ChatGPT

Printly Print-On-Demand: Design Process, Alternatives, and E-Commerce Strategy

How Printly's Design Process Works

Printly (a print-on-demand platform) provides a design interface that lets you upload artwork or add text onto product templates (example: designing a tote bag). You can position and resize your graphic within the print area and even preview how it will look on the item.

Selecting Products: The first step is to choose a product from Printly's catalog. Like other print-on-demand services, Printly likely offers a range of items (e.g. shirts, hoodies, swimwear, mugs, etc.). This is similar to platforms like Printify that let you browse hundreds of products including apparel, accessories, home décor, and more [1] . You'd pick the item you want to customize (for example, a bikini if they offer it, or other clothing).

Creating a Design: Once you select a product, you upload your design (image file) or create it using their design tools. Printly's design process should allow you to center your artwork, adjust its size, and ensure it fits within the printable area. On some products (like all-over-print clothing or swimsuits), you might need to use a provided template to cover the entire surface. Ensuring your design file has high resolution is important so that even small details print clearly – typically **150–300 DPI** is recommended for sharp results, with 300 DPI preferred for fine details [2] . This means your "nano-banana" graphics (if they involve tiny banana images or intricate patterns) should be created in a sufficiently large, high-resolution format to avoid blurriness. For example, Printful (another POD service) suggests 150 DPI minimum and 300 DPI for small detailed prints [2] . So as long as your banana design is high-res and within Printly's content guidelines, it *should* work fine. In the design editor, you can typically preview how the product will look – for

instance, seeing the banana pattern on a bikini mockup – to verify that everything aligns correctly and nothing important is cut off.

Preview and Mockups: After placing your design, Printly will generate mockup images of the product. You mentioned that when you used Printly before, the default mockups looked like a "flat logo on a shirt" and not very high-fidelity. It's a common issue that generic mockups can appear flat. Some sellers use external mockup generators (like Placeit) to get more realistic visuals [3] . However, using Printly's mockups is fine for initial testing, and you could improve visuals later. The key thing is that the printing **will** match how you set up the design file, not necessarily how a fancy 3D mockup looks [4] [5] . So you must align and size your banana artwork exactly how you want it printed. If you want an all-over print (say bananas patterned all over a bikini), ensure the design file covers the full print template provided by Printly. And if the design has very small "nano" details, consider ordering a sample to see how well it prints, since extremely tiny details might not show up crisply depending on print method.

Integration and Publishing: Once your design is ready, you would publish the product to your online store. Printly likely integrates with e-commerce platforms (Shopify, Etsy, etc.) similar to how Printify or Printful do [6] . This means you can push the product listing (with its mockup images, description, pricing) directly to your store. For example, with Printify you connect your store and it handles creating the product listing on Shopify or other sales channels [6] . Printly's integration should automate order flow: when a customer orders the item on your website, the order is sent to Printly for fulfillment.

Fulfillment and Shipping: After publishing, you just need to promote your products. When someone places an order, Printly will automatically handle printing the item and shipping it directly to your customer, under your brand's name. You don't need to hold any inventory. According to a Reddit user experience, Printly's print quality was great (which is encouraging for your designs) [7] . Once a sale is made, the print provider prints and ships the product, and you get charged the base cost + shipping while your customer pays whatever price you set. (To illustrate, print-on-demand flows like Printify state: *"Once you make a sale, our Print Providers take care of order fulfillment while you focus on marketing"* [8] .) This "hands-off" fulfillment means you can experiment with designs like your banana-themed items without upfront production costs. Just be aware of the production times – typically a few days to print – and shipping times, so you can set proper customer expectations on delivery.

Will "Nano-Banana" Stuff Work? – In summary, yes, if by "nano-banana" you mean a small banana graphic or pattern, it should work with Printly as long as you prepare the file correctly. Ensure the design meets their file guidelines (format, size, resolution) and doesn't violate any content rules. Banana images are generic enough to not trigger copyright issues (unless it's a very specific copyrighted banana character). If the design is an all-over pattern, use the correct template. If it's a small logo or motif, place it appropriately on the product. Printly's process is very much like other POD platforms: you have creative freedom to print any artwork **you** have rights to. Just double-check that tiny details (like the word "nano" if you include text, or very small banana icons) print clearly – ordering a sample product for yourself is a good idea to verify quality. Since one user noted Printly's **base product cost was somewhat high** [7] , you might want to compare prices with alternatives, especially if margins are a concern (more on that below). But from a design standpoint, your concept is feasible on Printly.

Alternatives to Printly for Print-On-Demand

It's smart that you asked about alternatives. The POD (Print-On-Demand) market has several platforms, each with pros and cons. Here are a few notable ones and how they compare:

- **Printful:** Printful is one of the most popular POD fulfillment services. It has a **huge catalog** of products (from t-shirts and hoodies to mugs, posters, and even bikinis) and is known for high print quality and reliable fulfillment. It offers nice extras like built-in mockup generators, custom branding options (labels, pack-ins), and worldwide fulfillment centers [9] [10] . The big downside is cost: Printful's base prices tend to be higher than other platforms [11] . Many users find the profit margins tight if you price your items competitively [12] . For example, a basic t-shirt might cost you ~$12 from Printful but only ~$8 via some competitors. Printful is **great for quality** and ease of use, but you pay a premium. If you want to maximize profit per item and are okay with a slightly smaller selection of bikini styles or such, this is a factor to weigh.

- **Printify:** Printify is another major player (recently **merged with Printful** under one company as of late 2024, though they still operate as separate platforms) [13] . Printify itself isn't a printer but an aggregator that connects you to a network of third-party print providers worldwide. You select which provider will fulfill each product, which can let you choose based on price, location, or print method. Printify's strengths are **lower base costs** and a very wide selection through all its partners [14] . For instance, Printify often had some of the cheapest base prices for shirts and hoodies, which means better margins for you [14] . You could likely find swimwear/bikini options on Printify too, possibly at lower cost than Printful. The trade-off is that quality and shipping speed can **vary by provider** – some suppliers are excellent, others may have inconsistent print quality or stock. It requires a bit more research (reading provider reviews) to ensure you pick a reliable one for your products. But many sellers use Printify successfully to keep costs down. Integration with Shopify, Etsy, etc. is seamless, like with Printful. Given that Printful and Printify are now sister brands, we may see pricing or features align more over time [15] , but currently Printify is the budget-friendly option while Printful is the premium option in POD.

- **Gelato:** Gelato is a rapidly growing POD platform that focuses on a global production network. They route orders to print partners closest to the customer (in 32 countries), which can mean faster and cheaper shipping, especially for international orders. Gelato's product range covers common items (apparel, wall art, stationery, etc.), though maybe not as extensive as Printful/Printify. Their base prices are competitive and they emphasize efficient worldwide fulfillment. If you plan to sell to customers beyond the U.S., Gelato can be a good alternative for broad reach. They integrate with Shopify and other shop platforms too. Quality is generally good, and like others, no upfront cost to use – you only pay per order.

- **SPOD (Spreadshirt POD):** SPOD is known for **speed**. They advertise 48-hour average production time and have some of the lowest base prices for certain products [16] [17] . The product range is a bit smaller and more basic (mostly apparel, mugs, etc.), and branding options are limited, but if you need cheap shirts printed and shipped fast (e.g. for time-sensitive campaigns), SPOD delivers on that. Possibly not a huge factor for a specialty bikini or niche product line, but worth mentioning if speed is ever crucial.

- **CustomCat, Teelaunch, Gooten, etc.:** There are many other POD fulfillment apps out there. **CustomCat** offers very low pricing as well (they have a large catalog and a paid plan that reduces costs further), great for budget-conscious sellers, though the app interface is a bit dated. **Teelaunch** specializes in some unique products (even electronics, pet items) beyond just shirts – they integrate with Shopify as well. **Gooten** is another integration-friendly POD network, often used by higher-volume stores; it has a wide range of products and an API for flexibility, but it's a bit less beginner-friendly [18] [19] . Since you're just starting, the main alternatives to consider first would likely be Printful and Printify (due to their popularity and broad feature sets), but keep the others in mind if you have specific needs (like a product only one provider offers, or cost/speed priorities).

Quality and Base Cost Comparison: In general, Printful has top-notch quality control (they do their own printing in many cases) but at a higher base price per item. Printify/CustomCat allow lower cost which means you can price your products more flexibly or enjoy higher profit per sale, though you must ensure the print provider's quality is acceptable. Some sellers actually use multiple POD providers: for example, using Printful for certain products or markets and Printify for others where cost is more critical. It's also worth noting that some POD companies offer **premium plans** or bulk discounts. Printify has a Premium subscription ($29/mo) that gives up to 20% off product costs [20] – if you start selling in volume, that can significantly boost your margins.

Since you mentioned Printly specifically: it appears to be another POD platform in the mix, possibly with a focus on European fulfillment. One Reddit user noted Printly's quality was great but the base prices were a bit high [7] . That suggests Printly might be similar to Printful in approach (quality focus). If base cost is a concern for you, checking some of the alternatives above might be wise. For instance, you could compare how much it would cost to print the same "nano-banana" bikini on Printful vs Printly vs Printify. If Printly is more expensive with no obvious quality benefit, you might choose a cheaper provider for better profit. On the other hand, if Printly offers a product or print style you really need and others don't have, you might stick with it for that unique offering.

Bottom line: Don't feel tied to a single POD service. You can test a few. Many entrepreneurs create a couple of sample products on different platforms, order them to see print/color quality in person, and compare costs. Also consider shipping fees and times from each. The good news is all these services integrate with Shopify (and other store builders), so you aren't locked in – you could even use multiple at once for different products. For example, maybe use Printly or Printful for all-over print bikinis (if they have the exact style you want) but use Printify for t-shirts and hats to get better margins. As your business grows, it's common to optimize by mixing providers or eventually moving to your own production if volume is huge. But starting out, POD services let you **start with virtually no upfront cost**, which is fantastic for trying out your nano-banana merchandise idea.

Using Shopify vs. Building Your Own Website

You asked about Shopify and what it can do, versus building a website yourself. This is a crucial consideration for your e-commerce strategy. Here's a breakdown of the two approaches:

Shopify (Hosted E-Commerce Platform): Shopify is a fully hosted e-commerce solution. In plain terms, if you use Shopify, you don't have to worry about web hosting, security, or building a shopping cart system from scratch – Shopify provides all that for a monthly fee. Some key advantages of Shopify include:

- **Easy Store Setup:** You can choose from many pre-designed themes (templates) and have a professional-looking online store quickly. No coding required for basic setup – you can drag-and-drop to arrange your homepage, etc., and use their theme customizer to change colors, fonts, and images to match your brand.

- **Built-In Features:** Shopify handles all the **shopping cart** and **checkout** functionality out-of-the-box. It will manage inventory tracking, calculate shipping rates, process credit card payments securely (via Shopify Payments or other gateways), and even handle taxes in many regions. It also provides an SSL certificate, so your site is secure (HTTPS) by default. User accounts, order history, discount codes, gift cards, abandoned cart recovery – all those e-commerce features are available in Shopify's system or via one-click apps.

- **App Integrations (especially POD):** This is a big one. Shopify has an app store with thousands of apps. Critically, almost every print-on-demand provider (Printly included, if they have a Shopify app, and certainly Printful, Printify, etc.) offers a Shopify integration app. You simply install the app, connect to your POD account, and you can create and sync products easily. Orders from Shopify automatically push to the POD app for fulfillment. This makes life much easier than if you had a custom site and had to manually send orders to the printer. Beyond POD apps, Shopify's app store has everything from email marketing tools, analytics, customer service chatbots, to design plugins. This ecosystem means if you need some functionality, you can probably add it without custom coding.

- **Multi-Channel Selling:** Shopify also lets you integrate selling on other channels – for example, you can connect your Shopify store to Facebook/Instagram to sell directly there, or sync with Amazon, etc. (some features might require certain plan levels or apps). It gives a centralized place to manage sales across platforms [21] [22] .

- **Maintenance and Scalability:** Because Shopify is hosted, they take care of server maintenance, security updates, and can handle traffic spikes. If suddenly your bikini goes viral and thousands of people hit your site, Shopify can scale (on a self-built site, your hosting might crash if not robust). Shopify's uptime and load speeds are generally excellent because it's a specialized e-commerce hosting environment. You also get 24/7 support from Shopify if something goes wrong with the platform.

The downsides of Shopify: - It has a monthly cost (the basic plan is around **$29/month** as of now [23]). There are higher tier plans ($79, $299) with lower credit card fees and more features, but a new store usually starts on Basic. If you're not selling much initially, $29/mo is an expense to consider (though quite fair for what you get). - While you can customize a lot, you are somewhat constrained by Shopify's framework. Deep customizations might require coding in Shopify's Liquid template language or hiring a developer. But for most small businesses, the provided features and themes are more than enough. - Shopify charges transaction fees if you use external payment gateways (they waive extra fees if using their built-in Shopify Payments in many countries). This is usually a small consideration, but worth noting.

Building Your Own Website (Self-Hosted or Custom): This could mean using a content management system (CMS) like WordPress + WooCommerce, or coding a site from scratch, or using another open-source e-commerce platform that you host yourself (like Magento, OpenCart, etc.). Here's what that entails:

- **Full Control and Flexibility:** When you build it yourself, you have complete control over the site's look, features, hosting, everything. You can design it exactly how you want (assuming you have the skills or hire someone). You're not limited by the preset structure of Shopify. If you want a truly unique web experience or specific custom functionality, a self-built site can offer that flexibility.

- **Cost:** This can be a pro or a con. There's **no fixed monthly platform fee** if you run something like WooCommerce (which is free plugin for WordPress). However, "free" comes with caveats: you'll need to pay for web hosting (cost can range from a few dollars a month on cheap shared hosts to much more if you need a robust server), and possibly pay for plugins or developer help. Over time, costs can add up to something comparable to Shopify's fee, especially once you include reliable hosting and any paid extensions. But if you already have cheap hosting or technical ability, you might keep costs low. For a simple start, though, you might actually save more time (and time is money) by using Shopify's ready-made solution than troubleshooting your own server.

- **Technical Responsibility:** When self-hosting, **you** (or your developer) are responsible for site maintenance. That means installing updates (important for security), preventing and handling hacks or downtime, configuring backups, etc. If something breaks (say an update causes a plugin conflict), you have to fix it. With Shopify, you avoid most of those headaches because it's managed for you.

- **E-Commerce Features:** If you go the self-built route, you'll need to assemble the e-commerce features. For example, using WordPress+WooCommerce, you'd install WooCommerce for the store functionality. It provides cart, product pages, etc. But then you might need additional plugins for things like SEO, caching (to speed up the site), security, etc. WooCommerce also has a large extension marketplace for things like advanced shipping rules, but many are paid add-ons. It's certainly possible to build a very powerful store this way (many businesses do), but *as a beginner* you would face a learning curve in setting it all up optimally. Shopify is more plug-and-play for e-com.

- **Integration with POD:** While Shopify is the most straightforward for POD integrations, other solutions exist too. For instance, Printful offers a WooCommerce plugin, and Printify can integrate with WooCommerce via an official extension or API. So you *can* connect POD services to a self-hosted site. However, it might not be as smooth to manage as on Shopify. Each plugin integration might have quirks, and you'll have to ensure your website can run the necessary processes. If you built a site from scratch (hand-coded), you'd likely have to use POD APIs to submit orders – which is a serious development project. So unless you're a developer, using an existing e-commerce framework (Shopify, or WooCommerce, or maybe BigCommerce, etc.) is advisable.

In summary, for most people starting out, **Shopify is usually the recommended route**. It lets you get to market fast, looks professional, and you can be confident that all the "plumbing" (payments, security, uptime) is handled. You can focus on designing products and marketing rather than on web development bugs. The main reason to build your own site from scratch would be if you have a very specific custom need, or you want to avoid monthly fees and are comfortable managing the tech side. Since you specifically mentioned Shopify, it sounds like you're considering it – I would agree that's a good idea given the vast support for it in the POD community. As one experienced POD seller noted, selling through your own online

store (Shopify) gives you full branding control and access to customer emails (for marketing), which marketplaces like Etsy don't give [24] [25]. Shopify is a solid middle-ground: your own branded site, but with infrastructure provided.

One strategy some follow is: test designs on marketplaces (Etsy, etc., or even just run some ads to a basic site) and if it gains traction, then invest more in your own robust Shopify store [26]. But you could also just start on Shopify from day one (they have free trials, and sometimes you can get extended trials by asking support). Overall, given the importance of smooth POD integration, Shopify's a strong choice.

To directly compare: **What can Shopify do that a self-built site might not?** – There isn't much in terms of *ultimate capability* (since anything can be built with enough effort), but Shopify gives you *immediate access* to things like a secure checkout, multiple payment options, shipping label purchasing, sales tax calculation, a blog section, inventory tracking, analytics dashboards, discount code generation, gift cards (on standard plan and up), and more, all without additional cost or configuration [27] [28]. If you tried to assemble all that on your own, it could either be costly or time-consuming. Shopify also continuously updates its platform with new features (e.g., they added tools for international currency selling, improved checkout, etc.), which you automatically benefit from. With a custom site, you'd have to implement new features yourself.

Finally, consider longevity and support: a platform like Shopify will have customer support you can reach out to 24/7 if your store has an issue. If your own site breaks at 2am, there's no support team unless you've hired one. So especially if you're new to e-commerce, Shopify removes a lot of those worries so you can spend your energy on product and marketing.

In short, **I'd advise going with Shopify** to launch your nano-banana merchandise store, unless you already have web development experience and a strong reason to custom-build. It will make things like using Printly/Printful much easier. You can always migrate to a different solution later if needed, but many businesses run on Shopify long-term quite happily (the scalability up to thousands of orders is proven). The time you save can be used to design more products or create content to promote your brand.

Licensing Concerns for College-Themed Merchandise (Ole Miss, LSU, Georgia, Alabama)

You specifically asked about licensing issues with using names or logos of Ole Miss, LSU, Georgia, and Alabama. This is **crucial** – using any university's branding or trademarks without permission can land you in serious legal trouble. Here's what you need to know:

Trademarks and Logos: Universities' names, nicknames, logos, mascots, and even certain slogans or color combinations are typically protected trademarks. For example, "Ole Miss," the Ole Miss script logo, "Rebels," etc., are trademarked by the University of Mississippi [29] [30]. The same goes for LSU ("LSU" and the Tiger logos), University of Georgia (the "Georgia Bulldogs" name, the "G" logo, etc.), and University of Alabama ("Alabama", "Crimson Tide", the "script A", etc.). If you put any of those on merchandise and sell it, you'd be infringing their trademarks unless you have permission.

Licensing Programs: Most large universities participate in a collegiate licensing program. Ole Miss, for instance, uses the **Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC)** to handle licensing [31]. That means to legally produce items with Ole Miss logos or even the word "Ole Miss," you must apply and become a licensed

vendor through CLC, and the university must approve your specific designs. Ole Miss explicitly states: *"If you'd like to become an official licensee... you must first apply to CLC and become an approved vendor... Failure to obtain a license... can result in the seizure and possible legal action of all non-approved merchandise bearing University of Mississippi trademarks."* [31] . That language is pretty clear: If you print unlicensed Ole Miss bikinis (for example) and they find out, they can confiscate your products and potentially pursue legal action.

LSU, Georgia, Alabama, and other big athletic schools have similar setups. Many also go through CLC or have their own trademark licensing offices. LSU's program, for instance, has an application process and requires any vendor selling LSU-branded goods to be licensed [32] . University of Georgia's licensing is handled by a company (recently it's been through a partnership with Fanatics Licensing Management) [33] – but the concept is the same: you need a license to use their marks. Alabama has a well-known licensing program and even a special **"crafters" license** for very small sellers, but importantly even that program *disallows* apparel and requires items to be handmade and low quantity [34] [35] – so it wouldn't apply to print-on-demand products. In general, to legally sell any apparel with these college logos/names, you would need a standard commercial license.

Licensing Costs and Feasibility: Getting licensed is often not trivial for small businesses. There are usually application fees and minimum royalty guarantees. For example, one user researching college licensing found that going through CLC involved a **$250 non-refundable application fee + about $125 per school** you want to license, *plus* annual minimum royalty fees per school (often another $125 per year each, with a cap for many schools) [36] . And that's just the starting point – you also typically need to carry liability insurance and submit all your designs for approval. The school will take a royalty (often 10-15% of gross sales) on any item you sell with their trademarks, which you'd have to price into your products. Some universities also require that you sell through certain channels (e.g., they might restrict selling on campus without additional permission, etc.). The process can also take some time to be approved.

Given you're in early stages, pursuing full licensing for multiple big universities could be cost-prohibitive and complex. The comment you provided suggests you're aware of potential issues. If your idea was to make, say, bikinis in the colors of LSU with their logos, or hats that say "Alabama Crimson Tide" with the logo – **do not do that without a license**. The universities are quite aggressive in policing unlicensed merchandise, because it's a huge market (college sports merchandise is a multi-billion dollar industry). They often have people monitoring sites like Etsy, eBay, etc., and will send cease-and-desist letters or worse.

For instance, the University of Alabama famously has pursued even small sellers for trademark infringement (even over things like using their particular shade of crimson in certain contexts or the word "Bama" on apparel). As FindLaw notes, *using a college's logo or even a confusingly similar design without permission can lead to trademark infringement claims, and colleges will act to prevent others from profiting off their brand or diluting it* [37] [38] . They want any merchandise with their name to go through them (so they get a cut and ensure quality control).

What about just colors or references? Using just school colors without names or logos is a gray area. Simply making a red and white bikini (Alabama's colors) is not infringing by itself. But if you market it as "Alabama bikini" or "Roll Tide swimwear," then you're invoking the trademark. Even phrases like "Hotty Toddy" (Ole Miss cheer) or "Go Tigers" in certain fonts could be protected (as Ole Miss's FAQ shows, they have a long list of trademarked phrases [39]). Some small sellers try to be coy, saying like "purple and gold tiger-themed bikini" without saying LSU – but if it's clearly meant to represent LSU Tigers, it can still be risky.

Nominative fair use in trademark law allows using a name to describe something *in certain contexts*, but not usually to brand apparel in a way that confuses consumers [40] [41] . It's unlikely you could get away with it if it becomes known.

Advice: If collegiate-themed products were something you really wanted to do, you have two paths:

1. **Pursue licensing** – Contact each school's licensing office or apply via CLC for those schools. Realistically, this only makes sense if you have a solid business plan and expect enough sales to justify the fees and royalties. Some schools might have a localized "crafters license" like Alabama's (which, as noted, still wouldn't allow mass-produced apparel) or a low-cost option for handmade small-scale sales. But for a broader POD business, you'd likely need the standard license. That involves an upfront cost and ongoing compliance. Only you can judge if that's viable. For a new venture, it's often not, unless your entire niche is "college fan apparel" and you're committed to that route.

2. **Avoid using the trademarks** – This is the safest if you don't want to deal with legalities. You can still draw inspiration from the idea of college spirit without directly using the protected elements. For example, maybe you create a line of products with generic college humor or generic sports phrases that aren't trademarked. But you must steer clear of specific names, logos, or trademarked mottos. Selling unlicensed college-themed stuff is playing with fire. Many people have had their Etsy shops shut down for selling items with college (or pro sports) logos without permission. Even if POD companies like Printful/Printify don't catch it (some actually have image recognition to flag obvious trademark uploads), the universities might.

One option mentioned in forums is to partner with an existing licensed vendor [42] . For instance, find a company that already has the license for, say, LSU and see if your designs can be produced through them (you'd essentially be a sub-vendor or designer under their license). This is probably not straightforward unless you know someone in that business, but it's an idea some have considered to avoid going through licensing solo [43] .

To sum up: **Licensing is a significant concern** and you should treat those college names as off-limits unless you go through the formal process. The safe advice is: **don't use Ole Miss, LSU, UGA, or Alabama trademarks on your nano-banana products**. Even if it's tempting to slap a team logo on a bikini to attract fans, it's illegal without a license. If your question was more about whether a banana design that references those schools (maybe a banana in a jersey with their colors?) would be okay – I would still be extremely cautious. Even indirect references like a product named "Tuscaloosa Bananas" (Tuscaloosa is Alabama's city) or "Oxford Rebels Swimwear" (Oxford is Ole Miss's city) could draw attention. The universities protect any reference that clearly points to them.

One concrete example: a few years back, the University of Alabama went to court over a company printing paintings of football game scenes that included Alabama's uniforms – it went up to an appeals court about whether painting the team uniforms (with colors and logos) was infringement. These institutions care deeply about their IP. So it's best not to get on that wrong side, especially early on.

If you really think collegiate apparel is a big opportunity for your business, consider starting with one school, maybe your own alma mater or a local one, and look into a license for that single school first. Some

smaller schools have simpler processes. The ones you listed, though, are all huge SEC schools with major licensing programs, so none will be trivial.

In conclusion: Unless you obtain licenses, **do not use the names, logos, or obvious trademarks of Ole Miss, LSU, Georgia, or Alabama** in your product designs or marketing. Focus on your own "nano-banana" branding or other original themes. It's not worth the risk of legal action and forced reprints/product destruction [44] . If down the road you grow big and want to tackle licensing, you can revisit it with proper legal guidance. For now, I'd keep the college themes out of your product line or use extremely generic approaches (which likely won't be as appealing to fans, unfortunately).

Expanding Beyond Bikinis: Product Opportunities and Profitability

You mentioned looking for good opportunities beyond bikinis – like hats, t-shirts, sweaters, hoodies, etc. This is a great idea to broaden your product range and revenue streams. Different products have different profit margins and startup considerations. Let's explore some categories and then consider how to rank them in terms of profitability and ease/cost to start:

Potential Products for Your Merchandise Line

- **T-Shirts:** The staple of print-on-demand. Custom t-shirts (especially unisex tees) are easy to design for, relatively inexpensive per unit, and have a huge market. Every POD service offers numerous t-shirt options (basic cotton tees, premium blends, different fits). Base cost for a decent quality tee is often around $8–$12 [45] . For example, Printify's profit calculator shows a generic unisex tee fulfilling at about **$8.77** base cost [45] . This means if you sell a shirt for $20, your gross profit is ~$11 (before any Shopify fees or advertising costs). T-shirts are a *low-cost start* because you don't pay until one is ordered, and you can list unlimited designs. They are also simple to design – you just need a front (and maybe back) artwork. The downside: t-shirt market is very saturated, and often you need really compelling designs or niche themes (or great marketing) to stand out. But since you have a unique theme (nano-banana) you could make it fun. Profitability per shirt is moderate (people have price expectations around $20–$25 for a tee, so you can't mark it up infinitely), but volume can be good if you hit a trend.

- **Hoodies & Sweatshirts:** These are higher-price apparel items. A hooded sweatshirt base cost might be around $17–$25 depending on brand and if it's all-over-print or embroidered, etc. The Printify example shows a standard printed hoodie at **$15.89** base [45] (that's actually quite low; many POD hoodies cost ~$20). Hoodies can retail for $40–60, so your margin could be $20+ per sale in some cases. Customers generally expect to pay more for a hoodie, so you have room to profit. They're especially popular in fall/winter or as fan merch year-round. Designing hoodies is similar to t-shirts (most are printed via DTG on the front/back). One thing: POD hoodies, being heavier, will have higher shipping costs for the customer, so factor that in. But in terms of starting cost: also essentially zero upfront (just design them in your POD app). They might sell a bit lower volume than t-shirts due to price, but the profit each can be higher. Hoodies are a solid addition to a clothing line once you have some traction, and banana-themed hoodies could be fun ("Banana Republic" jokes aside – careful, that's a clothing brand, though the word banana itself is fine). **Sweaters** (if by that you mean things like knit sweaters or fleece crewnecks) are similar to hoodies in print process (crewneck sweatshirts can be printed same as hoodies, and knit sweaters aren't typical POD products except "ugly

Christmas sweater" prints which are actually cut-and-sew sublimation prints). So I'd lump sweaters/crewnecks with hoodies for this discussion.

- **Hats & Caps:** Caps, beanies, and hats are popular, but the printing method differs. Most POD hats are **embroidered** rather than printed (because embroidery looks better on fabric like caps). Embroidery has some limitations: you can't do very fine detail or gradients as easily – designs need to be fairly solid shapes/colors. If your "nano-banana" design can be simplified (like an outline of a banana or a small logo), that could work well as an embroidered cap. Hats have a base cost around $12–$18 typically [46] (for example, a POD dad hat might cost $13 base; beanies might be similar). Many sellers price hats ~$25–30, so you're looking at maybe $10–$15 profit each. Not bad. And hats are a nice accessory that people buy year-round. Start-up is just creating the embroidery file (Printful actually auto-digitizes it for a fee, others might do similarly or require you upload a vector graphic). Since your brand theme is quirky, a hat with a tiny banana icon could be a hit. Just note embroidery has an initial digitization fee (e.g., Printful charges ~$6.50 one-time per design to convert to embroidery format). After that, you can embroider that design on any number of hats. So, hats are a bit more involved in design prep but still quite accessible. They can be profitable but maybe a slightly smaller market than tees/hoodies.

- **Other Apparel (Leggings, Shorts, etc.):** Depending on your niche, you could consider things like leggings (all-over print yoga pants are offered by Printful/Printify), sports bras, or other fashion items. Leggings base cost maybe ~$15, sell for $30–40. They're a popular POD item if your brand has a strong visual style (banana print leggings could be bold and fun). However, focusing on too many categories at once can be overwhelming – it might be better to start with the core items (shirts/hoodies/hats) and expand later unless you specifically want to be a full apparel line.

- **Accessories and Novelty Items:** If your "nano-banana" concept has a humor angle, you could put it on things like **stickers**, **mugs**, **phone cases**, **tote bags**, etc. These are all available via POD as well. Stickers have low base cost (maybe $1–$3) and can sell for $3–$5, which is a smaller profit but they can be add-on sales. Mugs base ~$5–$7, retail around $15, decent profit. Phone cases base ~$10, retail $18–$25 [45] (the Printify calc showed tough phone cases base $10.73 [45], so margin is okay). These items are easy to produce once you have a design (just format it to the template). They can broaden your catalog and give customers cheaper options (not everyone may want a $30 hoodie, but they might buy a $12 mug for example). In terms of *starting cost*, these also have none (just design time). In terms of *profitability*, their margins in percentage can be high, but absolute dollars per sale are smaller (a $5 profit on a mug vs $15 on a hoodie). Yet, they're worth considering to capture more sales from your audience.

Profitability and Ease: Ranking Suggestions

If I were to rank product types for you, considering **low startup cost** (all POD is low cost, but considering design effort/risk) and **potential profitability (margin × demand)**, my ranking (with reasoning) would be:

1. **T-Shirts:** *Ease:* Easiest to design and launch, no complexities, every POD provider does them. *Cost to start:* Essentially $0, just your design effort. *Profitability:* Moderate per unit (~$10 profit each), but very high sales potential because everyone wears t-shirts year-round and you can churn out many designs. Also great for building your brand visibility (walking advertisements). Despite competition, a

unique design can sell well. I rank this first because it's the lowest hanging fruit – nearly every successful merch line has tees as the backbone.

2. **Hoodies/Sweatshirts:** *Ease:* Easy to add once you have designs (often you can repurpose your t-shirt graphic on a hoodie). *Cost:* Slightly higher base cost but no upfront payment; just ensure your design looks good larger (hoodie print areas might be a bit bigger). *Profitability:* High per unit (possibly $15–$25 profit each at a $45 price). Lower volume than tees maybe, but people love hoodies. Great for fall/winter or as premium merch. I put this second because it complements t-shirts well and tends to yield higher profit per sale.

3. **Hats (Caps/Beanies):** *Ease:* Moderate – need an embroidery-friendly design (one-color or two, not too intricate). *Cost:* One-time digitizing fee per design (a few bucks), otherwise POD like others. *Profit:* Good (maybe $10 each). Demand can be decent; fans like caps, and they're unisex. I rank hats slightly below hoodies because not everyone wears caps, but it's still a strong category, especially if your banana logo is cute as an embroidered patch or icon.

4. **Bikinis/Swimwear:** *Ease:* Moderate to hard – all-over print requires careful design alignment, and it's a more niche product. *Cost:* Base cost is moderate (~$15-$20). *Profit:* Potentially good ($15+ each if you price around $40). However, bikinis are seasonal and the audience is narrower (primarily women in summer or vacations). Also, returns/exchanges can be tricky with swimwear (sizing issues), and not all customers are comfortable buying swimwear from a new brand without trying on. Since your original idea was bikinis, you can certainly offer them (that could be your unique angle to stand out). But purely in profitability, you might not sell bikinis year-round at high volume. I'd still include them, just not rely on them as the sole product. They rank here because while unique, they might be slower sellers than the universal items like tees.

5. **Stickers & Small Accessories:** *Ease:* Very easy to design (just make a PNG of your graphic). *Cost:* Very low base cost; you might want to order some to see quality but negligible cost. *Profit:* Low per item, but these can be upsells or bundle items. They likely won't drive huge profit alone, but I mention them because they're so easy to add and can round out your store (also good for promotional giveaways etc.). They rank lower because selling a $3 sticker one at a time won't make you much money after processing fees – but as part of a larger strategy, they're fine.

6. **Mugs/Drinkware:** *Ease:* Easy; design area is just a rectangle that wraps around a mug. *Cost:* Base ~$5. *Profit:* $5-10 each. Mugs have broad appeal (everyone drinks something). They could feature your banana design and maybe a funny phrase. I'd rank mugs similar to accessories – nice add-on but not as core as apparel in terms of defining your brand or profit center. Though some stores do sell a ton of mugs if the design is catchy.

7. **Phone Cases, Tote Bags, etc.:** These are similar in ease to mugs. Phone cases especially can do well if your design is trendy (e.g., a cool banana pattern on a phone case). Totes are cheap base cost and can sell as eco-friendly grocery bags or fun swag (and your example image actually showed a tote with a design). These could be middle-of-the-pack in profitability – not huge money-makers individually, but they add diversity to your catalog with little effort.

In terms of **low cost to get started**, all POD products are low upfront cost (since you pay on demand). So "cost to start" is more about complexity and potential wastage. The nice thing is, you can list 100 designs on

10 product types and if none sell, it cost you nothing but time. The *real* cost consideration is sample orders – it's wise to order samples of any product type you plan to sell (so you can check quality and have them for product photos or marketing). So maybe budget some money for ordering yourself a banana bikini, a t-shirt, etc., to verify they meet your standards. But sample costs are usually discounted by POD companies (Printful gives 20% off + free shipping on samples up to a certain number per month).

Profitability Considerations: Profit = (Retail Price – Base Cost) – any fees. T-shirts and hoodies have a healthy margin if your brand can support mid-tier pricing (don't price too low or you erode profit; don't price too high or no one buys). Hoodies often have better absolute profit than tees. Hats also good. Bikinis, if unique, could possibly be priced premium (some all-over print swimsuits on Printful sellers go for $50+). If you manage to sell at that price, bikini profit could rival hoodie profit. But again, volume might be lower.

Another angle: **Which product is likely to sell best for your theme?** If "nano-banana" is whimsical, maybe t-shirts with funny banana graphics and quotes could go viral. Hoodies might sell to a core fan who really likes the brand. Bikinis are more novel (maybe appealing as a fun gift or Instagram-worthy item). If you're not sure, you can list all of them and see what gets traction. Since there's no inventory risk, the main investment is time designing and possibly cost of sample or mockup generation. Just be careful not to spread yourself too thin at the start – each product type might require tweaking designs (e.g., an image that fits a t-shirt might need resizing or pattern extension for a all-over bikini). But many designers do exactly that: create a design and then adapt it to multiple products to maximize its usage.

Marketing Tip: Ranking in profitability also ties to how you market. A t-shirt might attract someone to your site, then they end up also buying a hoodie and a sticker. So think of product mix and pricing such that you can encourage bundles ("Free shipping if you buy 2 or more items" can incentivize multi-item orders, increasing your average order value). A diverse catalog helps with that.

Final Rankings (Profit vs. Ease):

If forced to rank strictly, I'd say for a new POD apparel brand like yours: 1. **T-Shirts** – highest priority (easy start, decent profit, broadest appeal). 2. **Hoodies/Sweatshirts** – strong second (higher profit per item, medium appeal, complements tees). 3. **Hats/Caps** – good add-on apparel (medium profit, niche appeal to hat-wearers, but worth it for brand). 4. **Bikinis/Swimwear** – your niche item (medium-high profit, niche seasonal appeal, differentiator). 5. **Mugs/Accessories** – supplemental items (low profit each, but very easy and can boost total sales). 6. **Stickers/Decals** – lowest priority for profit, but throw them in for branding/cheap upsells.

This ranking balances startup ease and profit potential. In terms of pure profit margin percentage, apparel often runs ~50% margin or more (if you price well), whereas accessories might be less. But also factor in how many you can sell. A killer t-shirt design could sell 100 units a month; a bikini might sell 10 units in that same time – however at $15 profit each bikini vs $10 each tee, that still contributes nicely.

Also consider **low-cost marketing**: T-shirts and hats basically turn customers into walking billboards for your brand if the logo or design is visible and intriguing. That can help spread awareness, whereas a bikini is seen more rarely in public (except maybe on social media if someone posts a pic). So for brand building, tees/hats are helpful.

One more thought: **bundling and upselling**. If someone is crazy about your banana theme, they might buy multiple items. Offer a matching set – e.g., a bikini with a matching sarong or flip-flops (yes, some PODs do flip-flops), or a t-shirt and a hat combo. This can increase overall profitability per customer.

At the end of the day, *your creativity and marketing will drive sales*. The profitability will follow if there's demand. So use these product options to their strengths. Start with the easy wins (tees) to get your brand out there, mix in a few unique items (bikini, etc.) to stand out, and keep an eye on what your audience responds to. Because it's all print-on-demand, you have the freedom to experiment at very low risk. If something isn't selling after a while, you can retire that design or product and try new ideas.

Good luck with your venture! It sounds like you have a fun concept. By leveraging a platform like Shopify, using POD services wisely, steering clear of licensing pitfalls, and offering a range of products, you'll be set up to test the market thoroughly without breaking the bank. Adjust your strategy as you learn which products are most profitable for you. And remember, the most valuable investment at the start is probably in marketing – great products don't sell if no one knows about them, so consider how you'll promote that nano-banana line once your shop is live.

Keep these tips in mind, and you'll be off to a solid start in your print-on-demand journey!

Sources:

- Printify "How it works" – overview of selecting products, designing, publishing to store, and fulfillment [1] [6] [8] .
- Printful guidelines on image resolution (150–300 DPI for best results, especially for fine details) [2] .
- Reddit user feedback on Printly quality and cost [7] .
- Podbase blog (POD platform comparison) – Printful's large product range vs. higher costs [10] [11] ; recommendation of Podbase as a "Printly alternative" for lower prices [47] .
- Bootstrapping Ecommerce (Printful alternatives 2025) – notes on Printify's low costs and Printful's merger [14] [13] , and SPOD's fast production & low pricing [17] .
- FindLaw on selling college logo items – need for licensing agreements to use college trademarks [48] and risk of legal action without permission [44] .
- University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) official licensing page – requirement to get licensed via CLC and warning of legal action for unlicensed use [31] .
- Reddit discussion on collegiate licensing costs – CLC application fees and annual fees per school [36] .
- Printify profit calculator examples – base costs for a T-shirt ($8.77) vs Hoodie ($15.89), etc. [45] .
- Reddit thread (printondemand) on using custom mockups and POD design considerations [3] [4] .

---

[1] [6] [8] [45] How It Works - On Demand Print and Drop Shipping for eCommerce
https://printify.com/how-it-works/

[2] How to prepare the perfect print file | Printful
https://www.printful.com/blog/everything-you-need-to-know-to-prepare-the-perfect-printfile

[3] [4] [5] Best method for high-fidelity mockups and printing. : r/printondemand
https://www.reddit.com/r/printondemand/comments/15b4z13/best_method_for_highfidelity_mockups_and_printing/

[7] [24] [25] [26] [Detailed Guide] How to crush it with Print on Demand : r/PassionsToProfits

https://www.reddit.com/r/PassionsToProfits/comments/1bmpmft/detailed_guide_how_to_crush_it_with_print_on/

[9] [10] [11] [46] [47] Podbase vs Printful: Which POD Platform Wins | Podbase

https://www.podbase.com/blogs/podbase-vs-printful

[12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] Best Printful Alternatives: My Picks for 2025 - Bootstrapping Ecommerce

https://bootstrappingecommerce.com/best-printful-alternatives/

[20] Best print-on-demand apps for Shopify: 12 Top picks

https://printify.com/blog/best-print-on-demand-apps-for-shopify/

[21] [22] [23] [27] [28] The Best Ecommerce Website Builders for 2023

https://www.bitrix24.eu/articles/the-best-ecommerce-website-builders-for-2022.php

[29] [30] [31] [39] Licensing | Ole Miss

https://olemiss.edu/csm/licensing/

[32] LSU Trademark Licensing

https://www.collegiatelicensingworld.com/lsu-trademark-licensing

[33] Georgia - Fanatics Licensing Management

https://fanaticslicensingmanagement.com/college/georgia/

[34] [35] Licensing - Crafters Licensing Program - Alabama Athletics

https://rolltide.com/sports/2016/6/10/licensing-crafters-html

[36] [42] [43] Collegiate/professional sports licensing : r/smallbusiness

https://www.reddit.com/r/smallbusiness/comments/161kmaa/collegiateprofessional_sports_licensing/

[37] [38] [40] [41] [44] [48] Can I Sell Items With College Logos? - FindLaw

https://www.findlaw.com/smallbusiness/intellectual-property/can-i-sell-items-with-college-logos.html