

GoBananas: A startup that saves the world  
while breaking the vicious entrepreneurial cycle- with the right marketing strategy

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## Abstract

GoBananas is a start-up company founded by students at Nova SBE's "Entrepreneurship with Impact" masters program. The company's mission is to make the world a better place through the creation and sale of banana ice cream popsicles. Because the team was facing numerous challenges and setbacks over the past year, it had to find creative solutions to break the common "vicious cycle" faced by many entrepreneurs. This work project details the company's journey and discusses the strategic decisions of the team to break this vicious entrepreneurial cycle to make GoBananas a successful venture.

## Keywords

Sustainability, upcycling, food waste, entrepreneurship, green, food tech, impact, vicious cycle, social venture, ice cream,

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### **1. Our path to being caught in a vicious cycle of entrepreneurship**

The UN states that one-third of all food produced on our planet goes to waste (Gustavsson, et al. 2011). Not because it is not edible but simply because it does not look appealing to the human eye anymore. At the same time, the World Food Program states that 828 million people do not have enough food (WorldFoodProgram 2022). GoBananas is a social venture that joined the fight against food waste.

Creating a venture with a societal impact is accompanied by numerous challenges. The team at GoBananas faced a year of fluctuating fortunes, experiencing numerous setbacks alongside their successes. They were forced to adapt to changing circumstances, and their resilience is continuously being tested when making their mission of reducing food waste a reality.

One reason for the significant setbacks was the vicious cycle that many entrepreneurs face during their ventures' development. The main objective of the whole GoBananas team during the last months was to break that vicious cycle. The two key cycle breakers were our branding and marketing, as well as finding the right sales channels.

This project analyses the evolution of GoBananas, focusing on the vicious cycle in which the venture became trapped, as well as the application of the design thinking framework in its development. Additionally, the report examines the strategic go-to-market approaches and implementation strategies implemented by GoBananas to overcome this vicious cycle following the creation of its minimum-sellable product.

### **2. The essentials of a social entrepreneurship**

To start a social venture, Felipe Santos determines essential dimensions that need to be in place for entrepreneurs to be successful.

“The Social Entrepreneur’s Guide to Changing the World” states that the following three key pillars are essential when social entrepreneurs choose their intervention space (Santos, et al. 2016).

Firstly, they must identify a real and relevant problem. Secondly, they must possess a passion for the topic. Thirdly, they must possess the necessary expertise and knowledge about the problem and their proposed intervention.

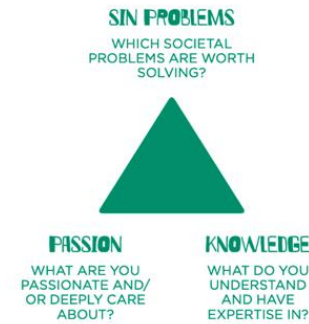


Figure 1 Intervention space for social entrepreneurs (Santos, et al. 2016)

In the course of our search for a societal issue to address, we discovered the problem of food waste, which aligns with several sustainable development goals (SDGs), including SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production). However, because the process of founding our venture was rushed, we did not possess the necessary passion or expertise in this area, which are essential for the success of impact ventures (Santos, et al. 2016).

## 2.1 The relevant societal issue

Food waste has a massive impact on climate change through carbon emissions. With the world population increasing to over 8 billion, 7.2 billion metric tons of foods are produced globally. Of these, 1.6 billion tons are wasted annually (Hegnsholt, et al. 2018). Overall, this waste accounts for 8% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, three times more than the aviation industry emits (Hegnsholt, et al. 2018). When organic produce is thrown away, it emits methane, a potent GHG, driving climate change. The United States estimates that their food waste alone leads to 170 million MTCO<sub>2e</sub> GHG emissions (excluding landfill emissions) each year. In contrast, that equals around 42 coal-fired power plants (Jaglo, Kenny und Stephenson 2021).

## **2.2 Our Passion**

As previously stated, it is commonly believed that passion is a crucial factor in the successful development of a venture. This sentiment is frequently emphasised in entrepreneurship education, including extensively in our master's program. Without passion for the problem at hand, it is likely that the venture will not be successful.

The issue of fighting food waste was a compromise between the founding team of the project. Even though it seemed like a noble and important issue to solve, no one felt exceptionally passionate about it. We assumed that this missing passion at the beginning of the project would lead to issues along the path. Regardless of the advice we got from mentors and professors, and due to the need to act, we kept the societal problem of food waste at the centre of our new venture and started working on it.

In retrospect, we have learned that passion often develops over time rather than being present from the outset. During the research phase and as our project began to gain momentum, all team members who initially struggled to relate to the topic gradually developed a deep-seated passion for our mission of combating food waste. The impact of food waste on the climate and the staggering amounts of food wasted in developed countries were particularly shocking.

Discovering the underlying issues of the general problem you are trying to solve creates a thrive to develop a solution that eliminates those issues.

As a project gains momentum and its solution is validated, it becomes easier to develop a passion for it. The project becomes a personal cause that the team is motivated to make reality to make a positive impact on the world.

## **2.3 GoBananas expertise in the topic**

As previously mentioned, the Team needed to discover where the roots of the problem lie and what potential solutions there are to fight food waste.

The GoBananas team used a mix of primary and secondary research to discover more about the subject and problem. We needed “to understand problems intimately, usually from within,

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through personal experience, direct observation or field research.” (Santos, et al. 2016). After getting an overall impression of where food waste occurs and who the issues' main stakeholders are, we used in-depth interviews with key stakeholders from the industry to discover their pain points.

Furthermore, the solution for such a significant societal issue seemed unclear initially. We did not have considerable experience in the food and beverage industry and, therefore, no specific knowledge about potential solutions that key stakeholders already use and which ones they need. We needed a structured approach to the issue to discover more about those underlying issues and come up with a creative solution.

### 3. Design thinking

Looking back at how GoBananas has been developed, it becomes clear that we followed the design thinking approach very closely. The tools we got during our master's program allowed us to bring structure into the overall development of GoBananas.

“Design thinking is generally defined as an analytic and creative process that engages a person in opportunities to experiment, create and prototype models, gather feedback, and redesign” (Razzouk und Shute 2012). The design thinking approach comprises six stages: Empathizing, defining, designing, prototyping, testing and implementing (Brenner, Uebernickel und Abrell 2016).



Figure 2 The design thinking process (Gibbons 2016)

At the time of writing, GoBananas has progressed to the testing phase but has not yet begun implementation.

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Empathizing with individuals who experience the pain point that a venture aims to solve is a fundamental aspect of the design thinking method. For us, conducting interviews with such individuals was a crucial part of our research process and helped to provide the foundation for our project.

### **3.1 Empathize and define**

Due to previous research, we discovered that supermarkets have a significant role in the fight against food waste. To understand the supermarkets' specific pain points, we got in touch with the head of sustainability of Sonae – Continente, Pedro Lago. After conducting several meetings with various employees of the supermarket and gaining access to the inner workings of supermarkets, we discovered that food waste is a significant problem, particularly in the fruit and vegetable section (Appendix 1). Our findings indicate that bananas are the most commonly wasted fruit in supermarkets. To verify our assumptions, we also conducted an interview with Auchan, who corroborated our insights from our conversations with Sonae (Appendix 2). However, we also quickly discovered that there is no reliable data on the precise amount of food waste that is produced. Our interview and conversation partners were able to provide rough estimates, but no accurate data on the amount of waste generated on a given day of the week. This uncertainty and lack of data would present a significant challenge in developing a business model that is sustainable.

These findings highlight the importance of conducting thorough research and interviews when establishing a new venture. Without engaging with individuals who regularly confront this issue, we would have been unable to disconfirm our initial hypothesis that supermarkets currently have detailed systems in place for tracking their waste production and would therefore have been unable to identify the problem. Furthermore, these interviews enabled us to identify a more specific problem to address: 50% of bananas in supermarkets are wasted at the end of each day.

### **3.2 Ideate**

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After defining the problem in more detail, we had to find a solution. Unfortunately, we left the structured way of design thinking and should have stayed more open-minded during that stage. Due to everyone's background and subjective point of view, entrepreneurs tend to think about the solution they have in mind before defining the problem. The same happened to the team members of GoBananas. We managed to keep an open mind during the research phase but then went the most obvious and straightforward route for our team. That limited us regarding the options to find the best possible solution for our problem and establish a solid problem-solution fit. One of our team members utilized her overripe bananas to make ice cream at home. She previously worked in the ice cream industry, so she had firsthand knowledge of the process. Given that summer was approaching, the most natural solution was to transform bananas into ice cream. Her experience indicated that the production process is relatively simple, but we recognized the need to gain expertise in how to manufacture ice cream for commercial retail, which would present various challenges that we would need to overcome.

### **3.3 Prototyping**

When jumping into the prototyping phase of the design thinking approach, we used a rather effectual methodology using the means we had in our hands (SARASVATHY 2001).

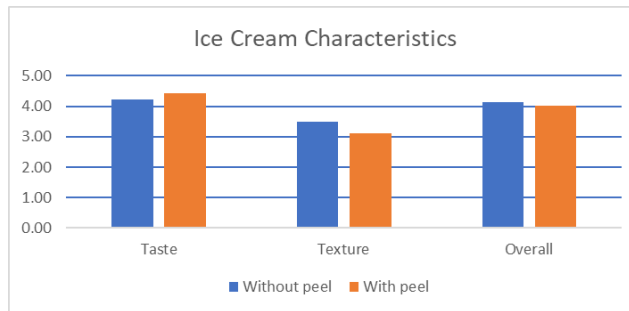
We tried creating an ice cream recipe in our kitchens. Getting away from our desks and testing things became one of the main drivers for developing our venture. For us, gaining first-hand experience and discovering what works and what does not was essential and should be for every entrepreneur building their venture. The design thinking approach builds on the iterative process of testing your assumptions and either approving or rejecting those assumptions.

At this point, we assumed that making ice cream was easy and that we could produce it ourselves. Additionally, we wanted to test whether it is possible to create a solution for the banana peel to reduce the amount of waste to zero (Appendix 3). We also experimented with adding the banana peel into *Figure 3 Survey results of Ice cream tasting* the ice cream to add more fibre and improve our texture. (Appendix 4).

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After multiple tries of creating our ice cream and a tasting with our primary target group, the survey results differed from our standards (see Figure 3).

Making the ice cream for immediate consumption was possible. Storing and conserving it was not. We realised that we needed support with the production of our ice cream.



Our options to get support were finding an external producer or learning how to make ice cream together with a professional chef.

Producing our ice cream would have meant that we must apply for certificates and licenses at the autoridad de seguridad alimentaria economica (ASAE).

Furthermore, it would be connected to a high initial investment to set up the whole ice cream production. The complete setup seemed like a long and expensive procedure. At that stage, the priority was keeping the momentum we got during the first weeks. Furthermore, we had to manage the risks we took in building this venture. All founding members had limited budgets and could not risk investing significant amounts of money with the high uncertainties we still had.

Finding an ice cream producer seemed faster, cheaper, and less risky. With the help of Francisco X. Froes, we managed to get in touch with Eduardo Santini. Other than being a big corporate producer, Santini had its production facility in the centre of our area of operations but had reached a size to serve our demand in the first months and potentially years. Eduardo was convinced of the mission of GoBananas and started the journey with us (Appendix 5).

This had enormous implications for our whole business – positively but also negatively.

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On the one hand, it would give us a considerable time advantage and tremendously reduce the complexity of our go-to-market strategy. Working with someone with expertise over multiple years accelerates the process of creating a suitable recipe.

Furthermore, we would not have to deal with the regulatory issues related to food production. We would also mitigate the legal risk away from us. According to Portuguese law, the food producer is reliable for the quality.

On top of that, it would reduce the amount of needed capital to a minimum. There was no need for expensive production facilities, storage solutions and certifications, reducing the number of fixed costs to a minimum and leveraging on the benefits of variable costs.

Finally, it would give the brand GoBananas significant spillover effects from the brand Santini. Santini is known as a high-quality ice cream brand and is known all over Portugal. Branding our packaging with their brand would lift our ice cream into the high-quality artisanal ice cream segment.

On the other side, it would create a high dependency of our small startup on a big established brand that owns the intellectual property of the recipe, which is the core of our business at that stage. That would have enormous consequences during the journey of our venture. Whether it is finding investors, expanding to other countries, or having the freedom to decide about our brand and the consumer perception of it.

Still, we decided to start the journey together with Santini. At that stage, we were still determining how far this project would develop, so we decided to deal with the current issues and risks rather than the more significant issues that might lie far ahead of the team.

The prototype would consist of multiple partnerships and was ready to make the next step into the testing phase. We were working with Continente as a primary distribution channel and resource provider and Santini as the manufacturer of our ice cream.

### 3.4 Testing

Things started to get complicated and did not go as planned. The testing phase of our prototype in actual market experiments was challenging.

We designed our minimum viable product with a focus on cost-efficiency, but still needed a modest investment for temporary storage solutions, marketing, and overhead expenses. During the winter break, we held discussions with potential investors from Gulbenkian, Delta Ventures, and Logoplaste. However, these discussions did not yield the desired results, as none of these potential investors were willing to support our efforts to test our assumptions. They believed that we were too early in the development stage and needed to demonstrate a proof of concept before they would consider investing. As a result, we had to consider alternative options for starting our venture. One possibility we considered was bootstrapping, as the required budget was relatively small, and we were increasingly confident in the potential of our project. Furthermore, our priority was keeping the momentum and not losing the speed at which we were operating the last weeks. Waiting for months to find the needed capital and investing the time in that type of fundraising would mean losing that momentum.

Additionally, we lost our partnership with Sonae without explanation. We assumed that we needed to be more credible for a big corporation to start a collaboration. The war in Ukraine also caused Santini to prioritize their core business and withdraw from their participation with GoBananas. These events left us without a supplier, manufacturer, and sales channels. Managing these setbacks and maintaining motivation for the project was challenging. As is often said, entrepreneurship is like a roller coaster. We needed to get back on track quickly.

Already at this point, it felt like we were caught in a cycle. We did not have access to the crucial resource for our ice cream, bananas. That led to the point that we could not produce our product. Because we did not have any customers and proof of concept, we could not raise funding to start testing. The lack of money led to a dependency on our partners, who did not treat GoBananas seriously and as an opportunity.

### **3.5 Pivot vs Persevere**

Due to all the setbacks, we had to decide between two things: Do we keep our current path, or do we pivot and change the business model because it does not work? According to Eric Ries, every entrepreneur has this experience eventually during the development of their venture (Ries 2011). Our progress until that point was insufficient because of all the setbacks. We were right back at the beginning. We rethought our whole business model and participated in a design thinking sprint at NOVA SBE. The insights and feedback we got during that sprint encouraged us to stay on track.

We used our existing resources and personal contact with Eduardo Santini to bring our ice cream producer back on board. Additionally, we connected with Refood, a voluntary organization that collects and redistributes excess food to families in need. Refood has an excess of food that it cannot redistribute, and Gobananas uses the excess bananas from Refood to produce banana popsicles.

Working with Refood has several advantages. First, we would obtain bananas for free, reducing the cost of our minimum sellable product. Additionally, Refood is an international organization that could supply us in different locations. Finally, Refood already has procedures in place to collect bananas, simplifying GoBananas' business model. The team reestablished the foundation of the business model and were ready to go to market with a supplier for raw materials and a producer for the product.

### **4. The Business model for the MSP launch**

At this point, we could test the project in a lean and straightforward version. We started our go-to-market process with the following business model.

For the purpose of this work project, we will focus on the most critical dimensions to give the reader a context of the business model of GoBananas to understand the following analysis.

#### **4.1 Value proposition**

Our company focuses on creating consumable products from produce that is deemed unsellable due to its appearance. We currently specialize in using bananas to make ice cream popsicles, using only bananas, a small amount of sugar, and lime juice in our ice cream. In the long term, our packaging will be made of bio-degradable plastic made from banana peels, ensuring that every part of the fruit is utilized. This new approach to utilizing unsellable produce allows waste producers to significantly reduce waste and offers consumers healthier, environmentally-friendly products.

#### **4.2 Key activities**

As with all FMCGs, the brand is vital. GoBananas is not just selling products but aims to change consumer behaviour by offering products out of waste. The reputation and brand message will differentiate the brand from competitors in the competitive landscape of FMCG. Building up our brand identity and visibility in the market as well as educating our consumers about food waste, will be one key activity of GoBananas.

Furthermore, the sourcing and supply chain of the otherwise wasted produce will be crucial for the business' viability. We will need to ensure a constant supply to the production plant to meet the constant demand of our customers and reduce inventory time.

#### **4.3 Key resources**

The critical resource for our business is the wasted fruits that we transform into new products. We are still determining the amount of waste we have each day to produce our products. We are currently facing the situation that our partnership with ReFood provides more than enough supply for the first months of production (Appendix 6).

#### **4.4 Key partners**

One of our key partners is Santini for the launch of the project. With Santini on board, we can ensure a high-quality product and have brand spillover effects on our brand. Santini is a local

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ice cream producer, which reduces logistical complications with the supply of Bananas and distribution of the ice cream. Furthermore, Santini has existing partnerships with packaging manufacturers who produce their packages out of 100% recycled plastic.

Refood is our partner regarding the supply of otherwise wasted bananas. They have existing procedures for the reverse supply chain of old bananas, reducing our complexity and associated costs significantly. Their whole supply chain is volunteer-based which makes the fruits we get free of charge.

#### **4.5 Channels**

Our main sale channels would be through vegan and alternative cafes and our own pop-up ice cream stores. That would give us maximum touchpoints with our consumers and allow us to learn from the consumer's product perception.

We mainly focus on social media and digital marketing for our marketing channel. Our primary target group are young conscious adults that care about the environment and have an extensive digital footprint. We, therefore, see the touchpoint option in their digital environment

#### **4.6 Revenue**

Our revenues come mainly from the sales of our products. Depending on the sales channel, our product price varies. The starting product of banana ice cream popsicles will be sold for 2,5€ to end-users and, depending on negotiations, for around 1,30€-1,60€ per popsicle to resellers. Future products will be priced depending on the production costs. Our products are produced out of waste. Charging a premium price for products that are produced out of waste is difficult because customers assume a lower quality. Leveraging on the premium brand of Santini, we can establish a price slightly under the one from our competitors.

#### **4.7 Costs**

The production costs of our Popsicle amount to 90 cents/per popsicle. That includes the packaging and the storage at Santini's facilities. Furthermore, we need to count on a profit

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margin of min 30% for retailers. On top of that come our operational expenses, such as logistics and marketing and overheads. Depending on the development of the business, we will need support for the supply of our bananas.

We are planning on moving the production in-house at a given point, which lowers our production costs. Because we get our primary resource for free, we will have only eight cents in ingredient costs (Appendix 7)

## 5. The Framework

When a young venture, such as GoBananas, enters a market, it is faced with a number of challenges that can hinder its success. These challenges can include difficulties in selling its products or services, finding liquidity, and acquiring marketing resources. After some time, the GoBananas team came to understand that these challenges followed a cyclical pattern, and it was necessary to find a framework that could help them navigate these challenges and achieve success.

One such framework is "Ten Principles of Entrepreneurial Creation", which outlines the entrepreneurial vicious cycle and provides guidance on how to break it, (Venkataraman 2002). This framework highlights the key pillars that any young venture should follow in order to succeed, including the need to identify a unique value proposition, build a strong team, and establish a clear business model.

While it may be tempting for a young venture to focus solely on the practical aspects of building a start-up, such as meeting timelines and responding to real-time events, it is also important to consider the theoretical underpinnings of the venture's strategy. In a perfect world, the ideal strategy would always be executed perfectly, but in reality, things do not always go according to plan. By following a framework like "Ten Principles of Entrepreneurial Creation," the GoBananas team was able to gain a better understanding of the challenges they were facing and develop a more effective strategy for overcoming them, (Venkataraman 2002).

The first principle of the framework states that entrepreneurs must seek out trends and not wait for them to appear. Entrepreneurs must observe and rely on current trends, but must also be willing to search for new opportunities to create products. This principle applies to the GoBananas team's journey. Principles number two and three are a clear reflection of what is described in this work project. The first one emphasises how the uncertainty of creating a new venture brings new risks and, thus, ambiguity. This instability may often lead the founder into a spiral of overanalysing and collecting too much data, losing sight of the bigger picture. The

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third one depicts the opposite of the pillar mentioned before. In short, taking too much action without enough analysis can lead to flawed products and strategies. Finding a balance between analysis and action is key to starting a venture on the right foot. This project will discuss the insights GoBananas analyzed and how they used that information to take action.

Pillar number four of the framework presents the affordable loss concept, which helps entrepreneurs find a balance between analysis and action. The idea is to invest in systems and methods that will generate early revenues, while understanding that time, effort, and funds will be expended. This is the best strategy for achieving a balance. The fifth principle clearly illustrates the “entrepreneurial vicious cycle”. During this project, this was the most emphasised pillar; throughout the whole journey, the team tried to prove it. For readers unfamiliar with this concept, it tells how difficult it may be for a new venture to get the resources and scalability it needs.

As the author so well put it, the cycle functions as the picture 4 shows. However, this concept applies to new ventures in different ways than GoBananas. It applies to those who wish to start in a new market with a new product, but that note does not apply to this thesis since the student-led venture did not create a new market. The popsicle market exists, and GoBananas has already produced the product. The problem lies in the cycle after production. For this



Figure 5: Entrepreneurial Vicious Cycle as depicted by the framework



Figure 4: GoBananas approach to the vicious cycle

venture, the cycle worked in the following manner: no customers meant no sales numbers, leading to a lack of credibility followed by no sales channels. If there are no sales channels, there's no revenue, investment, marketing, and customers. Drawn from the base assumption of

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principle five this work project will show how the team tried to break free from this never-ending cycle.

This vicious cycle can be broken by using resources the venture previously owned. This type of capital can fit in a broad scope from human, intellectual and social. This brings us to the sixth principle to break this endless sequence described by the author. The entrepreneur must be willing to use the resources they already own, which often implies the tactic of bootstrapping. By using this strategy, the business can grow at a steadier pace. However, the bootstrapping technique is the ideal way to stop the cycle, but just like any art, it must be mastered. Pillar number seven gives the entrepreneur some rules of thumb on how to learn how to bootstrap, and the goal, as it implies, is to “invest imagination, before spending money” (Venkataraman 2002).

Principles eight and nine highlight the importance of cash in a new venture. The eighth point depicts how cash is at its most expensive stage during difficult times such as crises or during the start-up stage due to the uncertainty that new businesses have surrounding them. Nevertheless, as portrayed by point nine, if cash is not the problem, then the logistics will be. The GoBananas team was prepared for complex logistics, but being prepared and actually performing them are two different things. Team members must be ready to take on different roles within the company and gain insights from all job positions. Flexibility was necessary for the venture to survive, and team members often had to help wherever was needed, regardless of their job titles. As the author paints, every team member or solo entrepreneur should know that he/she/they will have to wear many hats, from CEO to the lowest ranking possible (Venkataraman 2002). The underlying assumption is that understanding that multitasking, knowledge of different fields and hard work will be a constant in the building up of a venture is critical at early-stage ventures.

The final principle to learn from this paper is that new ventures usually have three to five drivers, and to be successful, the key is to focus the efforts on them. All businesses should have

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some drivers that have the most significant impact on costs and revenues. It can be churn rates, client responses, client base, quality, etc. In the case of GoBananas, some drivers can lead the start-up to successful roads. Those same forces will be described throughout this work and the learnings that the team members have found—noting that this paper is a description of how this venture tried to test some of the venture’s drivers to understand if they were, in fact, the most prominent forces behind this brand.

The venture’s journey has not been linear, but it is best described with a structure to which the team had to go back in critical moments. In the case of GoBananas, it was this article. Throughout this work project, that same journey will be explained so that the reader will be able to understand how the members were able to guide themselves through the principles explained before. There were many moments when the team’s philosophy was based on trusting each other and trial and error. It was during moments of crisis that the venture was put into trial, and the member’s trust in each, as well as the process, was crucial.

Problems happen daily in young ventures, so why is GoBananas so special? The reality is that the vicious entrepreneurial cycle is what can break this startup. The goal is to show all the crossroads that different departments faced and how they handled it. These mishaps are a part of the cycle stated in principle five. The hypothesis laid out is whether GoBananas could break free of these cyclical problems and how the other principles were applied in this journey.

A considerable portion of startups fail; according to Forbes, nine out of ten of these ventures tend to fail (Patel 2015). To be successful, it should be as simple as following the principles. GoBananas sales and marketing strategies often proved that nothing is as simple as theory states, and this work project is the story of how they followed the rules and still haven’t reached their goals.

## 6. Branding Strategy

Before entering the market, the team had to consider the meaning of their brand. Without this understanding, it's difficult to reach target consumers, even if they have a product..

GoBananas needed to consider how their brand would be perceived by different audiences.

Initially, the team agreed that their brand should convey a sense of youthfulness and fun, but after seeking expert advice, they realised that their brand needed to be more than just fun.

They decided to make their brand's mission an integral part of their branding strategy. By considering all of these factors, they were able to develop a more effective branding strategy that resonated with their target audience.

### 6.1 Creating the branding graphics

The first step in developing GoBananas' branding strategy was to create a clear and consistent structure that everyone on the team could follow. To achieve this, the team created a branding guideline (Appendix 8). As they developed this strategy, the team frequently consulted the principles of colour psychology, a science that explores how colours affect human perception and behavior (Color Psychology s.d.).

Colour psychology is considered a part of behavioural psychology and branding, and it can be an important factor in developing an effective brand strategy, (Color Psychology s.d.). For example, bright yellows and blues are often associated with high churn rates in situations that require a call to action, such as highlighting important buttons on a shopping cart.

Given this, the team was drawn to using these two colours in their branding. Ultimately, the use of colour psychology helped to create a visually striking and effective branding strategy for GoBananas.

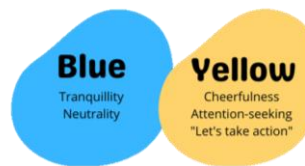


Figure 6: How colour transmits different feelings to the consumer

## **6.2 Branding Positioning**

In terms of branding positioning, the goal for GoBananas was for customers to perceive the company as more than just an ice cream company. The objective was to be seen as a mission-driven company, rather than one focused solely on revenue. To achieve this, the team sought to emphasize keywords such as sustainability, veganism, and circular economy when promoting the brand. We used every opportunity to educate the audience about food waste and how GoBananas was helping to prevent it.

The team also looked to brands like Patagonia and Ben & Jerry's for inspiration in developing their own brand positioning. They sought to understand the techniques these companies used to create a strong, mission-driven brand, such as using a compelling storyline to anchor the company's messaging.

The GoBananas team understood that a strong story was a key advantage. Once they defined a clear and consistent story, they were able to move forward with their branding strategy. Their chosen story focused on their mission to fight food waste, which helped establish their brand as mission-driven and credible. This approach helped GoBananas establish a strong and compelling brand story. The GoBananas team knew how they wanted their brand to be perceived, but they struggled to effectively convey this to their audience. Without a background in branding or sufficient experience, they sought help from outside the company. Fortunately, their brand had a great backstory that could differentiate it from competitors, but simply labeling it as sustainable and fun was not enough to fully capture its potential. In order to achieve this, the team needed help to translate that history to the final consumer.

The GoBananas team faced a significant challenge in the early stages of their venture due to a lack of in-house knowledge and expertise in the area of branding. While seeking external mentoring can be helpful, it can also be risky because no one understands the brand as well as the team members themselves.

### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

After a decisive meeting with Rui Gouveia from Build Up Labs, the team decided to sit down and fully align their individual brand visions. This discussion was crucial in helping us understand the importance of branding and the need to focus on it alongside other key areas such as marketing and logistics. The importance of telling the brand's story was also confirmed, which helped to further refine the branding strategy. Overall, this meeting was crucial in helping the team understand the value of branding and the need to prioritize it in their efforts to build a successful venture.

Promoting a product made from "end-of-the-day bananas" or highlighting the issue of food waste can be damaging to a brand's image. If a consumer associates a brand with waste or trash, they are likely to perceive the brand negatively. For example, if GoBananas were to promote their popsicles as being made from wasted bananas, consumers might assume that the bananas were rotten or unfit for consumption, according to feedback received from previous pitch decks. To avoid this negative association, it is crucial for the GoBananas team to be careful in their branding and messaging. Negative word associations can be enough to deter consumers from choosing the venture, so it was important to seek help in developing a branding strategy to avoid these pitfalls. This is why the team chose to adopt the expression "end-of-the-day bananas" in their branding and marketing efforts. By carefully considering the potential impact of their branding on consumer perceptions, the team was able to avoid damaging the image of the GoBananas brand before it had a chance to take off.

When production started with the partner Santini, the problem of designing a packaging that reflected the team's vision was an issue. However, upon discussing it with the ice cream chain, no freedom was given to GoBananas to design and execute a package that the team members envisioned. In the end, the current packaging was mainly produced not by the team but by Santini. We learnt from this experience that compromises need to be made for partnerships to be successful. Nevertheless, it was imperial to have Santini's support at this stage, so giving in on some aspects of the process was a decision that had to be made.

### 6.3 The effect of branding on the consumer

When developing a pricing strategy, it is important to consider costs, margins, and the target market. In the case of GoBananas, the team aimed to target consumers who valued sustainability and quality, and developed a pricing strategy that reflected this.

This approach helped to differentiate the brand and create a solid foundation for future growth. The reality of using this sustainable brand strategy seems promising since there is still room to grow. Since the pandemic, consumers have shown an increase in their interest towards the sustainability of products purchased, and brands should advocate for that eco-friendly trend rather than prioritise product promotion (Auty 2022). The usage of certain words to associate

Keywords/expressions associated with the GoBananas Brand
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Green
Sustainable
Circular Economy
Save the World
Vegan

the brand with a positive impact is very important. When purchasing products deemed “green”, it seems like a good premise. After all, who doesn’t want to help the world?

Table 1 Keywords associated with GoBananas

There’s still a troublesome gap between the reality of sustainable products and the misconceptions associated with sustainable products bringing some disadvantages, especially when the venture plans to expand outside of this consumer range. According to literature, products labelled as eco-friendly have a negative stigma attached to them (Gitell, Magnuson e Merenda 2012).

For example, many consumers assumed by that the price will be higher when comparing products to non-sustainable ones. The troubling notion that they are less effective or tasteful occurs especially in the vegan food sector. The misconception that the value of sustainable goods is better for society but leaves the individual worst off due to financial or time costs needs to be managed carefully when exposing the brand and applying marketing techniques (Gitell, Magnuson e Merenda 2012). The market GoBananas is aiming for is already aware of this

Commented [SH1]: Reference missing

“price” and conceived notions, but there needs to be a consciousness of it for expansion plans into other target consumers.

Lastly, compared to other ice cream brands, the competitive advantage in terms of branding strategy is that GoBananas has a storyline bigger than selling a product. They appeal to the sentimental and activist side of a generation focused on solving problems like this. The GoBananas brand's green mindset is a big differentiator compared to other brands, which are focused on revenues and don't offer the opportunity to make a difference to consumers. When put next to competitors, the goal is for the target consumer to see GoBananas as a brand that is prioritizing doing good than making profits.

## 7. Marketing

Now that the branding of GoBananas was clearly defined, the team could start designing the marketing plan and executing it.

### 7.1 GoBananas and Sustainable Marketing

When discussing marketing goals, the team agreed that the plan, apart from promoting the product, is to educate the consumer. Having a venture that is highly focused on fighting food waste is a big opportunity in that context. [There's a possibility of creating a bigger impact if the marketing efforts focus on educational approaches] as much as product promotion. The strategy should focus on sustainable practices as opposed to past definitions that stated marketing solely as a connector between consumer and production (Rex e Baumann 2006) The basics of GoBananas marketing should always revolve around the people and the ecosystem they are inserted in (Gittell, Magnusson and Merenda 2012).

With the development of the sustainable market, more ethical and educational approaches to marketing are being chosen by companies (RedFame 2016). Ethically concerned strategies are being considered and re-inventing what the typical theories state (RedFame 2016). Since the beginning, GoBananas wanted to leverage this trend. When we met to discuss the next moves

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at the beginning of September, everyone was aligned that the marketing should be educational as much as promotional.

## 7.2 Marketing Strategy

To create an impactful marketing strategy, the GoBananas team embraced a consumer-centric. Their key strategic goal was to break the vicious cycle of short-term challenges and obstacles that many young ventures face. By prioritizing consumer education on sustainability, the team hoped to create a deeper connection with their



Figure 7: The GoBananas Vicious cycle approach and how it affects Marketing

audience and generate the financial resources needed to achieve their short-term goals and break the cycle of uncertainty and struggle.

This approach allowed them to differentiate their brand from competitors and establish a clear and consistent image. By incorporating these values into their branding and marketing efforts, the team was able to build a solid foundation for future growth and success.

In terms of benchmarks, the GoBananas team focused on increasing consumer brand and mission awareness, community building and increasing sales. These goals were measurable through digital platforms, the number of attendees at events, and accounting methods such as sales data. However, the team was more interested in the impact of their marketing efforts on consumers and their perception of the brand. By prioritizing these values and focusing on creating a positive impact, the team was able to develop an effective marketing plan that set them on a path to success.

As a student-led venture, GoBananas was able to take advantage of its proximity to its initial consumer base to quickly build a network of supporters. This allowed the team to experiment with their marketing efforts in a low-risk environment and develop a comprehensive approach.

### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

The team's strong presence within the Nova SBE community and focus on building a network of supporters were crucial factors in their early success.

Understanding the consumer's values and behaviour when strategising is essential from early on. In this case, it was established to focus on the 18-34 age range. This new customer segment, we are currently testing, was the product of ruling out previous assumptions regarding this topic. The first theory about the target consumer was that children would be the best client base demographics. But after selling at a Lisbon private school, the team quickly ruled out that hypothesis. The sales conclusions and feedback received from the children showed that most kids don't like bananas thus, completely discarding the GoBananas popsicles.

The key characteristics of GoBananas' target consumer are: millennials and gen-z (18-34 years old), a green mindset, and a predisposition towards a healthier lifestyle and sustainability. This persona is likely to be someone who is active on digital platforms and does research before making purchasing decisions. Overall, the team has defined a specific and well-defined target consumer for their brand, which will help guide their marketing efforts and increase the likelihood of success (Appendix 9)

The GoBananas team was able to take advantage of their proximity to their target consumer, who was close in age and behavior to the team members. This allowed them to quickly gather feedback from consumers and adjust their marketing strategy as needed. While this was a valuable asset at the early stage of the venture, we recognize that as the venture grows, it may become more difficult to manage a large number of diverse opinions. However, for now, the team is able to take advantage of this proximity to their target consumer and continue to test and refine their strategy. This close relationship with the target audience is a competitive advantage for GoBananas compared to larger, established competitors.

Our focus on transparency as a strategic position is a unique and carefully designed decision. The team is open and transparent about all aspects of the production processes and journey, and

### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

actively engages with clients both in person and on digital platforms. This level of transparency helps GoBananas to establish trust with their target audience.

The marketing efforts are focused primarily on engaging with the end consumer, even though the company also sold through B2B channels. This emphasis on the end consumer was necessary because they were the ones making purchasing decisions based solely on the information provided by the venture. To appeal to this target audience, the plan was designed to be flexible and adaptable to the feedback and preferences of the consumer. By building this connection with clients, we were able to break the no credibility point in the entrepreneurial vicious cycle and create a community of engaged and supportive consumers. This close relationship with the target audience is a valuable asset for the venture, particularly at the early stages of growth.

The key message the final consumer should relate to is, the possibility of saving the world. To transmit the message, the team created the brand slogan, “Saving the World, One Lick at a time”. During the acceleration program, From-Start-to-Table, from Startup Lisboa, one of the mentors advised the team to “dig dip”. Ana Santiago (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa and Startup Lisboa) recommended that the GoBananas marketing should be more than popsicles but a lifestyle and, to have a broader scope than just showing bananas on campaigns. At this point, this advice contradicted what the current strategy is focusing on, but it showed the team just how powerful GoBananas can be if investments continue to be applied.

Regarding channels, the team mainly used digital media due to the characteristics of the target client. The decision to focus on the digital side of marketing was made for several reasons. The most important one was that the target consumer age responds well to e-marketing via social media or the GoBananas website. According to studies on social media and marketing, social media is the leader of digital marketing channels used, with 44%, followed by website platforms with 36% (Statista 2022). This shows that GoBananas needed to be more present in their digital

Commented [SH3]: What does that mean?

#### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

social media profiles. The millennial and Gen-Z generation is known for being the smartphone generation, so it made sense to start there.

In the same study, it's possible to evaluate how beneficial it is to use social media for marketing purposes. Around 85% of the benefits of using these platforms are a general increase in exposure (Statista 2022). Even though smaller than the previous value, 57% of the benefits are increased sales (Statista 2022). Due to the constant presence of the vicious cycle and the lack of funding the team had to develop a lean and cost efficient strategy. GoBananas decided on social media due to larger brand exposure, small costs, easier to do community building and is also a credibility source.

The team's primary focus on digital marketing channels is reflected in their use of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of their strategy. The main KPIs used revolve around digital traffic, as this is where most of the marketing efforts have been concentrated. These metrics provide valuable insights into the team's audience and the effectiveness of their marketing efforts. Despite the team's limited financial resources, they have been able to make significant progress in this area, and their return on marketing investment is expected to increase over time.

Now that the strategy is defined it's easier to understand the 4P's of Marketing(place, promotion, price and product) who is still the most universal standard to assess a marketing strategy even if considered rather conservative (Dominici 2009). It's easily understood that the product is vegan, healthy, ethically made popsicles. Promotion will be described in detail in the next section, centred around digital strategies, direct marketing, and word of mouth. The Place, is something that needs to be solved since there's no physical space selling GoBananas yet but the product is already selling in online platforms. The target customer can find GoBananas on the brand's digital profiles, in food distribution platforms (Glovo), in events that can vary from Lisbon to Carcavelos or in partners' channels (e.g., Start to Table acceleration program's

media). Pricing was constructed around the freedom given to the team by their partner's margins, meaning that the price was established according to Santini's most moderate values.

### 7.3 The Marketing History of GoBananas

This initial marketing strategy relied heavily on word of mouth and community support to raise awareness of the GoBananas brand. As the venture grew and developed, the team began to explore more formal marketing strategies, focusing on digital channels and community building to reach their target audience and promote their product and mission. Despite the challenges of being a student-led venture with limited resources, we were able to develop a successful marketing approach that helped to grow and establish a strong presence in the Nova SBE community.

The team's perseverance and focus on creating a high-quality product helped to build credibility and drive demand for GoBananas. As demand grew, the need for a more comprehensive marketing strategy became apparent. To test recipes and gather feedback from consumers, the team set up a tasting booth at Nova SBE during peak lunch hours. This allowed us to gather valuable insights from the target audience and fine-tune the product offerings. Overall, this approach helped the team to build a solid foundation for future campaigns.

The team's actions afterwards were mainly organic through word of mouth or activities such as acceleration programs and pitches in the Nova SBE institutions like the Haddad Entrepreneurship Institute. Because this was not a viable long-run strategy, the members agreed that their efforts in this department had to change. So, they started to invest their time and knowledge in digital platforms.

For the GoBananas team the first step on their strategy was to establish an online presence in both social media and website. It was important for the brand's target consumers to know they could count on us to bring valuable educational information. The company's website and social media pages were completely renovated to make them more attractive and reflect the brand's values (Appendix 10 & 11). Additionally, due to a lack of cash and bootstrapping was stretched

Commented [SH4]: What was via social media and their website?

## Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

to the maximum in other departments, such as sales, this was the team's best shot at attempting to break the vicious entrepreneurial cycle.

According to the social media platforms statistics, there was a positive change when the focus on this department pivoted. [When comparing different stages, such as before the team invested in their social pages and after, there's an apparent increase in the number of followers and profiles reached.] From the business statistic results that the platforms offer, the team saw an increase of 202% in their accounts followers, 189 more accounts engaged with the GoBananas profile and 2937 accounts were reached (Statistics calculated from September 1<sup>st</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup>). After having a considerable number of profiles in the digital community, it was possible to confirm that around 27,8% of people interacting with the venture's digital profile were from Lisbon, 43,8% were between the age range of 18-24 years, and 43,8% were amongst the ages of 25-34. Regarding interactions on the content produced by the team, the results were astonishing, a 5437% increase was described. Thus, confirming that GoBananas was targeting the right customer group (Appendix 12).

During this part of the journey, the team lacked focus on what was important and a valuable lesson was taken from it. There were a few weeks when we faced moments of tunnel vision. The necessity to have online content seemed more important than the product. When looking at the bigger picture, this was during a challenging time when the ice cream production was delayed, so everyone inside the venture looked at the brand's online presence as their last thread of the company. However, during talks with some mentors, words of caution were spread. The team needed to shift their mindset from social media to real life because the product wasn't the digital platforms.

Unfortunately, not everything in digital marketing is free such as Google/Social Media ads. The team needed to be craftier when figuring out ways to pursue this type of action. Early on, the lack of online advertisement seemed like a big problem for the GoBananas marketing expansion. During talks with Rui Gouveia from Buildup Labs, he had a different opinion. He

**Commented [SH5]:** Show off with that. What were the things that led to changes. What did we implement in detail that had the impact?

**Commented [CCZM6R5]:** i had this but ricardo said it was to much

#### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

highly advised the team to refrain from pursuing online ads due to their expensive nature and the venture's small size. However, for us, it seemed necessary since the target consumer was very present on digital platforms.

Additionally, partnering with a digital marketing course as a case study allowed the GoBananas team to gain valuable insights and expertise from the students and their professors, as well as access to a range of digital marketing tools and resources. This collaboration provided a unique opportunity for the team to test and refine their marketing strategies in a low-risk environment, while also providing valuable hands-on experience for the students involved. Overall, this partnership allowed the GoBananas team to gain a deeper understanding of the digital marketing landscape and how to effectively engage with their target audience through digital channels.

The team decided to try out influencer marketing as part of their broader social media strategy. Influencer marketing, which involves partnering with influential individuals on social media to promote a brand or product, is a common tactic used by many companies to engage with consumers. According to a recent study, 66% of respondents reported using influencer marketing as a means of consumer engagement (Statista 2022). The GoBananas team reached out to several influencers and their agencies, and eventually decided to pursue a campaign with one influencer to test the effectiveness of this tactic. This decision was based on the team's ambition to maximize the marketing potential of the venture, and their belief that influencer marketing could be a valuable part of their overall strategy.

After the campaign followed through, the GoBananas profiles saw a small engagement increase. The accounts reached via social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) increased by 394%, while the number of interactions and followers didn't see any changes. The results were somewhat disappointing since it was expected better numbers regarding followers. Several learnings can be taken out from this experience. Matching influencers and their digital

#### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

presence size is crucial, but perhaps GoBananas was not established enough for this type of strategy (Appendix 13).

In order to better connect with their target consumer, the GoBananas team decided to engage with the community face-to-face. They chose to do this on university grounds, where they could reach their target consumer without having to pay for space usage. During the event, the team learned that engaging with consumers and highlighting their support for a local NGO was an effective way to attract attention and build positive perceptions of their brand. They also found that giving out gifts and prizes was a useful way to increase participation in their surveys and evaluations. Overall, this face-to-face approach helped the team better understand the needs and preferences of their target consumer, and allowed them to make more informed decisions about their marketing strategy. Despite the lower turnout, the team was able to gain valuable insights and feedback from the consumers who did attend. This face-to-face interaction allowed the team to better understand the preferences and attitudes of their target audience, and helped them to refine their marketing strategy moving forward. Additionally, the event allowed them to connect with the local community and build awareness of the brand among potential customers. Overall, it was a valuable learning experience for the team.

In order to increase the chances of success in securing sales points, the GoBananas team decided to adjust their strategy by going door-to-door to cafes and restaurants around Lisbon. Although the team has not yet secured any sales points, they have made connections with interested parties and increased awareness of the brand and its mission. This ongoing effort is an important part of the marketing and branding strategies.

GoBananas is a venture that was born in a university setting and has since aimed to expand beyond the student community in *Carcavelos*. The team behind GoBananas has limited resources, so they have focused on being present at as many events as possible to build a community around their brand. To do this, they have used cold outreach methods such as email and LinkedIn messages, as well as connections made through the From-Start-to-Table

#### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

acceleration program. This accelerator was significant for the marketing department since no one in the team had extensive experience in the area. During webinars, tools were discovered to make marketing processes frictionless, and mentors like Ana Santiago were a huge help. It was suggested that our partner Santini was too present in our campaigns and not to be afraid mention more than just bananas because the mission was bigger than just that. All these helpful notes will be considered in future campaigns and promotions, but for now having our name partner seems like a good short-term help to get credibility. Having an established brand as a partner reassures the consumer about the brand and the quality of the product, taking us one step closer to break the vicious cycle. In the future, GoBananas hopes to have a brand strong enough without needing Santini has a trustworthiness stamp.

Furthermore, the team was a part of the Nucleo A70 weekly market (12<sup>th</sup> of November) and CCB Christmas Market (3<sup>rd</sup> December). However, with little success. A lack of traffic in the markets resulted in little brand awareness among potential customers. The sales records were low as well as people's interest in GoBananas. This is due to several reasons: the market demographics needed to be more fitting for the brand, bad booth placement in the spaces, and the product's seasonality. Hopefully, in time these assumptions can be tested out in different settings.

#### **7.4 Breaking the vicious entrepreneurial cycle in Marketing**

GoBananas used the bootstrapping technique in all its departments, and marketing was no exception: Due to our limited resources, we had to be as lean as possible and learn as quickly and cheap as possible. The strategy created in the beginning had to suffer changes to be successful, and many lessons were made during this journey. The team learnt that there needs to be an awareness towards tunnel vision moments, that not all advice is ideal and that everyone has their own opinions which can be conflicting. For instance, when it came to campaigns, the venture was given warnings not to rely on the Santini brand for promotion by mentors. In contrast, others pushed it to be equally promoted as the GoBananas brand to gain credibility. It

### Individual Contribution of Carolina Zurzica Moura

was also learnt that more detailed filtering should be conducted while choosing events since the markets it has joined have yet to be successful.

In entrepreneurial ventures, some members are more focused on departments where their expertise is best, but they all understand that if needed, they would have to perform the role of a marketer. This concept is transversal to all departments. The mindset that when there's a fire, any member needs to help to put it out proves principle nine in the framework, which states that everyone inside the startup will need to wear different hats depending on the help needed (Venkataraman 2002).

During the execution of several events in the journey, it was understood that there is an advantage when promoting the product and brand while using its main assets: sustainability and circular economy—becoming one of the leading branding drivers. The usage and display of this side of GoBananas demonstrated more considerable traction in the customer base and prospective clients. This suggests that by using the venture's main drivers as their biggest attention-grabbers in marketing campaigns, the venture gained a competitive advantage and solidified its uncertainty regarding the brand, as proven by the principle ten in the framework. However, marketing fails to break the vicious cycle. In this case, the setback concerns the credibility GoBananas can achieve with the resources available. Even if the correct solutions were applied, the efforts to break the cycle were insufficient.

According to the literature, (Venkataraman 2002), bootstrapping is the solution to break it. This concept can be applied in many ways, varying from intellectual resources to financial. In this venture's case, the theory was not applicable to practice even when all was in place. The human, intellectual and social capital the startup owned were present: the team, the knowledge they possessed and their contacts. In addition, it was clear that more than the available cash raised through bootstrapping was needed for the strategy that fit GoBananas best. |

Commented [SH7]: That's very good

#### **7.4.1 What the cycle stopped GoBananas from achieving**

There are several moments when the inability to break the cycle was present. The team wanted to hire a marketing consultancy but couldn't afford it, leading to blind spots about marketing and branding. Digital campaigns are on hold due to a lack of funds, and the plan to create educational merchandise was abandoned, hindering the effort to build a strong brand.

When we started this marketing strategy, it seemed like it had the resources to follow all the goals laid out. However, bootstrapping as a solution wasn't enough to break the cycle and conquer all the objectives. External investment in GoBananas needs to happen very soon. Otherwise, the consumers will be lost because at this point the team has done everything their resources allow them to do when it comes to branding and marketing.

## 8. Our journey in a nutshell

At the end, it is essential to reflect on GoBananas' progression and evaluate the central question it seeks to answer: Did GoBananas break the vicious entrepreneurial cycle of Venkataraman?

While the cyclical events outlined in Venkataraman's framework were not specifically tailored to GoBananas, the venture personalised them to fit its own journey. For GoBananas, the cycle began after production. As the team soon discovered, there was a distinct cyclical pattern to be followed when attempting to sell popsicles and launch marketing campaigns. The lack of credibility posed a significant barrier to accessing sales channels, resulting in a lack of revenue, cash flow, and thus, no marketing investments to attract the target consumer.

While many of the principles outlined in Venkataraman's framework applied to GoBananas' journey, some affected the venture differently. The lack of credibility hindered the company's ability to secure funding and partnerships, leading to a deviation from the typical entrepreneurial vicious cycle. Sales were constricted because there was insufficient liquidity to invest in sales activities, distribution, or logistics. The strategy of bootstrapping failed because it did not create the needed effect of building a countercyclical virtuous cycle.

When cash is not enough to sustain the most important operations for the venture's survival, it leaves other fronts to manage themselves with little left. Marketing was a sleeping department until the surrounding circumstances made the team reach a pivot point. Even when everyone's focus was on it, some strategic aspects still fell short. One example was that there wasn't any liquidity left to sustain substantial campaigns as envisioned in the initial strategy.

At the beginning team was optimistic that the vicious cycle could be broken at the outset of given the initial resources assessment. The venture was introduced to several individuals who expressed confidence in GoBananas' potential for success. However, after one year of operation, the current strategy could not break the cycle and overcome the barriers posed by a lack of credibility, inadequate funding and seasonality.

Commented [SH8]: I don't quite get what you mean here

### **8.1 Key learnings from this work project**

Despite the challenges and setbacks GoBananas encountered along the way and the current stage it finds itself, the team gleaned valuable insights and lessons. As the team navigated through the search for effective sales channels, GoBananas acquired a wealth of knowledge and understanding.

The first lesson is that seasonality is a very dangerous concept. Launching ice-creams during the off-season is difficult. All potential sales channels had an aversion for the product due to the season. The Team now uses this phase of GoBananas' journey as a soft launch to learn as much as possible and implement the learnings in summer.

There are still some low-season months left, and sales have yet to be promising. This time will be used to collect investments to support future capital-intensive sales activities (e.g., professional stand infrastructure, freezers, promotions etc.).

Another crucial lesson is the importance of availability for the launch of a product. The efforts of acquiring loyal customers fall flat when the product is not widely available. Currently, GoBananas' popsicles are only available on Glovo in a specific area. The team needs to set up their retail or online distribution properly for the "grand opening" this summer.

Marketing and branding also showed some good lessons. Firstly, it is not easy to start a strategy without proper background/expertise within the team. It can be very overwhelming not knowing which direction to follow.

Seeking advice can be helpful, but when the team is not aligned with their individual visions of what the brand should be it's very hard to even choose which advice is more suitable for the venture.

Relying on external opinions is supportive but the team had to find a balance between what they know and what mentors tell them to do. Following what experts tell, can work as long as the team understands that only we know the full scope of the brand and message it wants to relay.

#### Group Contribution (Carolina Zurzica Moura, Jean Semjon Hyweege)

The conflict between using Santini's brand in marketing campaigns was many times said that it was a credibility stamp while other advisors advocated that it shouldn't be attached to GoBananas. The team was in the middle of this spectrum of opinions and in the end we understood that it was needed as a short-term strategy but in the long-run it would have to change. This is the type of decisions that demonstrate how balance is key when receiving help from many different people.

Marketing is an important part of any young venture trying to retain and acquire customers. However, it shouldn't offset other areas (sales, operations, legal, etc) but it shouldn't be forgotten either. Being highly focused on marketing strategy can lead to tunnel vision within the team and not focusing on it leads to no consumer awareness. After this journey GoBananas learnt that to be successful the ideal position to be in is in between both extremes.

Using free tools, such as websites and social media, goes a long way but this journey taught us that to make a big splash and achieve a bigger consumer base investment needs to be done. More cash to invest in better campaigns means acquiring clients. Having the funding to perform marketing investment reassures the consumer that GoBananas is a serious and trustworthy venture. In other words, investing in marketing campaigns gives the customer the credibility needed to purchase the popsicles and breaking the vicious cycle.

#### **8.2 Future of GoBananas**

What implications do these learnings have on the strategic development of GoBananas?

First, the next three months will be used in the search for cash. However, the limited proof of concept and missing credibility eliminate venture capitalists and angels as business partners.

This leaves the team with the possibility of grants, funds and acceleration programs. As mentioned through the work project, GoBananas is already participating in the From-Start-to-Table program, sponsored by Startup Portugal. The winner earns a cash prize of 10 000€, which would be crucial for current cash flow issues.

Group Contribution (Carolina Zurzica Moura, Jean Semjon Hyweege)

Fund	Sponsoring Entity	Value (€)
+Plus Fund	Casa do Campo	50 000€ -100 000€
Gulbenkian Award for Impact Entrepreneurship	Calouste Gulbekian Foundation	6 000€ (per student) or 20 000€(per project)
Startup Vouchers	Startup Portugal & Portuguese Government	30 000€
Portugal 2030 Fund	Here Partner (EU fund for Regional Development)	To be announced

Table 6: Grants and Funds GoBananas is applying

Commented [SH9]: Missing VALUE

In addition, the venture is currently in the process of applying for several other funds. The focus for the upcoming season is to prepare for the summer months.

The marketing strategy will focus on brand/product awareness and education. To do so, several digital campaigns will start at the beginning of the next year as a teaser to show the consumer how GoBananas can be inserted into their purchase options. Showcasing how the GoBananas ice cream is the better option by highlighting its qualities and mission to prepare the consumer for when the big launch happens.

A “grand opening” event will be hosted in May to reinsure that the community stays in touch with the brand and to acquire new members. It’s the perfect time to give the consumer an opportunity to taste the popsicles and remind them of where they can find GoBananas.

If funding allows, ideally campaigns will start to step up outside of the box and use guerrilla marketing by making bold moves in the Lisbon city center that show what’s the product, the story and the mission. Additionally, to start approaching the concept of being more than a company but a lifestyle, a merchandise product line will be designed with the intention of spreading the message about the mission, with the support of local Portuguese artists.

Also in the sales area, GoBananas will introduce strategic changes based on the insights of the last months. Nevertheless, the team still believes the approach of creating a loyal community through in-person sales and making the product somehow available to this community is the right approach. For that, the Team will stop all efforts of selling through supermarkets, cafes or restaurants and focus entirely on online distribution and in-person sales.

Group Contribution (Carolina Zurzica Moura, Jean Semjon Hyweege)

As described before, one key driver for success is the availability of our product for this loyal customer base. The team will keep working with Glovo as an online sales point but reduce the margin to almost zero at the beginning. Like that, we want to counteract the high delivery and service costs from Glovo, which is paid by the customer. Furthermore, we will change our main distribution hub from Carcavelos to Lisbon to make it more available. To support the reach of online distribution, we also intensify the hunt for Glovo distribution centres which then get reimbursed. The requirement for this is that one of our possible funding options work.

Furthermore, GoBananas will step back from participating in events with a small customer reach. The efforts connected to it are comparably high, and the exposure to our target group is very limited. The team will focus instead on participating in big events that start next summer through existing connections in the industry. Furthermore, we will be present at reoccurring events (e.g. “night stories” or the open-air cinema) with a recurring customer base. On top of that we will use sunny weekends in spring and summer to sell at the beach.

Finally, the team wants to use crowdfunding campaigns as a sales channel. The reason here to buy is different than just buying an ice cream popsicle. Customers will show their support for the brand, increasing GoBananas’ credibility. In return for their support, we will reward with an equivalent amount of ice cream popsicles. Like that we want to increase our sales, get more brand visibility and support our funding strategy.

With all those new approaches in place and the coming summer season backing up the teams’ initiative, GoBananas will finally break the vicious cycle it is still caught in and become a flourishing FMCG brand with its products being produced mainly out of waste.

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**Appendix 3**

Results of our prototyping sessions to develop a recipe for our banana popsicles (top) and the biodegradable plastic (bottom)



**Appendix 4**

Final kitchen lab result of ice cream with peels (left) and without peels (right)



**Appendix 5**

Agreed partnership with Eduardo Santini at their production facility in Carcavelos







## Appendix 9



**JULIA**  
23 years old

**Occupation:**  
Student

**Location:**  
Lisbon

**Interests:**  
Climate Change, Outdoor activities,

**Channels used most:**  
Instagram, Tik Tok, Websites

**Pain Points:**  
Lack of environmentally conscious sweets/desert



**EDUARDO**  
26 years old

**Occupation:**  
Web Developer

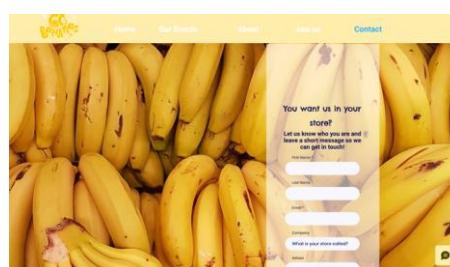
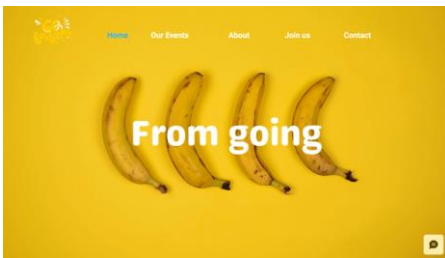
**Location:**  
Lisbon

**Interests:**  
Healthy Cuisine, Vegan Food, Technology

**Channels used most:**  
Instagram, LinkedIn

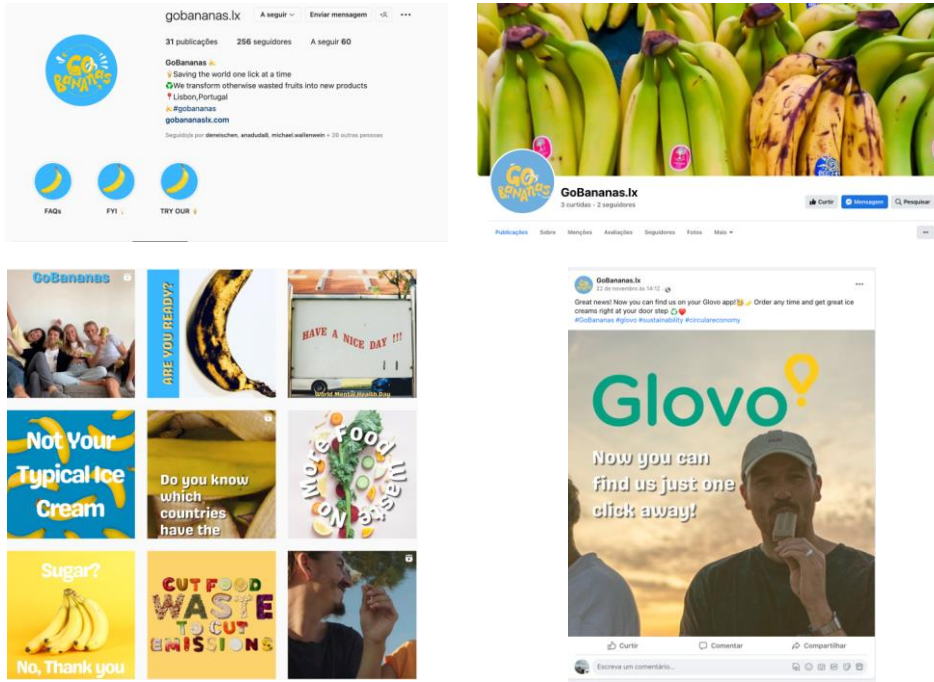
**Pain Points:**  
Healthy desserts with no chemical transformations

## Appendix 10

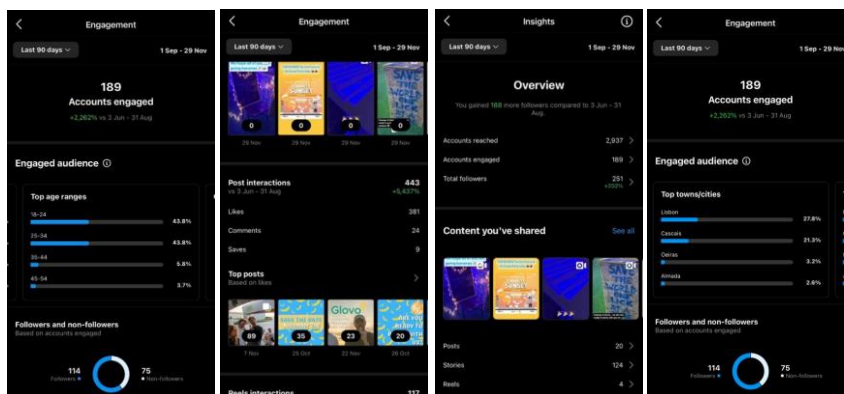


Group Contribution (Carolina Zurzica Moura, Jean Semjon Hyweege)

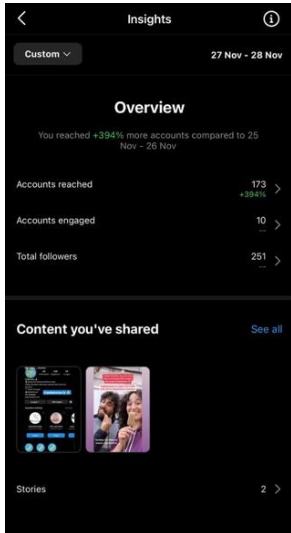
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