

ENGAGING ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS FOR THE YOUTH

GREEN: Venture Biography



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432

Content

Disclaimer	III
1 ID Card	4
2 Founder(s)' Background and Motivation	4
3 Business Modell	4
4 Startup development.....	5
4.1 Idea-Generation	5
4.2 Incubation / Founding	6
4.3 Scaling-up / Consolidation	6

Disclaimer

The document presents a story of an existing startup prepared through desk research and a narrative interview with the founder. For reasons of data protection, the names of people, cities, support programmes and companies are exchanged with pseudonyms. The biography has been approved for publication by the startup and can be used for further research by citing it accordingly (see below).

This document is prepared by DOBA Business School within the “Ecosys4you – Engaging Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for the Youth” research project as part of working package 1 “Analysis and co-creation of activities”. The project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432.

Suggested citation:

Vilman, Z. & Letonja, M. (2024): GREEN – Venture Biography. A deliverable within the Ecosys4you project funded by the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432. Maribor, DOBA Business School.

1 ID Card

Name of the startup (Pseudonym)	GREEN
Which ecosystem?	Slovenia
Founding date	Idea 2017, founding 2019
Sector	Food, cosmetics, well-being
No of employees	3 + 1 intern
(Expected) Turnover	EUR 3 million
Male/female founder	Female
Timeslots of start-up phases	
idea generation	2012-2014
incubation	2015-2017
consolidation	2017-onwards
Funding / financial support	start-up competition, SEF

2 Founder(s)' Background and Motivation

Suzy's entrepreneurial odyssey commenced during her pursuit of a Master's in Entrepreneurship, where she delved into the corporate realm with a position at a sports center in a quaint Slovenian town. After dedicating a year and a half to this role, Suzy found herself yearning for fresh challenges and the autonomy to explore her innovative ideas. Fueled by her fervor for healthy living, sports, and culinary arts, Suzy pondered the prospect of transforming her passions into a viable business venture.

Driven by her entrepreneurial zeal and a penchant for online marketing, Suzy took the courageous leap to establish her own company. Understanding the significance of collaboration and synergizing complementary skills, she invited her friend and classmate, Nina, to join her on this entrepreneurial voyage. United by their shared dedication to promoting wholesome lifestyles and offering access to premium natural products, Suzy and Nina embarked on the exhilarating journey of company building. Initially, for the first six months, they juggled their entrepreneurial pursuits alongside their day jobs, until eventually relinquishing their employment to fully devote themselves to the burgeoning business. Their inaugural months proved fruitful, marking a promising start to their entrepreneurial endeavor.

3 Business Model

GREEN thrives as an e-commerce business, specializing in the provision of health-conscious fare, superfoods, natural cosmetics, and products crafted to enhance well-being. Sprouting into existence around April 2013, GREEN seized upon its dedication to championing a wholesome lifestyle and delivering top-tier, natural offerings. Anchored by its digital emporium, the company's primary revenue stream flows from its online store, offering customers seamless access to a diverse array of goods.

Moreover, GREEN bolsters its revenue through the creation and sale of its own branded products, affording greater control over quality and market positioning.

To captivate audiences and spur sales, GREEN leans heavily on digital marketing tactics, encompassing social media engagement, email campaigns, insightful blogging, and other online avenues. Educational content, spanning topics from nutrition and healthy living to delectable recipes and product usage tips, serves as a beacon of value, nurturing brand loyalty among customers. Collaborations with influencers within the health and wellness sphere further amplify GREEN's visibility and extend its reach to new audiences.

Expanding its reach beyond the digital realm, GREEN forges strategic partnerships with health food stores, specialty shops, pharmacies, and various retail outlets, diversifying its distribution channels and fueling revenue growth. Adaptability is key to GREEN's success, as it continuously broadens its product offerings to meet evolving market demands and trends, ensuring its competitive edge remains sharp.

In essence, GREEN's business ethos revolves around delivering premium products, advocating for a healthy lifestyle, and harnessing the power of digital marketing and strategic alliances to propel sales and elevate brand awareness. Indeed, the company stands as a steadfast ally in the pursuit of a wholesome, vibrant lifestyle.

“The company acts as an ally in a healthy lifestyle.”

4 Startup development

4.1 Idea-Generation

The beginning: September 2012 to April 2013

Realizing that she couldn't tackle the project alone, Suzy extended an invitation to her college classmate, Nina, to join forces. Their journey began with the task of choosing a name, a process that involved brainstorming sessions until the perfect fit emerged. To kickstart their endeavor, they pooled resources by borrowing EUR 7,500 (the initial capital) from their supportive parents.

Navigating through the vast expanse of the internet, they scoured Google to uncover potential suppliers. After careful consideration of business terms and pricing, they settled on two suppliers from England and several from Slovenia. With a clear vision in mind, they hastily crafted a concise business plan encompassing revenue projections, expenses, and a rudimentary marketing strategy—all condensed onto a single page.

With finances tight in the fledgling stages, Suzy and Nina ingeniously opted to operate out of Suzy's modest abode, despite its less-than-ideal accessibility and unreliable internet connection. However, as their venture gained traction, they transitioned to a more professional setting, securing a 20 square meter office in a neighboring town after two months of operation.

In their growing GREEN kingdom, the warehouse boasted an impressive assortment of approximately 400 diverse products, with nearly half sourced locally from Slovenia. Ensuring the quality and integrity of their offerings, all non-Slovenian products bore at least one certification, whether it be EuroList, Vegan, Soil Association, or Fair Trade.

Furthermore, the burgeoning GREEN empire boasted a range of around 90 products under its own brand, reflecting their commitment to delivering premium-quality goods. Despite the humble

beginnings, Suzy and Nina's entrepreneurial journey was marked by perseverance, resourcefulness, and an unwavering dedication to their shared vision of promoting a healthier lifestyle through GREEN.

"Our offer is expanding from week to week - of course according to the wishes of our customers".

Test phase: October 2013 to January 2014

Within a span of 11 months, their digital presence flourished with 35,000 Facebook views, an email database of 15,000 subscribers, and a steady stream of 35,000 monthly website visitors. Amidst this digital frenzy, they successfully sold 14,000 of their wholesome packages, embodying their operational motto: "Do what you enjoy, seek, and stimulate customers."

Their clientele, predominantly women comprising approximately 95%, were drawn in initially by the allure of daily healthy recipes shared on Facebook. Leveraging this engagement, they strategically showcased their products and promotional offers, fostering a dialogue with followers to solicit valuable feedback and garner likes. Expanding their reach, they ventured into various social networks, embracing platforms like Instagram and Pinterest to broaden their community.

"This is cost-effective marketing," Suzy remarked, recognizing the financial constraints of their startup phase. "You need to attract the customer, give them some cooking ideas, advice for a healthy life. This builds trust and attracts the customer. But you also need to sell to the customer."

In the art of sealing the deal, Suzy emphasized the importance of offering customers a myriad of payment options and product selections from multiple suppliers. Coupled with a thoughtful gesture—a gift—and a genuine inquiry about additional needs, their approach aimed to provide a comprehensive and seamless user experience, fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4.2 Incubation / Founding

During its incubation phase, GREEN embarked on a transformative journey of ideation and validation. Fueled by Suzy's fervor for healthy living and entrepreneurship, the seeds were sown for what would become a thriving health food store. Drawing upon their collective expertise in entrepreneurship and marketing, they delved deep into market research, meticulously validating their business concept and crafting a comprehensive business plan. With initial funding sourced from personal coffers and a crystal-clear vision driving them forward, they braved the hurdles of establishing their online presence, forging supplier relationships, and refining their product selection. Despite facing constraints on resources, their unwavering commitment to delivering top-tier products and championing a healthy lifestyle laid a robust groundwork for GREEN's future growth and prosperity.

Reflecting on their journey, Suzy remarked, "We vowed never to hire relatives or friends, yet we took the leap, and it paid off."

In 2015, their dedication and hard work bore fruit as they earned the prestigious title of online retailer of the year, cementing their position as a leader in the health and wellness space.

4.3 Scaling-up / Consolidation

GREEN's visionary team recognized the challenge posed by market fragmentation and the prevalence of misinformation surrounding healthy living. From its inception, they've tackled this issue head-on by offering verified recipes, top-tier products, and expert advice, with a particular emphasis on addressing common health concerns such as obesity, high cholesterol, anemia, gluten and lactose allergies, as well as issues related to motivation, energy, and stress. Central to their ethos is the belief in the

transformative power of proper nutrition and a holistic approach to wellness in managing, if not eradicating, the symptoms of various ailments.

With aspirations to lead the healthy food market in Slovenia and beyond, GREEN embarked on an ambitious expansion journey. They ventured into Croatia in 2015 and secured a lucrative EUR 100,000 contract in Montenegro the same year. In the autumn of 2015, recognizing the burgeoning demand from international clientele, they launched an English-language online store to cater to a global audience. Despite starting with a modest annual turnover of approximately EUR 300,000, the company experienced meteoric growth, reaching EUR 500,000 within three years and currently boasting an impressive turnover of around EUR 3 million. Employing a dedicated team of 12 staff members, they now dispatch over 500,000 parcels annually.

Reflecting on their evolution, Suzy said, "In the beginning, we aimed to offer a comprehensive range of products. However, we soon realized the importance of quality over quantity and made the strategic decision to streamline our offerings."

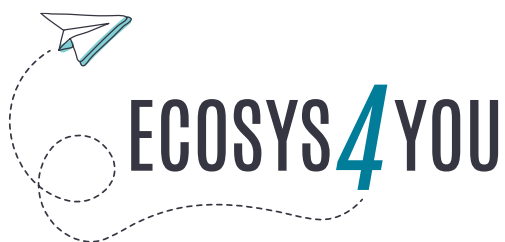
Initially boasting a catalog of approximately 1,000 products, including their own branded items, GREEN has undergone a strategic refinement, trimming its product selection to around 80 offerings, with an unwavering focus on quality. Despite operating without external investors, they secured a €75,000 convertible loan through the Slovenian Enterprise Fund's SK75 Seed Capital program in 2017. Around 20-25% of their budget is earmarked for marketing, with half of their dedicated team tasked with amplifying their promotional efforts.

With a robust social media presence boasting over 150,000 followers across various platforms, including TikTok, GREEN remains committed to expanding its promotional footprint. Prioritizing brand-building endeavors, they recognize the pivotal role of robust distribution channels in navigating the competitive market landscape. Email marketing continues to be a cornerstone of their customer engagement strategy, accounting for approximately 20-25% of their outreach efforts. Presently, GREEN's team comprises 12 dedicated members, collectively driving the company's vision forward.

Imprint

Publisher and Contact

Grant number: 101100432
Project duration: Jun 2023 - Mai 2026
Project Coordinator: Dr Anna Butzin, IAT - WH GE
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Ecosys4you – Engaging Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for the Youth (2023-2026) strives to bridge the entrepreneurial ecosystems of the Ruhr, Germany, Varna, Bulgaria and Slovenia by connecting young founders, start-ups, HEIs and other ecosystem actors.

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