,520 €
Marketing Expense (% of Revenues)	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Marketing Expense (€)	5,400 €	9,936 €	15,876 €	18,575 €	21,504 €
Personnel Cost Per Additional Session	10 €	10.20 €	10.40 €	10.61 €	10.82 €
Personnel Cost Per Additional Session Growth (%)	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Personnel Cost	0 €	490 €	6,492 €	8,659 €	10,911 €
Total Costs	5,400 €	10,426 €	22,368 €	27,234 €	32,415 €
Incremental Cash Flows	21,600 €	39,254 €	57,012 €	65,640 €	75,105 €
Discounted Cash Flows	19,281 €	31,278 €	40,549 €	41,673 €	42,563 €
Terminal Value	**245,336 €**				
NPV	**420,679 €**				
Payback Period	**4 Months**				

Appendix 17 - List of businesses within a 5 minute walking distance from Abraço

#	Name	Type of Activity	Address	Estimated Number of Workers
1	Tabacaria Castor Lda	Stationery Store	R. da Beneficência 197, 1600-218 Lisboa	2
2	Florista Teresa Lopes	Florist	R. Cardeal Mercier Loja 1, 1600-019 Lisboa	2
3	Peixaria Cristina peixe	Fish Shop	Mercado bairro Santos, R. Portugal Durão, 1700-000 Lisboa	2
4	Mika Muniz Nails Designer	Nail Salon	R. da Beneficência 205A, 1600-185 Lisboa	3
5	Barbearia TGR	Barbershop	R. Cardeal Mercier, 1600-102 Lisboa	3
6	Engomadoria - Passo a Passo	Ironing Service	R. Cardeal Mercier loja 6, 1600-185 Lisboa	3
7	Barbearia94	Barbershop	R. da Beneficência 201A, 1600-019 Lisboa	4
8	Dog Day Care	Dog Day Care Centre	R. Portugal Durão 7B, 1600-093 Lisboa	4
9	Partner Travel	Travel Agency	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes 10 loja 9, 1600-198 Lisboa	5
10	Titan Barbershop II	Barbershop	R. da Beneficência 237A, 1600-196 Lisboa	5
11	INEDIT Design	Women's Clothing Store	R. da Beneficência 235B, 1600-196 Lisboa	5
12	Zéfil - Materiais de Construção, Lda	Building Materials Store	R. da Beneficência 233A, 1600-019 Lisboa	5

13	Mousiké Estudio	Music School	R. da Beneficência 231 A 1600-019, 1600-019 Lisboa	5
14	Gazi Tech	Mobile Repair Shop	R. da Beneficência 199A, 1600-019 Lisboa	5
15	Madeirindustria - Máquinas Acessórios Para Automóveis E Indústria, Lda	Car Body Parts Supplier	R. Veloso Salgado 54, 1600-218 Lisboa	5
16	Infocostura	Sewing Machine Repair Service	R. Veloso Salgado 40A, 1600-218 Lisboa	5
17	My Tours Portugal	Tourism Agency	R. Veloso Salgado 16, 1600-218 Lisboa	5
18	Clínica Tamara Castelo	Chinese Medicine Clinic	R. Francisco de Holanda 37A, 1600-088 Lisboa	5
19	Calcebeto,Lda	Interior Renovation Contractor	R. Luciano Freire 13, 1600-142 Lisboa	5
20	SPLIU - Sindicato Nacional dos Professores Licenciados pelos Politécnicos e Universidades	Workers Union	Praça Nuno Gonçalves 2A, 1600-170 Lisboa	5
21	Nessa Cabeleireiros	Hair Salon	Praça Nuno Gonçalves Nº 2B, 1600-170 Lisboa	5
22	Clube Português de Canicultura (CPC)	Non-Profit Organization	R. Frei Carlos 7, 1600-095 Lisboa	5
23	Esco Studios	Music Recording Studio	R. Frei Carlos 13A, 1600-185 Lisboa	5
24	Art For Fun Tattoo Lisbon	Tattoo Shop	R. Carlos Reis 4A, 1600-032 Lisboa	5
25	SOULIMA - Loja Lisboa (Rego-Av. Novas)	Car Parts Store	R. Jorge Afonso 30A, 1600-124 Lisboa	5
26	Century21 Classic	Real Estate Agency	R. Cardeal Mercier 23 B, 1600-026 Lisboa	5
27	Heaven's Hair	Hair Salon	R. Francisco Tomás da Costa 3C, 1600-101 Lisboa	5
28	Titan Barbershop	Barbershop	R. Francisco Tomás da Costa 8, 1600-093 Lisboa	5
29	Feijosul LISBOA - Peças e Acessórios para Eletrodomésticos em Lisboa	Home Appliance Store	R. Portugal Durão nº1A, 1600-183 Lisboa	5
30	Audium	Audiovisual Equipment Supplier	R. Gen. Leman 5 A/B, 1600-101 Lisboa	5
31	José da Costa & Ventura Lda. - Casa das Tintas do Rego	Paint Store	R. da Beneficência 126A, 1600-023 Lisboa	8
32	Vitaforma Avenidas Novas - Estetica e Spa	Spa and Aesthetics	R. Jorge Afonso 13A, 1600-125 Lisboa	8
33	Cila - Banhos Tosquias - Lisboa	Pet Grooming Shop	R. Carlos Reis 25 A, 1600-030 Lisboa	8
34	Espaço Cidadão de Avenidas Novas - Mercado do Bairro Santos	Government Office	R. Cardeal Mercier 1, 1600-105 Lisboa	8
35	Novidades Legatteaux	Wig Store	R. Cardeal Mercier 29 A, 1600-026 Lisboa	8

36	Franca Pinto & Associados - Sociedade de Advogados, SP, R	Law Firm	Rua Soeiro Pereira Gomes, n.º 10, Esc. 3, 1600-189 Lisboa	10
37	Apcri-Associação Portuguesa De Capital De Risco	Association	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes Lote 1 8ºF, 1600-196 Lisboa	10
38	Amoena Portugal	Health and Beauty Store	R. Cardeal Mercier 25, 1600-102 Lisboa	10
39	Multihora - Centro Apoio Técnico Automóvel, Lda.	Auto Repair and Maintenance	R. Carlos Reis 65B, 1600-031 Lisboa	12
40	Academia Nova União Lisboa - JiuJitsu	Gym	R. Carlos Reis 65A, 1600-031 Lisboa	15
41	E-sycare, Lda.	HR Consulting Firm	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes, 1600-198 Lisboa	20
42	YouLead - Agência de Inbound Marketing	Marketing Agency	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes 1, 1600-024 Lisboa	20
43	genesis.studio	Software Company	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes 1 7º B, 1600-198 Lisboa	20
44	SYNLAB Rego | Análises Clínicas	Medical Laboratory	R. Cardeal Mercier 4-B, 1600-027 Lisboa	20
45	Santogal Peugeot Oficina	Car Repair Workshop	R. Dom Luís de Noronha 40, 1069-081 Lisboa	20
46	Caixa Mágica Software	Software Company	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes Lote 1, 1600-198 Lisboa	30
47	Faurecia Aptoide Automotive	Automotive Software Company	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes 1, 1600-198 Lisboa	50
48	SANA Metropolitan Hotel	Hotel	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes 2, 1600-198 Lisboa	60
49	SIBS Forward Payment Solutions	Financial Institution	R. Soeiro Pereira Gomes 1, 1649-031 Lisboa	200
50	Teleperformance Portugal - Open	BPO Company	Av. das Forças Armadas 125, 1600-079 Lisboa	200

Appendix 18 - Analysis of the equipment to buy for the cafeteria, regarding price and priority

Equipment	Price (1 – 5) 1 – highest price; 5 – lowest price	Priority (1-5) 1 – lowest priority; 5 – highest priority	Price + Priority	Year to acquire
Warming Cabinet	5	4	9	1
Refrigerated display case	2	1	3	3
Industrial Fridge	4	3	7	2
Industrial Freezer	3	5	8	1
Refrigerated workbench	5	1	6	3
Industrial dishwasher	3	2	5	3
Industrial hoven	1	5	6	2

Appendix 24 – Skills'ON Competitors Benchmark Summary

Competitor	Product	Price	Place	Promotion
Goodhabitz	Wide range of online courses focusing on communication, teamwork, and leadership. Designed for corporate employees across sectors. 115 courses in a video gallery-style format, all asynchronous.	Subscription-based: ~€6,000/year for up to 100 employees (~€60 per person/year).	Online platform optimised for integration into client systems. User-friendly website for HR managers and decision-makers.	Google Ads targeting HR managers and corporate leaders. Social Media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram (infographics, testimonials, course highlights). Email marketing for updates.
Training House	Modular online courses focused on emotional intelligence, communication, and personal development. Flexible format: synchronous and asynchronous options. Tailored to individual needs and employability.	Approximately €90 per course (37 hours of content), or ~€9 per 3-hour session.	Fully digital platform accessible across Portugal. User-friendly website for registration and payment.	Digital marketing via social media, SEO, and Google Ads. Partnerships with educational platforms to expand reach.
Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP)	Soft skills training (communication, conflict resolution, teamwork) integrated into workforce development programs for marginalized groups (e.g., immigrants, unemployed youth).	Free (government-funded).	Training centres across Portugal. Face-to-face delivery.	Partnerships with NGOs, local councils, and community organizations. Social Media: Facebook and LinkedIn.

Nova Skills Association	Workshops and training sessions focused on interpersonal skills, communication, teamwork, and leadership. Programs tailored for students to complement academic education.	Free for Nova SBE students. €50–€100 per workshop for non-students and alumni.	Nova SBE campus in Carcavelos, Lisbon. Face-to-face training with career-focused guidance.	Social Media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram. Campus channels and career services. Collaboration with employability events.

Competitor	People	Process	Physical Evidence
Goodhabitz	E-learning experts specializing in video production and interactive media.	Fully asynchronous learning. Seamless enrollment process integrated into corporate systems.	Digital certificates and badges that can be showcased on LinkedIn profiles.
Training House	Professionals with expertise in coaching and psychology.	Seamless registration and payment process. Flexible delivery combining synchronous and asynchronous methods.	Digital certificates for CVs and LinkedIn profiles.
Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP)	Experts in social work, psychology, and education.	Enrollment involves personalised consultations with advisors. Training tailored to individual needs.	Completion certificates for employability enhancement.
Nova Skills Association	Facilitators include university faculty, industry professionals, and alumni.	Simple registration through Nova's digital portals. Participants guided towards suitable workshops based on aspirations.	Digital certificates and badges for CVs and LinkedIn profiles.