

From designer to system architect: Designing a node-based brand identity system that structures human-AI co-creation in brand identity development



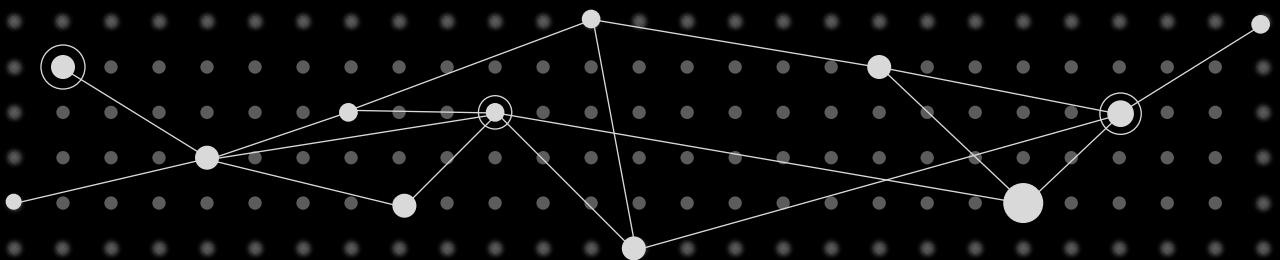
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PREFACE

The idea for this thesis grew out of a question I had been circling for a while: how will working with AI change what it means to be a designer? In September 2025, I published a paper on human-AI co-creation, a quantitative study of co-creating with a custom GPT, where I measured the quality, novelty, and variety of the outputs it helped produce. That study gave me some insight into what these tools and systems can produce, but it did not address the question of what happens to the designer during the process. I wanted to build on that work by returning to human-AI co-creation from a different angle, this time qualitative rather than quantitative, and focusing not on the quality of the output but on the designer's role and the usability of the system. This thesis evolved as a result of that curiosity, which allowed me to broaden an interest that began with numbers into something more relevant to the day-to-day experience of design.

Throughout the project, I faced challenges that eventually led to personal growth. I was constantly inspired because, as a designer myself, I am interested in how my own position will evolve with the rise of AI. But building a node-based system was something I had never done before, and learning something new comes with difficulties and uncertainties, and eventually takes longer than I anticipated. At some points I was uncertain whether what I was researching would still be relevant when my thesis was done, but what helped was staying with it and finding different perspectives. What I did not know beforehand was that I had more fun studying it than I thought I would. As I gained more knowledge, the elements that seemed challenging at first were gradually replaced by confidence.

I want to thank my supervisors, Evangelos, Jorg, and Simon, for their guidance and for the way they gave it. Our conversations felt less like formal supervision and more like thinking out loud together and sharing knowledge on what we found on the topic. This gave me the room to question my own decisions and the confidence to follow them. They were interesting, and they taught me to learn along the way and adapt as I went, since in the AI field new information arises every week. I am also grateful to the agency where I did my graduation for welcoming me into their team and giving me access to their expertise and their resources. A special thanks to the designers who took part in the focus group and the evaluation sessions, who gave their time and their honest reactions; this research would not exist without them.

And finally, I want to thank the people around me, my family, and my friends for their support and encouragement, and for helping me stay grounded through the more stressful moments. Since this thesis is about technology and digitalisation, and so much of it meant long hours behind a screen, I am especially grateful to them for pulling me back to the off-screen world: the walks outside, the coffee breaks, and the fun conversations are the things that kept me balanced.

This thesis has taught me a lot about how design and AI can work together, and about the role designers can hold as these tools become part of the everyday process. I hope the system and the ideas developed here are useful to other designers who are asking the same question I started with.

Thank you for reading, and I hope you find this research as interesting to read as I found it to create.

Tessa Scholing
29 June 2026

ABSTRACT

Type a prompt, wait a few seconds, and generative AI hands you a finished logo. A logo belongs to a brand's identity, but so do its strategy, personality, and how it shows up across touchpoints. Brand identity is a network of connected decisions, where strategy shapes personality, personality shapes visual language, and visual language shapes every touchpoint a customer meets. Current AI tools work against this logic. The brand strategy defined in one tool is invisible to the image generator in another, since they are designed for single, disconnected, prompt-based outputs. At each stage, brand decisions must be manually re-entered. As a result, designer control is lost, brand consistency is threatened, and the creative process begins to represent what the tool can do rather than what the brand should be.

This thesis investigates how a node-based brand identity system can structure human-AI co-creation across the full brand identity workflow while maintaining the designer's strategic and curatorial role. The work follows a Research through Design approach, structured by the Double Diamond. An exploratory phase, combining a literature review, a focus group with four agency brand designers, and a design hackathon, mapped how branding is practised and where AI currently fits. These findings, together with five concepts drawn from brand theory and human-AI interaction research, formed the theoretical framework for the design. Guided by this framework, a node-based system was built in Krea.ai across the six core branding phases, from research and discovery to guidelines and delivery, with around 90 nodes.

The system was evaluated through a qualitative usability study with six professional designers, combining a guided walkthrough, a think-aloud assignment, semi-structured interviews, and a Likert-scale survey. Reflexive thematic analysis produced four themes. Designers found the phase-based logic sound and instantly recognisable, located the friction in the platform interface rather than the node-based architecture, and consistently reclaimed authorship by curating outputs, editing prompts, and uploading their own work. Every participant judged the designer's role to be equally or more important when working with the system, not less.

The findings show that a node-based system shifts the designer from asset creator to system architect: someone who designs the structure that produces brand assets, not only the assets themselves. This shift is evidenced at two levels. Building the system was itself a design activity in which the decisive choices concerned architecture, which nodes to connect, which models to assign, and where to place human control points, rather than individual visual outputs. In the evaluation, designers who had not built the system took up curatorial, directive, and prompt-authoring control, added nodes themselves, and reasoned about its structure, showing this orientation is accessible to those who operate the system, not only the one who built it. This makes design expertise more decisive, not less, while raising the value of new skills such as turning creative intent into precise prompts. Because the framework structures any multi-phase creative process where strategic intent must be carried across stages, the same logic may extend beyond branding to other design domains.

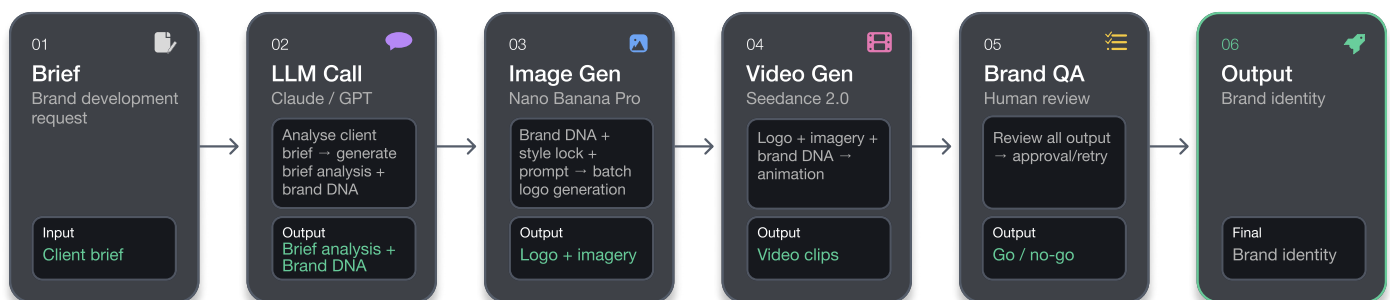


Figure 1. A simplified example of the node-based brand identity system, tracing how a client brief moves through AI-supported stages to a finished brand identity, with a human review point before output.

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GLOSSARY

Anti-slop: Prompting strategies that constrain a generative model away from ‘slop’, the generic default aesthetic of AI image outputs (oversaturated colour, plastic textures, stock-photo compositions), so that results better match the intended brand direction.

Brand archetype: the narrative role a brand plays in the life of its audience, drawing on Jung’s (1969) theory of universal patterns and later adapted for branding by Mark and Pearson (2001).

Brand identity: the strategic, verbal, and visual elements an organisation projects to define how a brand presents itself across touchpoints (Wheeler, 2018; Kapferer, 2012).

Brand image: the perceptions customers actually hold of a brand, as distinct from brand identity (D. Aaker, 1996).

Brand personality: human characteristics associated with a brand, described here through J. Aaker’s (1997) five dimensions.

Control point: a place in the workflow where the designer evaluates, curates, rejects, or creates, keeping human judgement in the loop.

Design parameter: a brand element expressed as a structured input an AI system can act on (Manavis et al., 2023).

Double Diamond: a four-stage design process model (discover, define, develop, deliver) used to structure the research and design phases.

Dynamic brand identity system: a brand system designed for variation, where some elements stay fixed and others change within set boundaries (Felsing, 2010).

Fixed and variable nodes: fixed nodes produce consistent, locked outputs such as logo, colour, and typography; variable nodes allow AI-generated exploration that the designer reviews.

Generative AI: AI systems that produce new content such as text, images, or video from a prompt, rather than only analysing existing data.

Node: a single building block in the node-based system that performs one defined task based on a given system prompt.

Node-based workflow: a visual interface in which generative steps are connected as nodes, letting a process be built and edited without writing code.

Prompt engineering (prompt craft): the practice of turning creative intent into effective AI instructions, treated here as a design skill that develops through iteration (Lindley & Whitham, 2025).

Reflexive thematic analysis: a qualitative method for identifying and interpreting patterns (themes) across data, in which the researcher’s active interpretation is treated as a resource rather than a bias to be removed (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022).

Research through Design (RtD): a methodology in which building an artefact is itself a form of inquiry (Zimmerman et al., 2007).

System architect: the designer’s expanded role, designing the system that produces brand assets, not only the assets themselves.

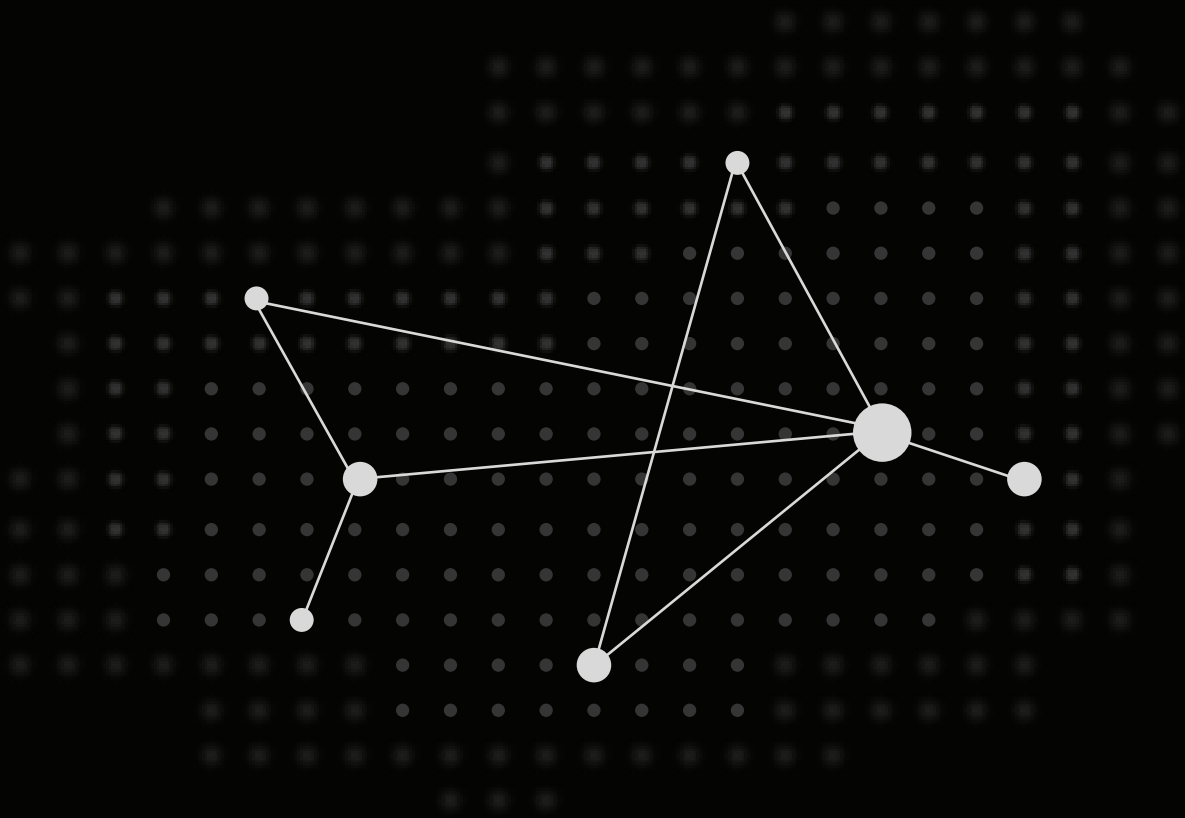
System prompt: the instructions that define what a node does, how its output should be organised, and what it should avoid.

Tacit knowledge: practical, experience-based expertise that guides a designer’s decisions but resists being fully put into words, as distinct from explicit knowledge that can be stated directly (Polanyi, 1966).

Visual identity: the tangible, designed layer of a brand, such as logo, colour, typography, and imagery, as distinct from brand identity, which also covers the strategic and verbal components (Wheeler, 2018).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI:	Artificial Intelligence
BNO:	Beroepsorganisatie Nederlandse Ontwerpers (Dutch designers' professional association)
COFI:	Co-Creative Framework for Interaction
GPT:	Generative Pre-trained Transformer
HCI:	Human-Computer Interaction
LLM:	Large Language Model
QA:	Quality Assurance
RQ:	Research Question
RtD:	Research through Design
SQ:	Sub-Question
UI:	User Interface
UX:	User Experience



01

INTRODUCTION

Framing the problem for brand identity development in the age of generative AI

1.1 Problem definition

Generative AI is entering creative industries at a speed that few professionals expected. Visual content, from brand logos and product concepts to brand campaign graphics and product photography, can now be created in seconds rather than days because of tools like Midjourney, DALL·E, Stable Diffusion, and an increasing number of platform-specific generators, including node-based agentic tools such as Krea.ai. According to consumer engagement measures, AI-generated graphics can match or even exceed human-created imagery in marketing contexts (Hartmann et al., 2025). The technology is no longer in the experimental stage. It is becoming an integrated part of the creative brand-building process.

Brand identity development sits at the intersection of two of the creative sectors most directly affected by this disruption: design and advertising (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2024). According to Wheeler (2018), a brand's identity consists of the visual, verbal, and strategic components that work together to create a memorable and recognised brand experience across all touchpoints. Market research, strategic positioning, concept development, visual and verbal identity design, application across touchpoints, and the creation of brand guidelines are all common phases in the multi-phase process of creating a brand identity (Wheeler, 2018; Olins, 2008). Designers make connected choices at every stage: the brand's personality is shaped by its strategic positioning, which influences its visual language, which in turn influences how it appears on a billboard, a website, or a product label. These choices are not isolated from one another. According to Keller (1993), Farooq Padela et al. (2023), and Kapferer (2012), brand identity is a relational system of interconnected parts that gain meaning through their connections to one another.

This connected nature of brand identity creates a fundamental mismatch with the way creative AI tools are currently designed to work. Most AI tools that are now accessible to designers are made for single-output, independent, prompt-based interactions. For example, a designer might use ChatGPT to define a brand's values and archetype during the strategy phase, then switch to Midjourney or DALL·E to develop visual designs, and finally switch to another AI tool for product mockups. The brand's strategy and vision need to be either mentally or manually re-entered at every change. These phases are not connected. The brand values that were created two steps prior are invisible to the image generator. Similarly, the mockup AI tool does not understand which visual direction was chosen in previous phases or why.

Although they may be aesthetically pleasing, the outputs produced by each AI tool function separately from the brand's strategic foundation (Figure 2).

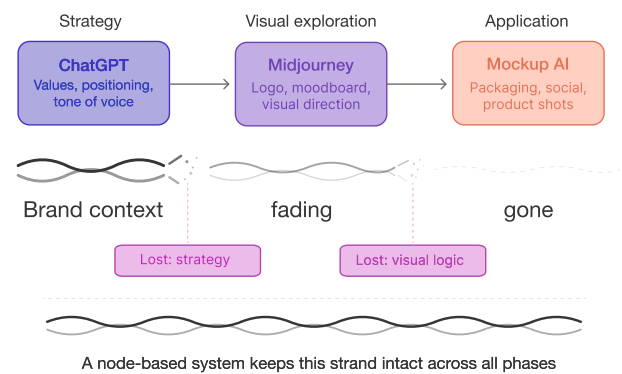


Figure 2. The brand context gap of fragmented AI-assisted branding workflows.

This disconnection leads to three problems for professional brand identity practice. First, there is a risk to brand consistency. Consumer trust and brand equity have traditionally depended on maintaining a consistent brand identity across touchpoints (Van Noort et al., 2020; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). The consistency that keeps a brand identity coherent is challenging to maintain when AI-generated brand content is created without a clear connection to the brand's strategic goal. This risk increases when AI-generated content becomes more diverse and customised, which could lead to different brand perceptions within the same audience (Agersborg et al., 2020).

Second, what practitioners refer to as “tool fatigue” affects designers. With each AI tool having its own interface, logic, and limits, the constantly changing field of generative AI has created an overwhelming range of tools. According to Park et al. (2024), designers describe feeling overwhelmed by the speed of change and discouraged by having to constantly learn new interfaces, sometimes giving up on tools completely before becoming skilled in them. The burden here is not the capability of any single model but the constant need to relearn how to operate it. Each new or redesigned interface resets the designer's hard-won familiarity, so effort flows into keeping up with tools rather than into the work itself.

Third, and probably most importantly, there is emerging evidence that designers change their creative vision to match the capabilities of AI tools rather than the other way around. According to Gmeiner et al. (2023), designers

often abandoned their original goal when using AI-based tools, accepting outputs they were not happy with because changing them seemed too hard. A similar pattern was discovered by Wadinambiarachchi et al. (2024): designers who used AI image generators during ideation generated fewer, less varied, and less unique ideas than those who did not. This suggests that AI outputs function as fixation anchors rather than sources of creativity. This dynamic presents a risk in brand identity work, where the designer's judgement and intentionality give a brand its meaning (Anscomb, 2025). When the tool has more influence on the outcome than the designer does, the brand identity starts to reflect what the AI can do rather than what the brand needs to be.

These three problems point to a gap that is not about the capability of generative AI itself but rather about the lack of structure around it. Two levels have been the focus of the academic literature on generative AI in branding so far. Researchers have studied whether AI can generate valuable brand content at the output level (Hartmann et al., 2025; Fong & See, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). And at the tool-use level, researchers have studied how designers interact with AI through iteration and prompting (Park et al., 2024; Adeola, 2025; Alshehri, 2025). What remains unexplored is the level above individual AI tools: how generative AI can be built into a brand identity development workflow as a connected system that spans multiple phases, carries brand decisions forward from one step to the next, and keeps the designer in control of strategy and creative direction.

The emergence of node-based generative platforms makes this level of integration technically feasible. Platforms like Krea.ai, ComfyUI, Flora, and Figma Weave allow designers to connect multiple generative AI models into visual workflows. Each step is an editable node, and the connections between the nodes define how the information flows. This node-based logic mirrors the structure of brand identity itself: a network of interrelated elements whose relationships carry meaning (Keller, 1993). Yet the application of these platforms to brand identity development has not been explored in academic research.

This is not a graphic design problem or a computer science problem. It is a design problem at the level of system architecture. The question is not whether AI can generate a logo or a campaign image. The question is how to structure the relationship between human expertise and AI capability so that the designer's strategic and creative judgement remains central to the process. In this framing, the designer's role shifts from creating individual brand assets to designing the node-based brand identity system in which those assets are created, maintained, and kept consistent. This shift from designer as creator to designer as system architect is at the core of what this research sets out to explore.

1.2 Research aim

This research aims to design and evaluate a node-based brand identity system that structures human-AI co-creation across the brand identity development workflow. Throughout this thesis, the term "node-based brand identity system" refers to a structured, multi-phase workflow built on a node-based generative AI platform, in which interconnected nodes guide the brand identity development process from strategic analysis to visual output. The node-based brand identity system is developed on the generative AI platform called Krea.ai and evaluated with professional designers both within and outside the context of a creative design agency. By designing and testing this system, this research explores what happens when the designer's role shifts from using AI as a generation tool to also designing the system that guides AI output.

1.3 Research question

The overarching research question guiding this study is:

How can a node-based brand identity system be designed to structure human-AI co-creation across the brand identity development workflow while maintaining the designer's strategic and curatorial role?

This question frames a two-part effort: understanding how branding is currently practised and where AI fits, then designing a system that structures human-AI co-creation across phases while keeping the designer's strategic and curatorial role central, rather than treating each phase as an isolated, prompt-based task. To answer it comprehensively, the study is structured around four interconnected sub-questions.

SQ1: How is the brand identity development workflow currently structured in professional design practice, and what role does AI play within it?

This question sets the groundwork for the research. Using a literature review, a focus group with brand designers, and a design hackathon, it maps how professional brand development works today and shows where generative AI fits and where designers push back against it.

SQ2: How can a node-based brand identity system be designed to structure human-AI co-creation in brand identity development, while keeping the designer's curatorial role?

This question turns the findings into a design. Drawing on brand theory and human-AI interaction research, it shapes a working system in Krea.ai across the six branding phases, with built-in points where the designer stays in control of the choices and the creative direction.

SQ3: How do professional designers evaluate the usability and applicability of a node-based brand identity system within their workflow?

This question tests the system in practice. Through a usability study with professional designers, combining a guided walkthrough, a think-aloud assignment, interviews, and a survey, it assesses whether the phase-based logic is sound, where friction arises, and whether the system could support real project work.

SQ4: How does working with a node-based brand identity system reshape the designer's role in the brand identity development process?

This question examines the shift at the centre of the thesis. Drawing on the same evaluation, it explores how the designer's role moves across the workflow, from analytical to curatorial to directive, and whether building and operating the system positions the designer as a system architect rather than only an asset creator.

The system was designed on a single node-based platform, Krea.ai, and tested with professional designers both inside and outside a creative design agency. This thesis focuses on the brand identity development workflow as used in professional, agency-based branding. The contribution is in a functional system and a structured explanation of designer-AI interactions rather than in statistically generalisable statements because the study is based on a Research through Design approach rather than a controlled experiment.

Through a combination of exploratory research and design-led evaluation, this study offers both a practical and a conceptual contribution. Practically, it delivers a node-based brand identity system, including a development log and user guide, that connects the full branding workflow and keeps strategic intent intact across phases. From a conceptual standpoint, it presents a way of working that might be applied to various multi-phase creative processes outside of branding and reframes the designer's job for the era of generative AI, from creator to system architect.

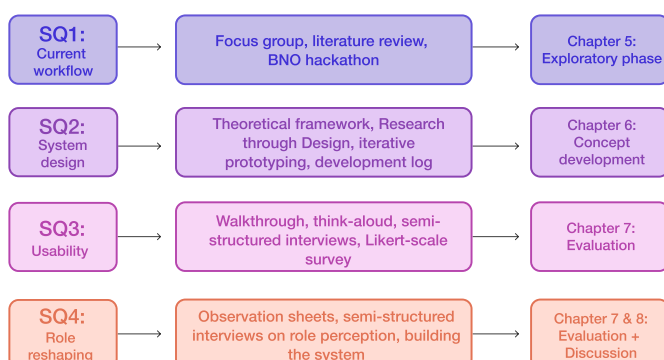
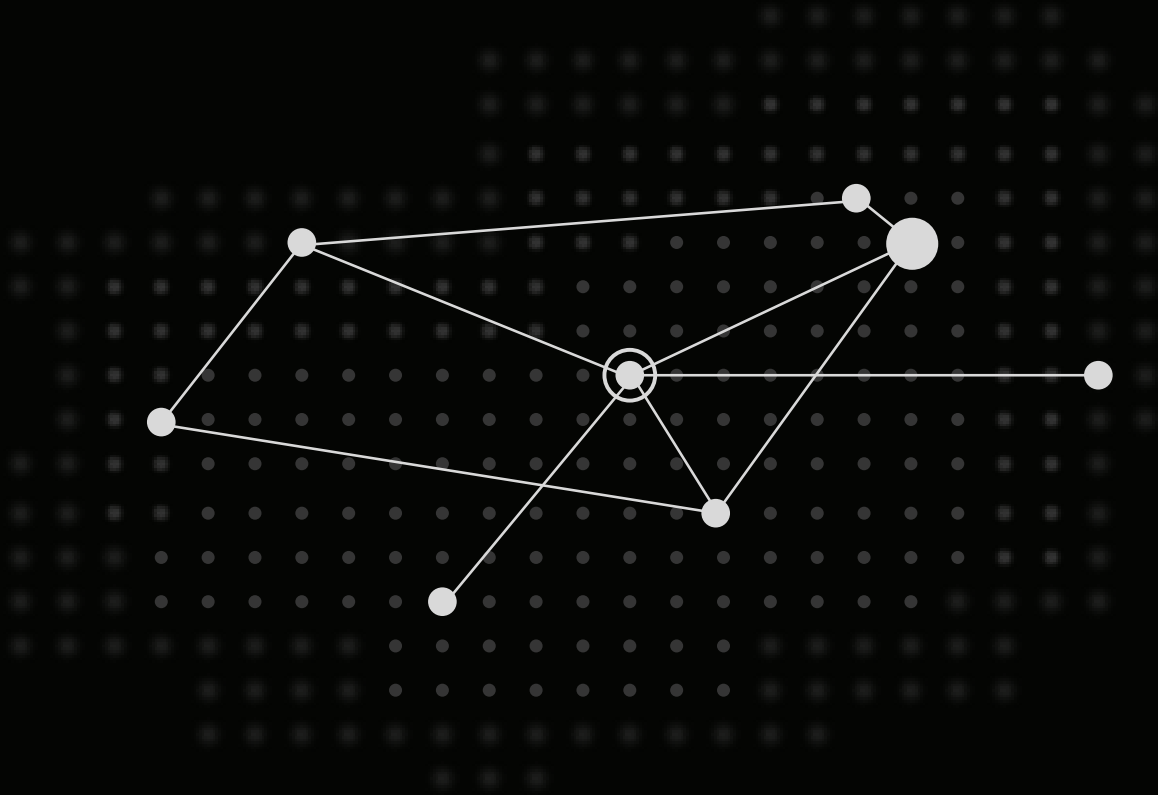


Figure 3. Research structure mapping sub-questions to methods and chapters.



02

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing brand identity, dynamic systems, and generative AI

This literature review examines brand identity theory, system-based branding, and generative AI from the perspective of the brand identity designer. In this review, “branding” refers specifically to the process of defining and shaping the visual, verbal, and strategic elements that make a brand recognisable and meaningful (Wheeler, 2018). It does not refer to brand marketing or brand activation, which deal with how an existing brand identity is communicated to consumers through campaigns and channels (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Brand identity is not only a visual or strategic output but also a cultural and symbolic construct (Holt, 2004; Beverland, 2009). This thesis focuses on the design stage and how generative AI changes the way designers approach it.

Although it has diverse meanings, the term “system” is commonly used in both branding literature and AI research. According to Felsing (2010), a “dynamic brand identity system” is one that is made to allow for variation and adaptability, with certain components staying the same (such as the logo or colour palette) while others change based on context, audience, or media (such as imagery, layout, or tone). A new method for achieving this kind of dynamic brand system is provided by generative AI, which allows designers to produce outputs that conform to a brand system’s guidelines rather than having to manually create each adaptation. Because of this, it is essential to understand how such a system should be designed so that designers can keep control over what stays the same and what can change in brand identity. A computational context where AI models generate outputs like text or images is referred to as a “generative AI system” (Tomczak, 2024). A “node-based workflow” is a visual interface that lets designers build and edit generative processes by connecting processing steps as nodes, without writing code. Unless otherwise specified, the term “brand system” refers to a dynamic brand identity system.

In contrast to a marketing designer creating campaign assets, a UX designer working on digital products, or a freelance designer working independently, the designer in this research is a brand identity designer within a creative agency context: someone responsible for

creating a brand strategy and translating it into visual brand identity systems, usually working with clients across industries (Wheeler, 2018; Olins, 2008).

This review’s main focus is on what brand identity designers need to execute their jobs successfully in an environment where generative AI is becoming a part of the process, rather than just what brand identity is or how AI can create brand material. Therefore, each section raises the question, “What does this mean for the professionals who actually design brands?”

2.1 Brand identity theory

Brand identity theory provides the foundations for understanding how brands create meaning, build recognition, and stay coherent across touchpoints, such as packaging, advertising, social media, websites, and physical spaces. When creating a brand, brand identity designers use these principles to guide their strategic and visual choices. Four related topics are reviewed in this section. First, the difference between brand image and brand identity. Second, how brand character is shaped by brand personality and brand archetypes. Third, the actual process of creating a brand identity. Fourth, what these theories mean when generative AI systems create brand expressions instead of designers producing them manually.

2.1.1 Identity, image, and the structure of brand associations

The difference between brand identity and brand image is a key principle of brand identity theory. While brand image describes the perceptions that customers actually have, brand identity refers to the set of associations that brand strategists aim to create and maintain (D. Aaker, 1996). Put differently, brand image is what the consumer perceives, but brand identity is what an organisation projects (Figure 4). The strategic and design decisions that brand identity designers make when creating a brand are the primary focus of this thesis.

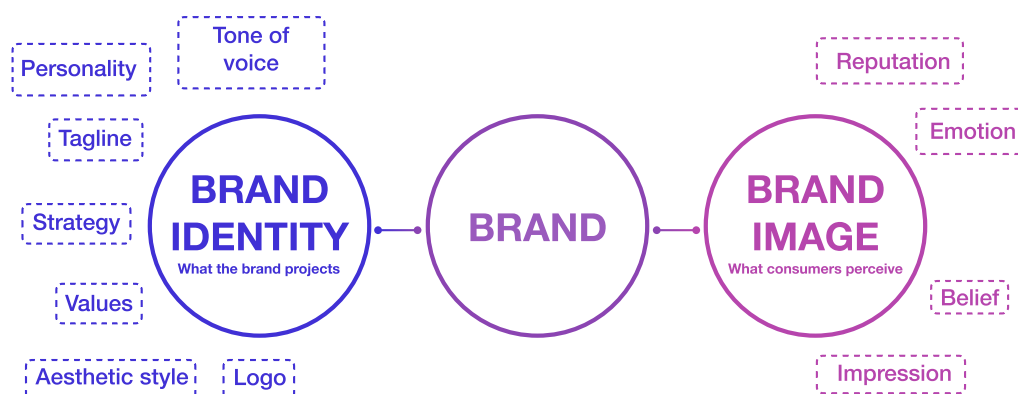


Figure 4. Brand identity versus brand image, from projection to perception.

Beyond this distinction, brand identity theory also offers a way of understanding how those associations are structured. Despite describing brands from the perspective of the consumer, Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity model structural logic directly relates to the development of brand identity. According to Keller, brand equity is based on the strength, favourability, and uniqueness of the associations that consumers hold about a brand in memory. This is known as brand knowledge, and it remains in memory as a network of associations. This thesis does not adopt Keller's model to analyse consumer perception. Instead, it uses a structural understanding as its starting point: if customers see a brand as a network of interrelated associations, then the system that creates that brand identity should be networked too. Because it links separate brand components into a single structured whole, a node-based workflow is architecturally appropriate, reflecting the associative structure that Keller defines on the consumer side. This networked brand identity structure is further discussed in Section 2.2.2.

This networked, multidimensional view is reinforced by later brand identity literature. De Chernatony (1999) defines brand identity management as the continuous process of aligning a brand's strategic intent with its expressions across touchpoints like advertising and packaging, and ensuring that these are perceived as intended by the audience. Kapferer (2012) adds to this by identifying the gap between what a brand projects and what consumers actually perceive as one of the main challenges of brand identity management. According to Kapferer, a brand's identity is multidimensional, covering not only its colour scheme and typeface but also its interaction with customers, cultural positioning, values, personality, and how it defines the identity of its users. Therefore, a brand identity as employed in this thesis includes both a brand's values and the ways in which they are communicated verbally and visually. These are various levels of the same system: the visual identity is shaped by the strategic identity, which in turn affects how customers view the brand.

2.1.2 Brand personality and archetypes

Another essential concept in brand identity theory is brand personality. Sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness are the five dimensions of brand personality that Jennifer Aaker (1997) suggested, expanding on the more extensive brand identity framework created by David Aaker (1996). These characteristics give a human perspective on how customers view brands. Despite its broad adoption, the framework has been criticised for being culturally biased because its initial dimensions were derived from American customers and would not be applicable in other cultural contexts (Aaker et al., 2001).

Brand archetypes provide another method of defining brand character alongside these personality dimensions. Originally based on Jung's (1969) theory of universal patterns in the collective unconscious, twelve archetypes were later adapted for branding by Mark and Pearson (2001), including the Hero, the Explorer, and the Creator, each of which represents a narrative role that a brand plays in the lives of its target audience. Archetypes reflect the narrative a brand tells, whereas personality dimensions indicate how a brand comes across (such as truthful or exciting). The two complement each other: depending on their personality profiles, two brands may have the same archetype but appear very different (Figure 5). This means that more than one label is needed to provide outputs that are consistent with the brand. It calls for a multi-layered set of criteria that captures the brand's narrative and personality. This is important for brand equity since a strong, recognisable brand identity maintains consumer loyalty and trust across all touchpoints, including digital, radio, and print (Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

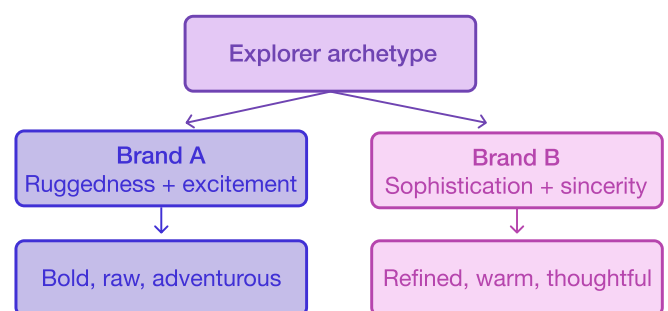


Figure 5. The same archetype produces different brand expressions depending on the personality profile applied.

2.1.3 Brand identity development

The process of creating a brand identity is called brand identity development. This can be divided into five stages (Figure 6), according to Wheeler (2018): market and audience research, brand strategy definition, visual and verbal identity design, application across touchpoints, and long-term brand management. These stages make sense: first, the designer decides what the brand stands for; then how it should sound and appear; finally, it is applied across everything the brand touches. The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, a framework developed by Urde (2013), builds on this by classifying brand identity into nine interconnected parts, from internal ones like mission and culture to external ones like positioning and relationships. The key realisation is that each of these components must work together. Since changing one component has an impact on the others, creating a cohesive whole is more important for brand identity creation than creating individual components.

This process includes a useful distinction. Visual identity is the tangible, designed layer that makes that brand strategy apparent, such as logo, colour, typography, and images, whereas brand identity is the entire set of strategic and visual components that define how a brand presents itself (Wheeler, 2018). Both are covered by the node-based system created in this thesis: its early stages deal with strategic foundations like personality and positioning, while its later stages transform those into visual identity outputs. This thesis' node-based brand identity system, where the output of each phase feeds into the next, reflects the interconnected logic of Urde's (2013) matrix, where changing one component impacts the others. The difference is that sections of the process that were previously completed fully by hand are now handled by generative AI within this system.

2.1.4 Implications for generative AI

The concepts discussed in the first three sections were created in an environment where companies controlled brand communication and used manual creative methods. Generative AI changes this setting in two ways.

First, the multidimensionality of brand identity as defined by Kapferer is directly challenged by generative AI workflows. The relational and cultural dimensions of brand identity that give visual outputs their meaning are difficult for these workflows to express (Hafez, 2025; Heigl, 2025). Instead, they usually work with visual features like style, colours, and composition. This means that creating a brand is more than just a visual exercise for designers. It requires translating various dimensions into logical design choices, many of which rely on contextual information that is difficult to summarise in a prompt or a set of AI tool parameters (Subramonyam et al., 2024; Park et al., 2024).

In a comparable direction, the layered nature of personality and archetype discussed in Section 2.1.2 implies that to ensure that AI-generated outputs remain consistent with the intended brand character, brand personality may need to be integrated not only in guidelines but also in the generative system itself.

Second, maintaining the consistency of brand material produced by generative AI at scale becomes a challenge in and of itself. According to Van Noort et al. (2020), preserving a consistent brand identity has long been crucial for maintaining consumer trust and brand equity across traditional media including radio, television, print advertising, and digital platforms. However, as generative AI enables brands to personalise content for individual consumers, this consistency might decrease as AI-generated brand representations begin to vary across audiences, making it more difficult for people to develop lasting relationships with the brand. Agersborg et al. (2020) describe this as a structural risk of AI-driven customisation in their master's thesis from the University of Gothenburg. The perceived identity of a brand may become inconsistent among members of the same target group as content becomes more individualised, damaging the consistency that is essential to brand equity.

Together, these challenges suggest that for brand designers working with generative AI, the task is shifting. Building brand systems that integrate a brand's personality, cultural aspects, and strategic aim into the generating process itself is now more important than simply defining a brand's appearance. The next sections focus on how brand designers could structure such brand identity systems.

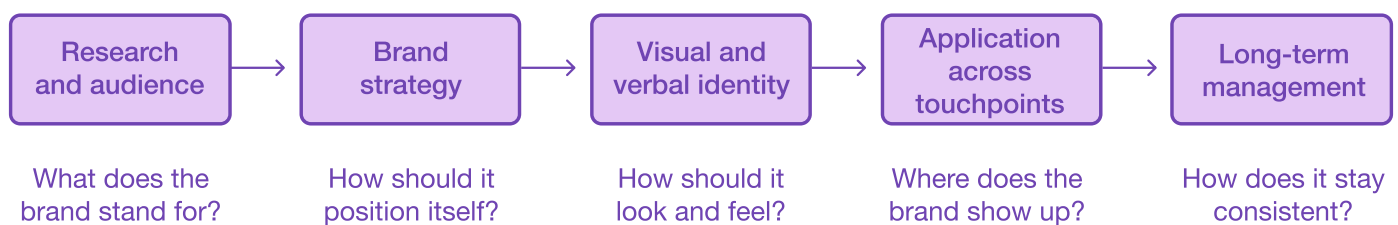


Figure 6. Brand identity development phases according to Wheeler, 2018.

2.2 Dynamic and system-based branding

Brand identity and its importance were discussed in Section 2.1. This section further explores the practical structure of brand identity. It presents the idea of a brand identity system, which is a collection of guidelines, constraints, and connections that together specify how a brand expresses itself. This idea is essential to the thesis since the node-based system created in this study is fundamentally a generative AI-powered brand identity system.

2.2.1 From static guidelines to dynamic systems

Static brand guidelines, which define rules that specify how a logo, colour scheme, typography, and images should be used, have historically been used to capture brand identity (Wheeler, 2018). When a small team generates few deliverables, these guidelines are effective. However, such standards become limiting when companies must appear across a wider range of channels, platforms, and audiences. A visual brand guide might explain how a logo should appear on an A4 sheet, but it often does not define how the brand should appear on an interactive website, Instagram story, or in-person pop-up event. It describes the brand's appearance to designers, but it does not explain how to modify it.

Designers have created what Felsing (2010) refers to as dynamic visual identity systems in response. These systems define a collection of rules and elements that allow brand expressions to vary based on the situation while still being recognisable as the brand to customers, instead of defining a single fixed style (Figure 7). For instance, a multinational corporation such as Coca-Cola uses different branding expressions, packaging designs, and advertising techniques in other nations to appeal to local consumers while maintaining the consistency of its essential components, such as the red colour and the logo. The reasoning is straightforward: create precise guidelines for elements that remain constant, such as the colour scheme, logo, and typographic style, and allow everything else to vary within those guidelines (Felsing, 2010; Mei & Padil, 2024).

This transition from static guidelines to dynamic systems is a sign of a broader shift in the perception of brand identity. Both Kapferer's (2012) multidimensional identity structure and David Aaker's (1996) brand identity model already made a distinction between a brand's core identity, the components that must stay the same over time, and its extended identity, the components that can adapt. According to Da Silveira et al. (2013), brand identity should be viewed as relational and dynamic, changing in reaction to societal and cultural changes while maintaining fundamental principles. And Holt (2004) and Beverland (2009) show that enduring brands achieve a balance between ongoing adaptation and historical consistency. For brand designers, this means that designing a system of rules that can produce various outputs while maintaining the consistency of the brand is now more important than simply creating a logo or a group of fixed assets.

2.2.2 Brands as connected systems

The idea that brands themselves can be viewed as systems of interrelated parts is also reflected in the shift towards dynamic brand identity. Brand systems, according to Farooq Padela et al. (2023), are networks of interacting people, processes, and symbolic elements where meaning is created by the relationships between parts rather than by each component alone.

For instance, a brand's colour scheme does not have meaning on its own. As shown in Figure 8, its relationship to the brand's typeface, tone of voice, imagery style, and the situations in which they coexist gives it significance. When one component is changed, the perception of the others is affected. From the standpoint of systemic design, Jones (2014) argues that instead of designing individual artefacts, modern design increasingly focuses on structuring interactions within complex systems, such as information, organisational, and product and service systems.

Keller's (1993) associative network model and Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, discussed in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.3, make a similar point: a brand is not one thing; it is a connection of parts that gain meaning through how they relate to each other. Node-based workflows follow that same logic. A designer connects individual nodes into a larger structure, and it is that structure, the relationships between the nodes, that carries the brand identity.

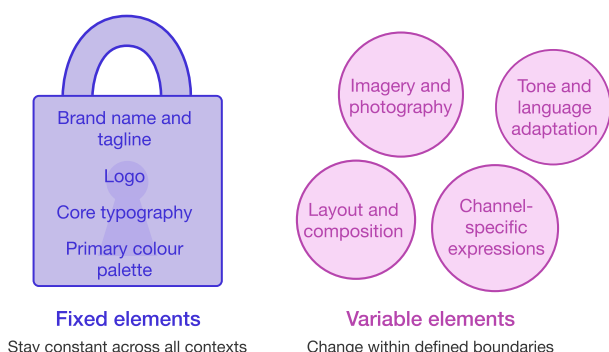


Figure 7. Fixed versus variable brand identity elements.

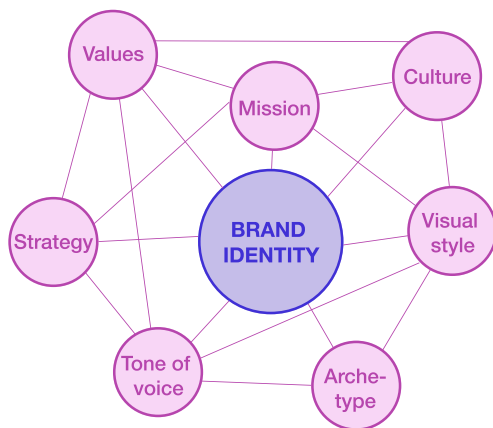


Figure 8. Brand identity as an associative network.

2.2.3 From visual assets to design parameters

If a set of rules and connections can be used to create brand identity, the next challenge is whether these rules can be specific enough to be used by a computational brand development tool, such as a node-based AI tool. Manavis et al. (2023) explore how visual elements have been transformed into design parameters using tools such as Grasshopper, a visual programming tool connected with Rhino's 3D modelling software (McNeel & Associates, n.d.). Shape, geometry, colour, and texture are examples of properties that can be turned into quantifiable values that guide the creation of product variations. The basic principle is important even if their focus is on physical product design rather than brand identity: the visual aspect of brand identity does not have to be defined in a brand book. It could potentially be transformed into structured parameters that are suitable for a dynamic brand system.

Combining this parametric method with generative AI in the context of brand identity has not yet been implemented. Section 2.3 reviews the platforms and technologies that enable this.

2.3 Generative AI in branding and design

While generative AI opens up new opportunities for the development and use of brand identity systems, it also raises concerns about creative control, brand consistency, and the evolving role of the designer. The relevant developments are reviewed in this part, including what generative AI is and its limitations, how human-AI collaboration functions in creative practice, and which platforms and technologies are available to enable a structured dynamic brand identity workflow.

2.3.1 Generative AI: an overview

In general, artificial intelligence refers to computational systems that carry out activities often associated with human cognition, including pattern recognition, decision-making, language generation, and image generation (Russell & Norvig, 2021). Large language models (LLMs) and generative models fall within the domain of machine learning, which is most relevant to today's branding practices. These systems do not follow predefined rules of programmers. Instead, they aim to provide outputs that are contextually suitable and statistically coherent, though not always strategically useful, by learning statistical patterns from big datasets.

Since ChatGPT's public release in November 2022, generative AI has developed quickly, creating new opportunities for creative activities. The diffusion model is the most used technology for creating AI images. Tools like Stable Diffusion and DALL-E are built on diffusion models, which are capable of recreating pictures from noise. During training, these models learn to associate text descriptions with visual features, allowing them to produce realistic visuals from text prompts (Zhang et al., 2023). Additionally, generative AI systems are increasingly functioning inside modular models that integrate different elements, such as search platforms, language models, and picture generation models (Tomczak, 2024). This allows for complex procedures where these different models work together to generate results. One such modular generating environment is Krea.ai, the generative AI platform used in this thesis.

The primary characteristic of these generative AI systems that is important for this thesis is a gap between their technical abilities and understanding of strategy. Even while generative AI is good at automating repetitive and technical tasks, it still lacks the intellectual, communicative, and cultural awareness that defines professional design work (Hafez, 2025). Artists and designers frequently complain about AI-generated outputs' inability to include personal opinion or societal nuance (Heigl, 2025). This is similar to more general conversations around generative AI, which argue that intentionality and critical judgement are necessary for authorship, capabilities lacking in existing AI systems (Anscomb, 2025). This divide is what makes the brand identity designer's job crucial: not as a manufacturer of particular products, but as the creator of the brand identity system that AI functions within. This suggests that the goal of the node-based system being developed for this thesis should be to create a structured environment where the designer's strategic and artistic choices direct the AI's output rather than to automate the designer's judgement.

2.3.2 Human-AI collaboration in creative work

Studies on human-AI collaboration have shown that generative systems are more effective when used in collaboration with human designers than when used independently. Rezwana and Maher (2023) developed this perspective using the COFI (Co-Creative Framework for Interaction) framework, which argues that the quality of human-AI co-creation depends not only on the capabilities of the AI model but also on the collaborative architecture (Figure 9), which includes the roles and communication channels assigned to humans and AI agents. This viewpoint claims that the structure of the interaction is a design variable in itself.

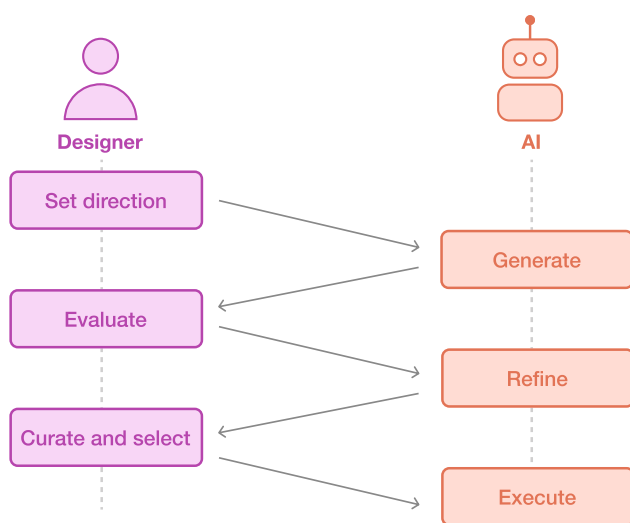


Figure 9. Designer-AI turn-taking pattern based on the COFI framework.

Similarly, Petrescu and Krishen (2023) describe AI-supported creative work as a type of hybrid intelligence in which computer power and human judgement are complementary. When using generative AI, brand identity designers frequently take on a strategic or directing role, choosing and perfecting the results generated by AI systems (Park et al., 2024). This transformation suggests that generative technologies have the potential to change not just how designers work, but also how the brand identity designer's role itself develops.

Research is showing increasing evidence of this change. Palani and Ramos (2024) investigated the use of generative AI by creative practitioners, such as architects and designers, across the many phases of real projects. They discovered that practitioners use a variety of AI tools at different phases, and that their role is changing from producing outputs directly to curating and selecting information produced by AI. Their research highlights how crucial it is to understand these changing roles and processes in order to create tools that genuinely support

designers in their jobs. This discovery closely relates to the goal of this thesis, which is to create a node-based brand identity system that supports rather than replaces the brand designer in a professional branding workflow.

Studies do, however, also highlight a number of difficulties. There is a mismatch between prompt-based interfaces and traditional creative processes, as highlighted by the fact that brand identity designers regularly report having difficulties translating visual thoughts into textual prompts (Park et al., 2024). Furthermore, when designers rely too much on generated outputs, AI-generated content may result in design fixation and a decrease in the variety of ideas (Wadinambiarachchi et al., 2024). The very flexibility that dynamic brand identity systems are intended to offer may be undermined if generative techniques reduce rather than increase the range of outputs. For designers who value imaginative creativity and experimentation, this is not just a restriction but a danger to the quality of their work.

The nature of design knowledge itself may provide a deeper explanation for this challenge. There are two types of knowledge, according to Polanyi (1966): explicit knowledge, which can be expressed verbally, and tacit knowledge, which is learned through experience but is difficult to put into words. The second type, which includes intuitions, sensory assessments, and contextual awareness that influence creative decisions without the designer being able to completely explain why, accounts for a large portion of what makes a designer successful (Cross, 2006). For prompt-based AI interactions, this distinction is important because prompts require that the creator express all creative intent verbally. Prompt-based interfaces cause a structural bottleneck if a large portion of design skill cannot be expressed verbally because they need the explicit articulation of knowledge that is naturally resistant to it (Subramonyam et al., 2024; Park et al., 2024). Accordingly, in an AI-augmented workflow, human designers are valuable for both strategic oversight and the tacit knowledge that influences creative decisions below the level of conscious expression.

2.3.3 Generative AI in branding workflows

Creative branding agencies and the marketing industry are seeing a rise in the use of generative AI. Research indicates that, in terms of customer engagement measures, the marketing images produced by AI are as good as those developed by humans, if not better (Hartmann et al., 2025). Logos, typefaces, and visual themes are all examples of brand assets that AI systems can create.

Experimental systems show how brand guidelines, including a particular visual style, colour scheme, or tone of voice, can be integrated into generative models. For example, Fong and See (2024) present BrandDiffusion,

a system that creates marketing images that fit a certain brand style by using diffusion models that have been trained on branded datasets. Zhang et al. (2025) show that the coherence of generated product designs is improved when brand design DNA is integrated into generative AI models. These examples show that it is theoretically feasible to integrate brand parameters into generative AI systems, even though both approaches prioritise output quality over the structure of the branding workflow.

In reality, most generative AI-based branding workflows still rely on prompt engineering, requiring designers to actively guide AI outputs through iterative prompting (Park et al., 2024). Adeola (2025) discovered in a master's thesis from Oklahoma State University that, instead of working inside structured brand identity systems that integrate brand guidelines, designers often adjust prompts or apply manual changes to guarantee brand consistency. Similarly, Alshehri (2025) explored how generative AI can be grounded in specific brand contexts in a master's thesis from Mälardalen University. She discovered that agencies often depend on unofficial, ad hoc processes to maintain brand alignment. These results show that while generative AI is capable of producing large quantities of brand content, structured systems that direct AI within professional branding workflows are still underexplored.

2.3.4 Node-based generative workflows: a new direction

Node-based generative platforms allow designers to easily integrate multiple creative steps into a workflow rather than typing in a single prompt and receiving a

single result. For example, a step that creates an image, a step that removes the background, and a step that changes colour are all independent nodes. Because the designer gets to choose the connections between the nodes, the process is transparent, repeatable, and easy to tweak. Node-based systems have been around for years. Tools like Grasshopper (McNeel & Associates, n.d.), a visual programming environment that integrates with Rhino's 3D modelling software, and Dynamo for parametric design, where designers set rules and parameters instead of drawing everything by hand, have been used by designers in architecture and product design (Manavis et al., 2023). The application of this approach to generative AI in brand identity design is new.

Node-based interfaces with generative AI are now available on a number of platforms, such as ComfyUI (open-source, used by technical studios), Flora (collaborative, used by agencies), Adobe Project Graph (integrated with Creative Cloud), Figma Weave (formerly Weavy, acquired by Figma in late 2025), Magnific Spaces (formerly Freepik Spaces, team-based, with real-time collaboration on a shared canvas), and Krea.ai (the platform used in this thesis, offering access to over 50 AI models on an infinite canvas) (see Table 1). These platforms share the concept of reframing the designer's role as one of creating workflows instead of only making suggestions. The designer creates a structured workflow in which all steps are clearly marked, modifiable, and linked to one another. According to Felsing (2010) and Farooq Padela et al. (2023), this is in line with the system-based branding logic. A node-based workflow makes sense as a setting for implementing the rules, criteria, and relationships that form the basis of brand identity.

Table 1. Overview of node-based generative AI platforms for creative workflows.

Platform	Main use	Design discipline	AI type	Since	Key feature
ComfyUI	Custom AI pipelines	VFX, animation, game dev	Image, video (diffusion)	2023	Open-source, 60K + community nodes, model-agnostic
Flora	Creative production	Branding, advertising, film	Image, video, text	2024	Collaborative canvas, Style DNA, agency-focused
Adobe Project Graph	Cross-app workflows	All creative disciplines	Multi-model (30 + third-party)	2025	Integrated with Creative Cloud, shareable capsules
Figma Weave	Generative + editing	UI/UX, visual design	Image (compositing, matte, relighting)	2025	Combined GenAI + traditional editing tools
Magnific Spaces	Team-based production	Marketing, advertising	Image, video, audio	2025	Real-time collaboration, production templates
Krea.ai	Multi-model creative	Branding, concept art	Image, video, 3D, audio (50+ models)	2023	Infinite canvas, real-time generation, 50+ models

2.4 Synthesis and research gap

2.4.1 What the field has focused on

The difficulty of creating brand identities, including both their strategic and visual dimensions, in the context of generative AI is broadly addressed by each of the three areas discussed above. The concept of brand identity is defined as the visual, strategic, and verbal expression of a brand across its touchpoints (Keller, 1993; Kapferer, 2012). Brand personality and archetypes form brand character by characterising a brand in human terms in aspects such as sincerity or excitement and story roles such as Hero or Explorer (J. Aaker, 1997; Jung, 1969; Mark & Pearson, 2001). In practice, brand identity is developed through a phased process of research, strategy, design, and application across touchpoints (Wheeler, 2018). Studies on dynamic and system-based branding have shown that identity can be seen as a flexible, rule-based system that maintains a balance between stability and variation (Felsing, 2010; D. Aaker, 1996), that brands function as networks of interconnected parts rather than as collections of individual parts (Farooq Padela et al., 2023; Jones, 2014; Urde, 2013), and that visual brand elements can be transformed into structured parameters for use in computational tools (Manavis et al., 2023). According to research on generative AI, AI can create brand content and even match human-created visuals in engagement metrics (Hartmann et al., 2025). However, current workflows rely on ad hoc prompting instead of structured systems (Adeola, 2025; Alshehri, 2025), and designers find it difficult to translate their strategic and visual thinking into text-based prompts (Park et al., 2024).

2.4.2 What remains underexplored

First, no research has yet designed, built, and evaluated a generative AI system that structures the full brand identity development workflow. AI in branding has been studied at the output and production level (Hartmann et al., 2025; Fong & See, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025) and the tool-use level (Adeola, 2025; Park et al., 2024), but not at the AI system-architecture level (Figure 10). The structural integration of brand identity into a node-based generative AI system that directs outputs during a professional, human-AI collaborative branding workflow has not yet been studied.

Second, there is still a lack of theoretical research on the brand identity designer's role as a brand system architect. This role is suggested by a selection of sources: Adeola (2025) emphasises model customisation as a type of design skill; Kirkby et al. (2025) explore human-led teaming setups for human-AI co-creation in brand development; and Na and Kim (2021) characterise the

designer as a process orchestrator. None, however, describe how designers might create and organise a generative brand identity system rather than just incorporating AI technologies into their existing workflow. In other words, this thesis explores the transition from employing AI as a tool in an already-existing workflow to building the workflow system including AI tools itself, and figuring out how AI is structured, limited, and guided throughout the branding process.

Finally, there is a lack of academic research into the translation of brand identity theory frameworks, such as Keller's (1993) associative network model and Jennifer Aaker's (1997) personality dimensions, into brand identity system parameters within node-based generative platforms like Krea.ai, Flora, ComfyUI, and Adobe Project Graph. These platforms are seeing growing adoption among creative professionals for branding projects.

By creating and evaluating a node-based brand identity system in Krea.ai inside the workflow of professional branding work at a creative design agency, this study aims to fill these gaps. The system was created from the perspective of the designer using a human-AI co-creation approach. In doing so, this study explores what happens when designers go from using AI as a generation tool to also creating the system that guides AI output.

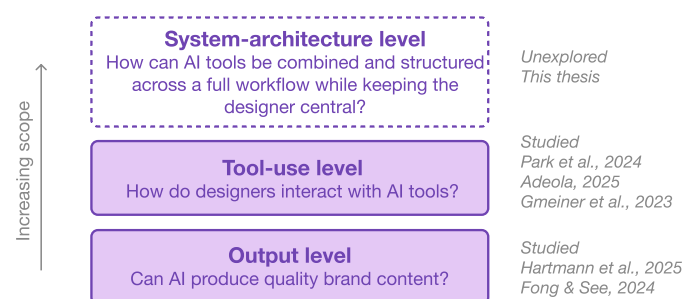
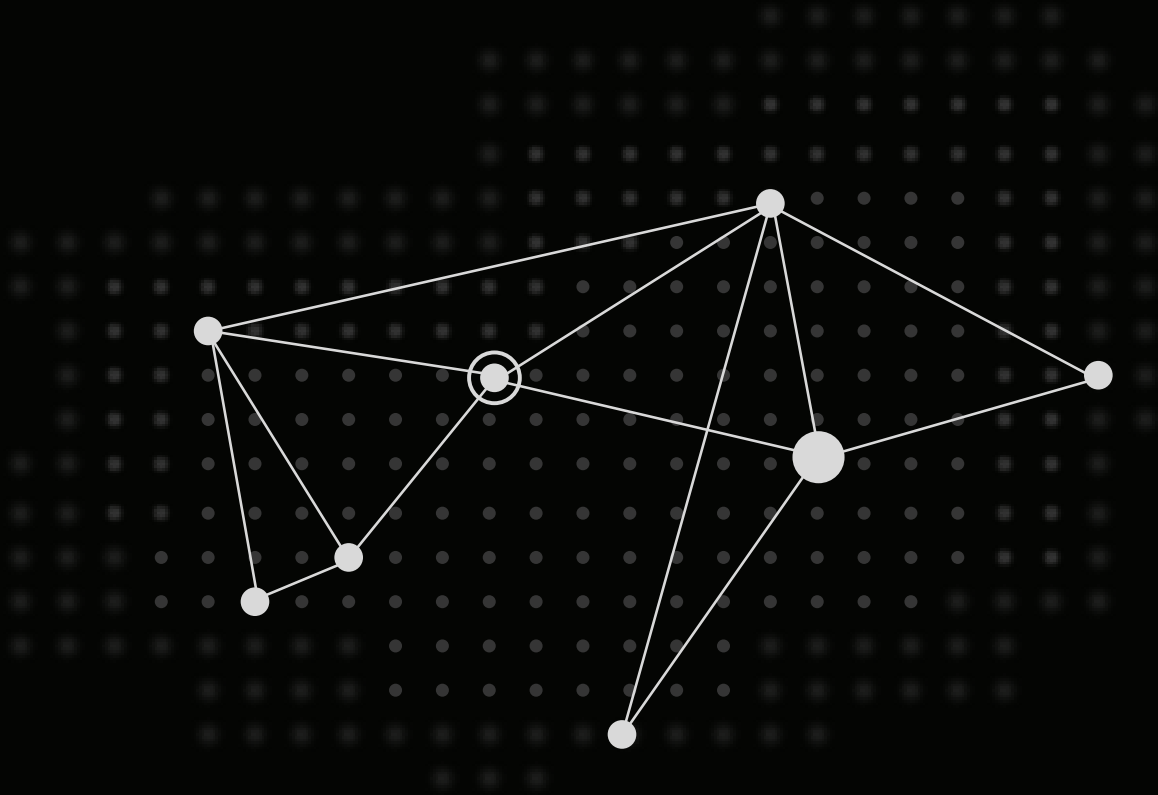


Figure 10. Three levels of generative AI research in branding.



03

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Five concepts shaping the design of a node-based brand identity system

Three areas were explored in the literature review: brand identity theory, system-based branding, and generative AI in design. Five concepts were chosen from these domains and formed into the theoretical framework for this thesis. Together they provide a structured way of thinking about how to design an AI-augmented brand identity system, and they guide the design, development, and evaluation of the node-based brand identity system. Each concept provides an answer to a particular design question, and when combined, they provide a layered logic that connects brand theory to the brand system's architecture. Each concept is introduced below, followed by an explanation of how they relate to one another.

3.1 The five concepts

3.1.1 Brand identity as a network (Keller, 1993)

According to Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity model, brand knowledge is a network of associations in consumers' memories, and the strength, favourability, and distinctiveness of these associations determine brand equity. As discussed in Section 2.1.1, what matters is how brand components work together to create a cohesive whole rather than a single logo or personality trait. This research does not claim that the node-based system mirrors how consumers actually store brand knowledge. What it takes from Keller is a structural idea: that brand identity lives in the connections between elements, not in any single element on its own. If brand identity is formed by the connections between its parts, then a system made up of connected nodes is a way to show and create it that makes sense from a structural point of view.

3.1.2 Brand personality and archetype as structured inputs (J. Aaker, 1997; Jung, 1969; Mark & Pearson, 2001)

Introduced in Section 2.1.2, J. Aaker's (1997) five brand personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) offer an approach to characterise a brand in human terms, in practice known as brand anthropomorphism (Epley et al., 2007). In addition to this, Mark and Pearson's (2001) twelve brand archetypes, rooted in Jung's (1969) theory of universal narrative patterns and adapted for branding, describe the narrative role that a brand plays in the lives of its target audience. Archetypes such as the Hero, the Explorer, and the Creator represent recurring character structures that brands can embody to connect with their audience on a deeper, symbolic level. The two frameworks interact at different levels: archetypes define the role a brand plays, whereas brand personality dimensions define how a brand presents itself and

interacts with its target audience. Depending on their personality profiles, two brands may have the same archetype but look entirely different.

Other frameworks could describe brand character in comparable terms. Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix structures brand identity into nine connected parts, and Kapferer's (2012) brand identity prism maps identity across six facets such as physique, personality, culture, and the relationship between brand and consumer. These frameworks, however, treat brand identity as a coherent relational structure that is useful for brand analysis but more difficult to implement as separate variable inputs. J. Aaker's dimensions and Mark and Pearson's archetypes are specifically chosen here because they break down brand character into a layered but limited set of values: a personality profile and an archetype can be assigned to a brand, and they can be methodically recombined. When combined, they provide the node-based system with a layered set of inputs that specify brand character, allowing generative outputs to differ in style while being consistent with the brand's narrative identity and personality.

The brand personality dimensions and archetypes are not predetermined by the designer in the node-based system created in this thesis. Based on the research and analysis from Phase 1 of the brand identity workflow, the system creates four brand scenarios in Phase 2, each of which suggests a different archetype. The scenario that most closely aligns with the brand's strategic direction is then chosen by the designer and client, along with one or two supporting archetypes. In Phase 3, the system creates three unique brand concepts based on various combinations of J. Aaker's personality dimensions, using the selected archetype as a basis. This means that while the personality profile varies, the archetype remains the same among concepts, giving the designer meaningful creative possibilities that all share the same narrative core. This method is useful because it lowers the chance that the visual outputs will vary from the brand's intended identity.

3.1.3 Dynamic identity systems and design parameters (Felsing, 2010; Manavis et al., 2023)

A fundamental concept of this thesis is outlined by Felsing's (2010) work on dynamic visual identity systems, which is covered in Section 2.2.1: not every element of a brand identity needs to be fixed. While some elements like a logo or primary colour scheme remain consistent, others like images, layout, or tone can change within defined boundaries. The same idea is applied by the node-based brand identity system in this thesis. While certain nodes are left flexible, allowing the AI to produce variations, others are locked, producing consistent outputs every time. Because of the way the system is set up, a designer can modify the brand for

various situations, including changing the graphics for another country, making variations for a new platform, or exploring different visual directions, without having to start from scratch. While the flexible nodes allow the brand to change, the fixed nodes guarantee that it remains recognisable. This is what makes the system dynamic: it is not a one-time output but a reusable structure that can keep producing new, contextually appropriate brand expressions.

Felsing addresses the branding part of this idea, but developing a generative AI system also requires a way to turn brand elements into inputs that an AI model can process. This can be seen in a study about product design, where visual attributes like texture, colour, and shape are converted into quantifiable parameters that control variation (Manavis et al., 2023). Similar reasoning is applied to brand identity in this thesis: strategic brand components like tone of voice, personality dimensions, and archetype are structured as defined inputs within the node system, directing what the AI produces while maintaining brand consistency. Although the method is different (structured prompts and model settings instead of numerical sliders), the basic concept remains the same: controlling and reproducing creative intent. One of the questions this thesis explores through its evaluation study is whether this approach is effective for brand identity development.

Together, Felsing and Manavis et al. address two sides of the same challenge. Felsing defines what stays fixed and what varies in a brand system. Manavis et al. offer an approach for making variation systematic, which this thesis adapts for a generative branding context.

3.1.4 Co-creative framework for interaction (Rezwana & Maher, 2023)

Section 2.3.2 examines the COFI framework, which argues that the structure of the collaboration, including the roles played by humans and AI, as well as channels of communication, determines the quality of human-AI co-creation. COFI provides the framework for creating the node-based brand system's interaction architecture for this study. It ensures the brand system is structured so the AI handles generation and variation within set parameters, while the designer keeps control over strategic and creative decisions. The roles and channels of communication between the designer and AI must be carefully defined at every stage of the workflow, rather than being left to form by accident.

3.1.5 The designer as system architect (Palani & Ramos, 2024)

As discussed in Section 2.3.2, Palani and Ramos (2024) discovered that creative practitioners using generative AI are slowly transitioning from directly creating outputs to coordinating and curating content generated by AI.

This role shift changes what it means to be a brand identity designer and defines the main focus of this thesis: designing a generative brand identity system is itself a type of design activity. Instead of being only a tool operator, the designer also becomes the system's architect.

3.2 How the concepts connect

These five concepts come together to form the theoretical framework for this thesis. They provide the theoretical grounding for designing a generative AI system that maintains designer autonomy and strategic coherence throughout a multi-phase creative workflow. Every layer builds on the one before it and answers a specific design question (Figure 11).

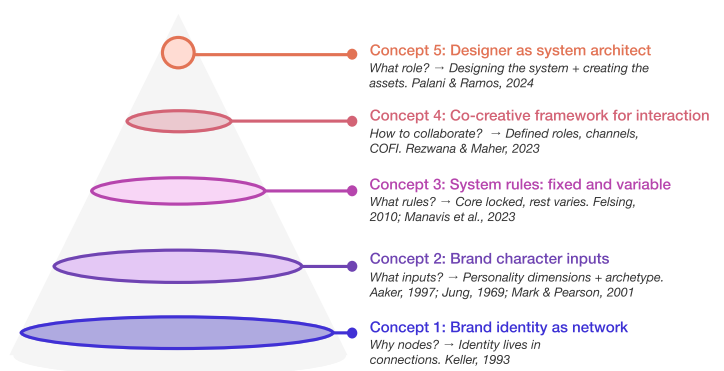


Figure 11. The five concepts forming the theoretical framework, layered from foundational structure (Keller, 1993) to the designer's overarching role (Palani & Ramos, 2024).

Concept 1: Relational structure (Keller, 1993). What structural logic should the system follow? Keller's relational network theory serves as the foundation. Connections between components, not a single component by itself, give brand identity its meaning. This is what makes a node-based approach a good fit: the architecture of the system reflects the structure of brand identity itself.

Concept 2: Structured character inputs (J. Aaker, 1997; Jung, 1969; Mark & Pearson, 2001). What brand inputs should feed the system? A relational structure needs content. J. Aaker's personality dimensions and Mark and Pearson's archetypes provide the structured inputs that are used in the brand system for the nodes to work with. Without Keller's relational logic, these inputs would have no structural home. Within a node-based architecture, they become functional parts of the system that shape what the AI generates.

Concept 3: Fixed and variable logic (Felsing, 2010; Manavis et al., 2023). What should remain fixed and what can vary? A network with inputs still needs rules. Felsing's dynamic brand identity theory defines what can change and what remains consistent. To translate visual brand elements into parameters that a generative brand system can understand, the parametric design approach from Manavis et al. (2023) provides a way to express those values computationally. Together, they provide the connection between variable nodes (elements that change, such as image style or composition) and constant nodes (core elements, such as colour scheme, logo, and typography). The collaboration between AI and designers is especially important at the intersection between fixed and variable.

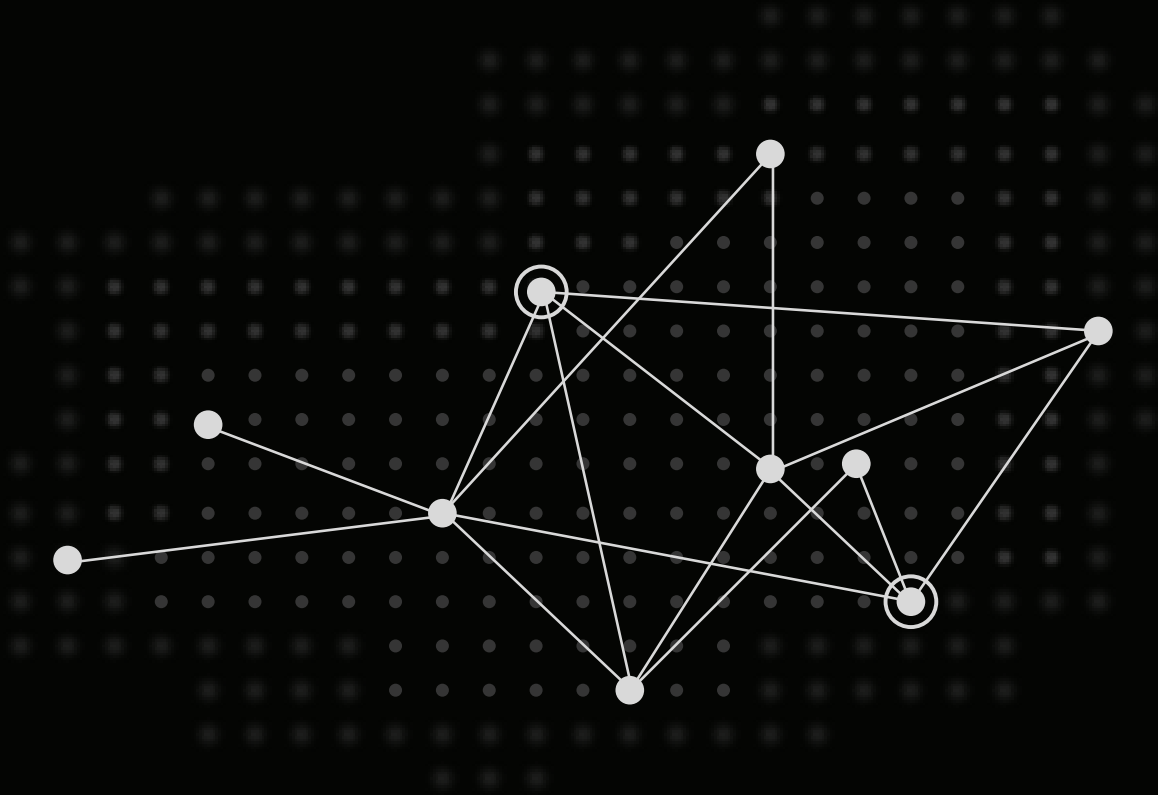
Concept 4: Co-creative framework for interaction (Rezwana & Maher, 2023). How should designers and AI collaborate? This is where COFI comes in. Rezwana and Maher's framework provides the principles for structuring how designer and AI work together at each point in the system. At fixed nodes, the designer decides and the AI executes. The AI creates within boundaries at flexible nodes, and the designer reviews and refines. The system could work theoretically without COFI, but the collaboration would not be taken into account.

Concept 5: Designer as system architect (Palani & Ramos, 2024). What role does the designer play? Palani and Ramos provide the overarching frame. The four previous concepts describe what the system is and how it works. Palani and Ramos explain what the designer is doing when they build it: not simply using an AI tool, but designing a generative system. The node-based brand identity system is not only a product the designer operates. It is also a design artefact the designer creates.

Each concept plays a necessary role in the design. Without the relational structure (Concept 1), the system would generate disconnected outputs with no brand consistency. Without structured character inputs (Concept 2), outputs would be visually varied but strategically meaningless. Without fixed and variable logic (Concept 3), consistency across touchpoints could not be maintained. Without a co-creative interaction architecture (Concept 4), the system would risk either full automation, with the designer excluded, or full manual control, where AI adds no value. Without the system architect role (Concept 5), the designer would be treated as an operator rather than the author of the system's logic. How these concepts shape the system is described in the concept development chapter (Chapter 6) and examined in the evaluation (Chapter 7).

The challenges the theoretical framework addresses are typical of any multi-phase creative process where strategic intent must be maintained across stages, such

as service design and product design, even though this theoretical framework was used to guide the design of a brand identity development system. Section 8.4 explores this further.



04

RESEARCH APPROACH

Research through Design, structured by the Double Diamond

This research follows a Research through Design approach (Zimmerman et al., 2007), structured by the Double Diamond framework (Design Council, 2005, 2019). This chapter introduces the overall methodology of the Double Diamond and explains how the three research phases map onto the framework. The detailed methods for each phase are presented in the chapter where that phase is reported: the exploratory phase in Chapter 5, the concept development phase in Chapter 6, and the evaluation phase in Chapter 7. Because the node-based system was designed and built during the concept development phase, the Research through Design methodology is explained in greater depth in that chapter.

4.1 The Double Diamond

The first diamond moves from divergent exploration to convergent integration to understand the problem. The second diamond applies the same cycle of opening up and focusing to design and test the solution. The framework was chosen because it provides a clear process for a graduation project that proceeds from understanding the problem to designing and evaluating a solution. It allows for iteration, returning to earlier stages when new information becomes available, which is important when designing a system intended to work within an existing professional workflow.

The four stages map onto this research as follows (Figure 12):

1. Discover (diverge): the current branding workflow and the role of AI were explored through a literature review, a focus group with four brand designers at the agency, and participation in a BNO AI x Design hackathon. This phase is reported in Chapter 5.
2. Define (converge): the findings were structured through workflow mapping, a morphological chart, and a set of design requirements that bridge the exploratory and concept development phases. This phase is also reported in Chapter 5.
3. Develop (diverge): the node-based brand identity system was designed and built through platform selection, iterative prototyping, and prompt engineering, guided by a Research through Design approach and the theoretical framework. This phase is reported in Chapter 6.
4. Deliver (converge): the system was evaluated through a qualitative usability study with professional designers, combining a guided walkthrough with think-aloud verbalisation, semi-structured interviews, and a Likert-scale survey. This phase is reported in Chapter 7.

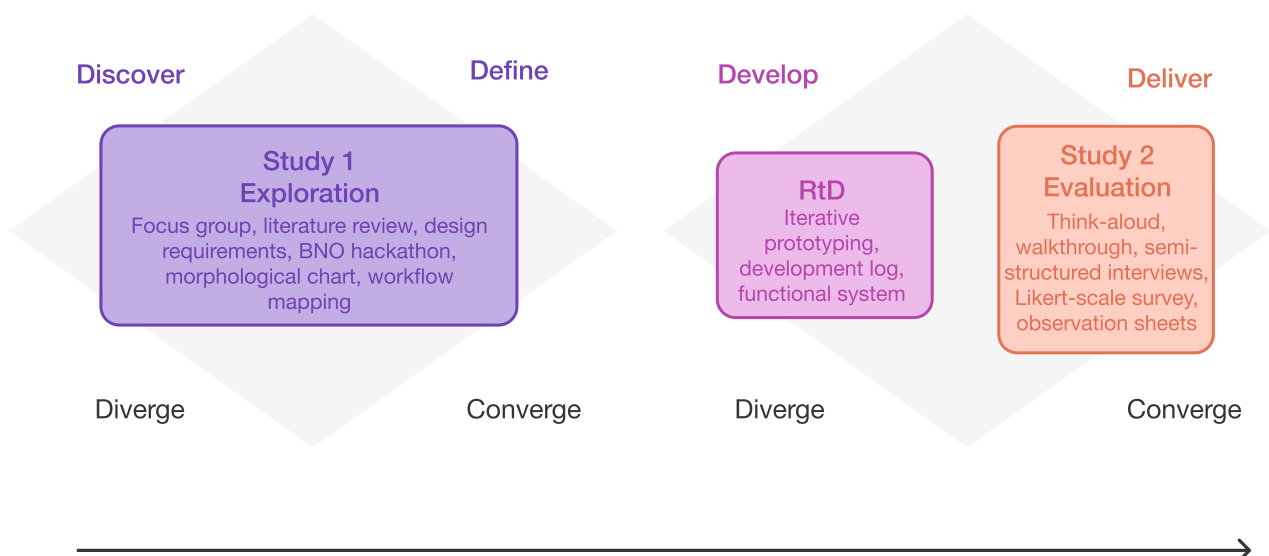
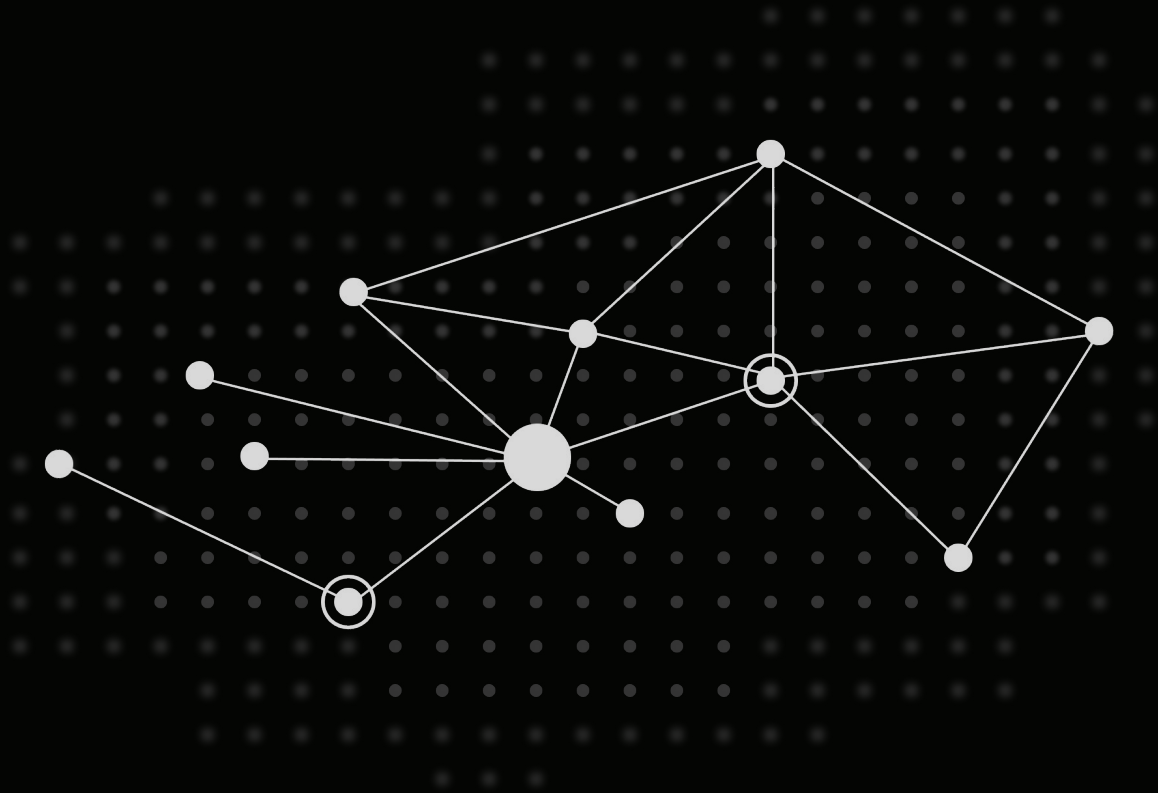


Figure 12. Research phases mapped onto the Double Diamond framework. Study 1 (exploratory) spans the Discover and Define stages, the Research through Design phase covers system development, and Study 2 (evaluation) delivers and tests the system with professional designers.



05

EXPLORATORY PHASE

Study 1, understanding the branding workflow and what role AI plays in it

This chapter presents the findings from the exploratory phase, which correspond to the Discover and Define stages of the Double Diamond (Design Council, 2005, 2019). It answers the first sub-question: how is the brand identity development workflow currently structured, and what role does AI play within it? The chapter follows a study format: Section 5.1 describes the methods, Section 5.2 presents the results, Section 5.3 discusses the findings, and Section 5.4 translates them into design requirements for the node-based brand system.

5.1 Methods

Three data sources were combined to map the current branding workflow and identify the role of AI within it. First, academic literature on branding processes (Kapferer, 2012; Olins, 2008; Wheeler, 2018) provided a starting point. Second, four of the agency's brand designers, each with five to ten years of experience, participated in a focus group to explore how branding functions in a professional environment. Third, external validation from the Dutch design community was obtained through an AI x Design hackathon organised by BNO (Beroepsorganisatie Nederlandse Ontwerpers) on 24 March 2026. The results from these sources were cross-checked using methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

To protect privacy, designers are referred to as Designer 1 through 4, and the agency is referred to as "the agency". The focus group setup is shown in Figure 13. All participants gave informed consent prior to the session; the consent form is provided in Appendix A. The focus group lasted approximately 70 minutes and was guided by a semi-structured facilitator guide covering three topics: the current branding workflow, how AI is used, and how designers feel about AI in their creative process (see Appendix B for the full facilitator guide). The session was recorded, transcribed, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-phase approach: familiarisation, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and writing up. A detailed audit trail documenting each phase of the analysis is provided in Appendix C. This produced six themes, which are presented in Section 5.2.3 and referenced throughout the results. The supporting quotes for each theme are provided in Appendix D. Full coded transcripts are available in the online appendix.

The hackathon brought together students, designers, educators, and researchers for a half-day working session. The researcher took part as an observer as well as a contributor. Although not a formal research method, the hackathon confirmed key focus group findings, including tool fatigue, the tension between craft and AI,

and the belief that designers should understand how AI adds value rather than master each individual tool. The full hackathon report is in Appendix E.

The results were structured using three synthesis methods. The literature and focus group results were compared to create a seven-phase branding workflow. The design space for the node-based system was explored using a morphological chart (Van Boeijen et al., 2020) that included important dimensions and potential choices for each. The combined findings were then used to create a set of design requirements that were represented as testable statements for use throughout the evaluation stage.

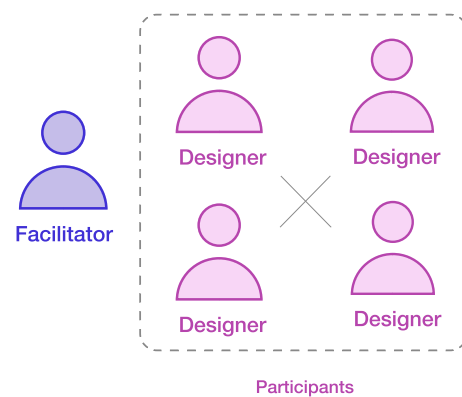


Figure 13. Focus group setup.

5.2 Results

The results are organised around three areas: the structure of the branding workflow (5.2.1), the pattern of AI involvement across its phases (5.2.2), and the perceptions and concerns designers expressed about using AI in brand identity work (5.2.3). After analysing the focus group data thematically, six themes were generated as follows: (1) AI as structural assistant, (2) the emotional and contextual gap, (3) generic outputs and trend bias, (4) reliability and planning risk, (5) tool fatigue and ecosystem instability, and (6) agency positioning and the value of process. Section 5.2.3 introduces these topics, which recur throughout Section 5.3's discussion.

5.2.1 The branding workflow

A seven-phase branding workflow was developed by integrating literature and focus group data and is shown in Figure 14. This workflow is structured into four stages: understanding, creating, delivering, and sustaining. According to the focus group, practitioners treat a few of the five phases identified by Wheeler (2018) as different processes, such as concept development and identity design. Designers go back and forth, especially between strategy and concept creation; therefore, the process is not strictly linear.

Phase 1 (research and discovery) and Phase 2 (strategy and positioning) are covered in the **understanding** stage. During Phase 1, designers conduct stakeholder interviews, client briefings, and brand audits (Kapferer, 2012; Olins, 2008). The most important input, according to Designer 3, comes from understanding what clients say “between the lines”, depending on interpretation rather than just gathering facts. The second phase involves using the research findings to build the brand’s purpose, values, and competitive positioning (D. Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). This is done by using archetype-based brand scenarios (Mark & Pearson, 2001).

Phase 3 (concept development) and Phase 4 (identity design) are covered in the **creating** stage. Phase 3 involves developing creative concepts based on a chosen brand scenario. In this phase, the archetype-based narrative from Phase 2 is complemented with personality dimensions that characterise how the brand should feel (J. Aaker, 1997). Moodboarding, developing creative directions, and client presentations belong to the activities. Here, the focus group’s strongest opinions were expressed: moodboarding, according to Designer 1, is more than just collecting pictures; it also includes the designer’s thoughts about the images. Designer 4 mentioned a designer who made a navigation shape based on a building they had seen; this was an unintentional connection that could not be written as a prompt. The chosen idea is developed into a complete visual identity in Phase 4, including a logo, typography, colour scheme, and graphic language (Felsing, 2010; Manavis et al., 2023).

The **delivering** stage covers Phase 5 (touchpoint design and application) and Phase 6 (brand guidelines and delivery). In Phase 5, the identity is applied across all brand touchpoints (Wheeler, 2018). Phase 6 combines all identity decisions into brand guidelines.

The **sustaining** stage covers Phase 7 (brand management and evolution), an ongoing process of monitoring and adapting the brand over time (Da Silveira et al., 2013). Phase 7 falls outside the scope of the node-based brand identity system of this thesis because it concerns the client’s post-handoff responsibilities.

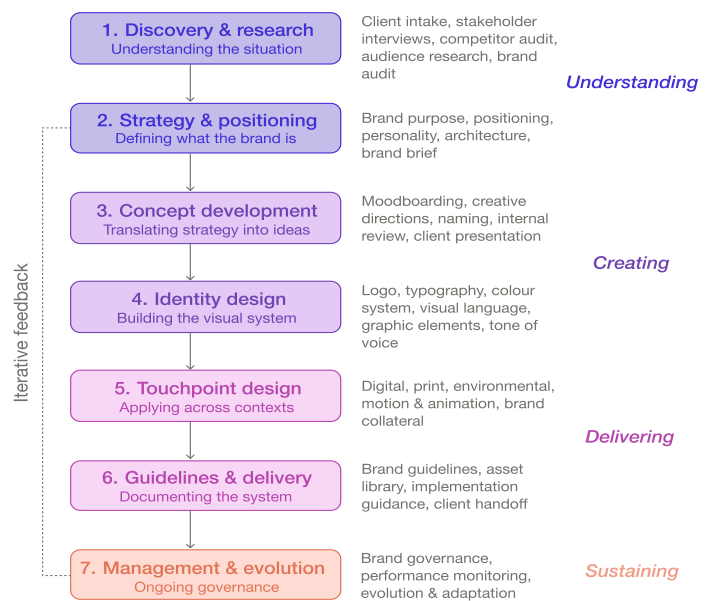


Figure 14. Current branding workflow: seven phases mapped from the literature and focus group.

5.2.2 AI involvement across the workflow

The application of AI is not consistent throughout the current branding workflow. There were three different levels of involvement, shown in Figure 15.

Active use, which is highlighted in Phases 1, 2, and 5, is the first level. AI is used by designers for wireframing, copywriting, research, thought structuring, and speeding up repetitive production tasks. The literature (Hartmann et al., 2025; Park et al., 2024) and the focus group both acknowledge that AI functions best when it completes production activities that do not call for creative judgement, but supports the designer’s thinking. While Designer 1 used AI to arrange ideas, Designer 2 structured brand values using ChatGPT. This pattern directly relates to Theme 1 (AI as structural assistant): designers have consistently stated that AI is beneficial when it serves as a thinking partner for planning and organisation and problematic when it tries to take over creative direction.

The second level can be defined as *selective resistance*, which most often occurs in Phase 3. Confirming the pattern towards creative practitioners selecting AI-generated possibilities, designers use AI to develop and explore concept ideas (Palani & Ramos, 2024). But when it comes to moodboarding, they actively reject AI. In moodboarding, the inspiration comes from offline experiences and personal visual connections, which add an emotional and experience quality that cannot be expressed in a prompt. Designer 1 described this as a lack of emotional connection: the designer loses the internal dialogue between their ideas and the chosen images when a moodboard is created instead of put

together. This is in line with the issue of visual thinking and risk of design fixation highlighted by Park et al. (2024) and Wadinambiarachchi et al. (2024). In Section 5.2.3, there is a deeper dive into Theme 2, which is about the emotional and contextual divide, and its central idea is this resistance.

Outright resistance, or under-exploration, which is centred in Phases 4, 6, and 7, is the third level. AI-generated work was viewed by designers as being overly generic and lacking in craft, and they strongly disagreed with the use of AI for fundamental identity components like logos and brandmarks. Anscomb (2025), who argues that intentionality is necessary for creative authorship, and Hafez (2025) and Heigl (2025), who discovered that AI outputs lack the cultural awareness required by professional design, both support this. In Phase 4, AI was used in supportive roles: while Designer 1 suggested an AI-as-QA concept that verifies work against the brief instead of creating content, Designer 2 used AI for 3D previews to sell concepts to clients before completing the work properly. Phases 6 and 7 did not report any AI engagement.

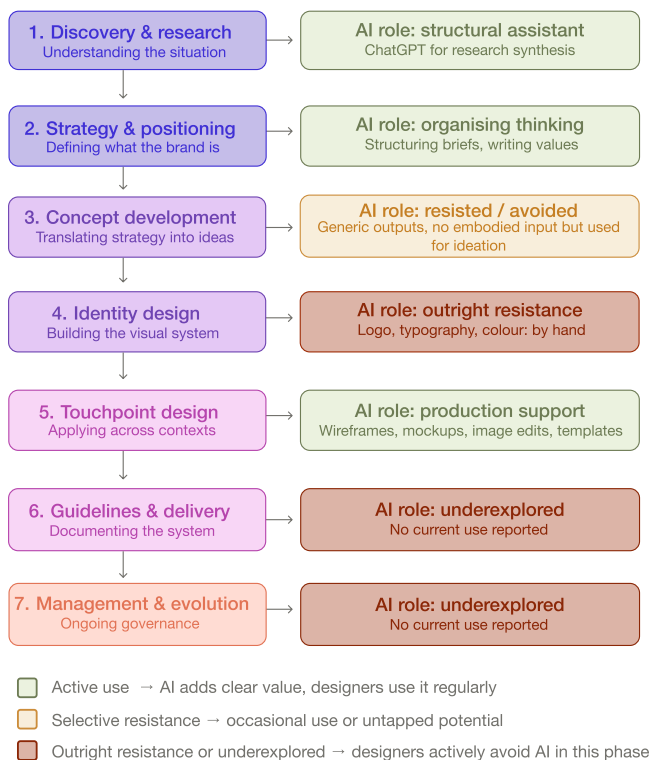


Figure 15. Current AI involvement across the seven-phase branding workflow.

5.2.3 Designer perceptions and concerns: six themes from the focus group

Six themes were generated by reflexive thematic analysis of the focus group (Figure 16). The first three address what AI can and cannot achieve in brand identity work, while the last three address the conditions under which designers are willing to use it.

Theme 1: AI serves as a structural assistant rather than a creative partner. The designers agree on the same concept of using AI: it functions well as a tool that collaborates with them during the planning, organising, and preparation stages. When it tries to come up with original design ideas on its own, it fails. While Designer 2 made use of ChatGPT to cluster brand values, Designer 1 described AI as a tool to externalise and arrange thoughts. In both cases, the designer kept creative control while AI took care of the supporting infrastructure. An AI-as-QA concept proposed by Designer 1 was also included in this theme. In order to find missing or inconsistent elements, this AI would work in the background, comparing the work to the brief and the brand repository. It would be designed to bring awareness to such incidents. The difference was described as an AI that improves rather than replaces the brain.

Theme 2: The emotional and contextual gap. This theme came across most clearly. AI was found to be unable to access three types of knowledge. The first is interpretive knowledge, which involves picking up on hesitations, inconsistencies, and unspoken demands by interpreting what a client says between the lines during discovery conversations. The second is inspiration, which refers to spontaneous interactions with structures, textures, and spatial senses that result in creative connections. As demonstrated by Designer 4's example of a navigation shape inspired by a building the designer passed, inspiration is tangible, unexpected, and highly personal, all of which are impossible to describe in a text prompt. The third is the sense of emotional ownership that results from creating a moodboard by hand: Designer 1 argued that the interaction between the designer and the images is an important step of the creative process and discussed the loss of emotional connection that takes place when a moodboard is created by AI rather than developed manually.

Theme 3: Generic outputs and trend bias. Every single one of the participants expressed concern about AI that will just keep producing the same trend-driven results. Designer 1 used the example of a water brand to show how AI would go for the most obvious visual associations instead of discovering the unexpected link that sets a brand apart. This was broadened to an argument by Designer 2, who said that AI consistently generates designs that are "beautiful" at this moment but do not have meaning beyond current trends. The training of

generative models on pre-existing visual culture pushes them towards statistical averages, which is a structural rather than a technological concern.

Theme 4: Reliability and planning risk. The unpredictability of AI has become a major concern. It is impossible to plan around a technology that may or may not produce a useful outcome in a professional setting with set deadlines and client responsibilities. Designer 3 explained that the risk of having to redo work outweighs the time savings when it comes to big projects. Another aspect of this risk is financial. Unpredictable disruptions to the creative flow can be caused by token and credit limitations, and being overly reliant on certain AI systems can leave designers vulnerable when pricing models change.

Theme 5: Tool fatigue and ecosystem instability. Two designers from the focus group said they were mentally overloaded not because of a specific tool but because of how quickly AI tools are evolving. Designer 1 talked about spending time mastering the UI of a certain tool, only to have it completely redesigned twice in four months, which resulted in frustration. Designers are forced to spend time studying and relearning rather than producing because of the abundance of tools, each of which claims to be the greatest and has a unique interface and workflow. This was independently echoed at the BNO hackathon, where participants argued that rather than mastering specific technologies that might not be available in six months, designers should be familiar with the principles of AI to apply them in different contexts.

Theme 6: Agency positioning and the value of process. Underlying the entire discussion was a common belief that the agency competes based on the quality of its work rather than the speed of its production. According to Designer 3, if anyone can make visually appealing brand assets, the unique factor is no longer the assets themselves but rather the strategy behind the brand. A contrast was made by Designer 2 between agencies that sell deliverables (which AI keeps getting better at) and agencies that sell the client relationship and way of thinking that results in important brands. While designers see the deeper client relationship and strategic thinking as the agency's true value, they worry that AI could undermine this by shifting client expectations towards speed and output.

5.2.4 Morphological chart dimensions

A morphological chart (Van Boeijen et al., 2020) was used to explore the design space for the node-based system. The dimensions were organised across the branding phases identified in Section 5.2.1, with four categories per phase: brand input (what information enters the phase), system output (what the system generates), AI node type (what kind of AI processing is needed), and designer control point (where the designer stays in control). Decisions about which options to include were guided by the literature and workflow mapping. The full morphological chart is provided in Appendix F.

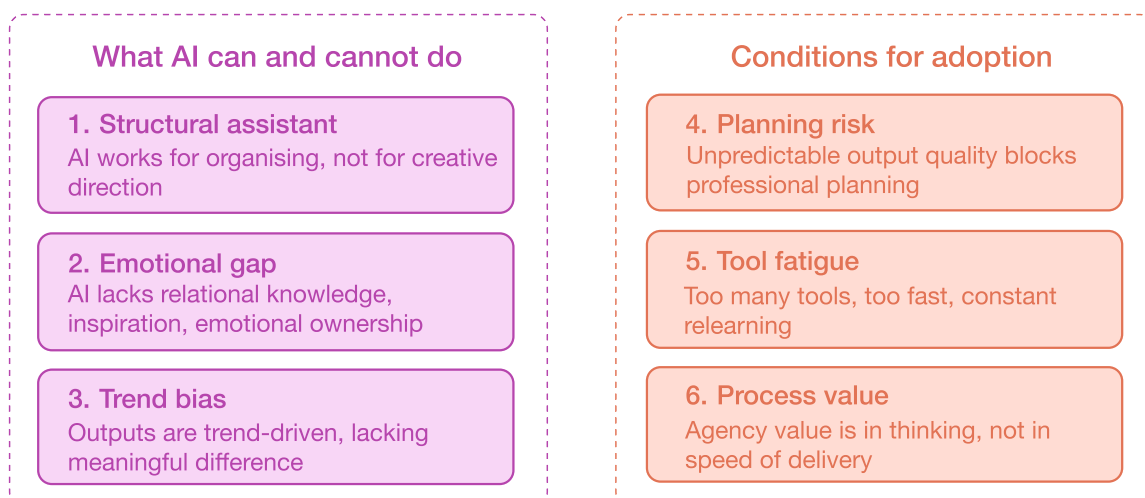


Figure 16. Six themes from the exploratory focus group, grouped by category.

5.3 Discussion

This section defines the design space for the node-based brand system, analyses the exploratory results in relation to previous literature, and identifies situations in which the results support, extend, or contradict earlier research.

5.3.1 The branding workflow: practice versus theory

While it differs in two aspects, the seven-phase process supports the general framework seen in the literature (Kapferer, 2012; Olins, 2008; Wheeler, 2018). First, although Wheeler (2018) combines the phases of ideation and identity design into one, in practice, these two processes are seen as separate phases, with ideation being more exploratory and divergent and the identity design more convergent and craft-oriented. This is important for the node-based system since the two phases need separate AI support: precision and designer control for identity design, and generative variation for exploration. Second, the movement between strategy and concept development is not simply corrective but constitutive. After viewing early designs, designers described going back to strategic positioning because the visual work itself produced fresh strategic insight. The system should enable revisiting earlier stages without losing future decisions, as a fully sequential pipeline would be an inaccurate representation of how designers truly work.

5.3.2 A pattern of selective integration

The inconsistent implementation of AI across the workflow does not fit into a straightforward “AI for routine tasks, humans for creative ones” approach. In the stages where AI is actively used (Phases 1, 2, and 5), its role is fundamentally different from the designer’s creative identity work. Although creating briefs and organising brand values require skill and authority, they do not result in the components that make a brand unique. This is covered in Theme 1 (AI as structural assistant): designers embraced AI when it supported their ideas without taking credit for the outcome.

There is a different kind of pushback in Phase 3. The idea of moodboarding with AI was rejected by designers, but not AI-generated concepts per se. This adds to the literature on design fixation (Wadinambiarachchi et al., 2024) by highlighting a process: fixation in brand identity development occurs when the designer’s emotional and sensory connection to reference material is lost, not primarily through visual similarity to AI outputs (Theme 2). Similarly, resistance in Phase 4 refers to resistance to AI that creates identity components rather than a general rejection of AI. In line with Anscomb’s (2025) differentiation between generative and evaluative AI roles, designers adopted AI for 3D previews and quality

assurance (the AI-as-QA concept).

5.3.3 The disconnection between tools

The disconnection between the tools used by designers in different phases is a finding that goes beyond thematic analysis. As shown in Figure 2, the image generator used for identity design cannot see the brand values specified by the LLM. Strategic choices are not transferred from one tool to another. This means that brand consistency relies on the designer’s ability to manually transfer decisions between tools and phases, which is difficult when the designer is already tired from using a variety of tools (Theme 5). The primary opportunity for a node-based system is defined by this disconnection: linking stages using structured parameters to maintain strategic intent across the process without requiring manual re-entry at each level.

5.3.4 Conditions for adoption

The requirements for adoption are defined by Themes 4, 5, and 6. The system needs to be dependable enough to work around professional deadlines (Theme 4), integrate several AI capabilities to make tool-switching easier (Theme 5), and be presented as complementing the designer’s strategic role (Theme 6), not automating it. No matter how good the output is, a system that is technically sound but is presented as replacing creative authority will be rejected because the value proposition of process-driven agencies depends on showing that a brand choice is made by a person.

Theme 5 also points beyond the disconnection between tools. Because designers’ fatigue stems from the pace at which tools change rather than from any single tool, the value of a node-based approach may lie in being a reusable structuring method rather than another tool to learn, one that holds across changing models and platforms. This reframing, from tool to method, is developed further in Chapter 8.

5.3.5 Limitations

It is important to recognise four limitations. First, there was a focus group consisting of four designers from one agency that specialises in meaning-led branding (tailored services). The results are based on this specific practice setting and might not apply to in-house brand teams, agencies with varying degrees of AI adoption, or high-volume production studios generally. Second, the researcher, who works for the agency, led the session. The researcher’s familiarity with the participants may have influenced which issues were discussed in depth and which were underexplored, even if the semi-structured style enabled the participants to lead a discussion towards their own concerns. Third, although the BNO hackathon helped with triangulation, it was not a formal research method; therefore, the results are seen as secondary data rather than primary evidence.

Fourth, the focus group captured self-reported attitudes and recalled practices rather than observed behaviour. There may be a gap between what designers say they do with AI and what they actually do when working with it. Study 2 partially addresses this by observing designers interacting with the node-based system in real time, allowing reported preferences to be compared with actual behaviour. Within a Research-through-Design approach (Zimmerman et al., 2007), where the exploratory phase aims to produce design-relevant insights rather than statistically generalisable statements, these limitations are acceptable.

5.4 Design requirements

Alongside the theoretical framework, a list of design requirements drawn from the exploratory findings (Figure 17) guided the creation of the node-based brand identity system. This list of design requirements is shown in Figure 18. The requirements are written as testable statements so that they could be assessed during the evaluation phase (Van Boeijen et al., 2020). System scope, workflow and structure, designer control, AI behaviour, usability, system boundaries, and system experience are the seven categories into which they are divided.

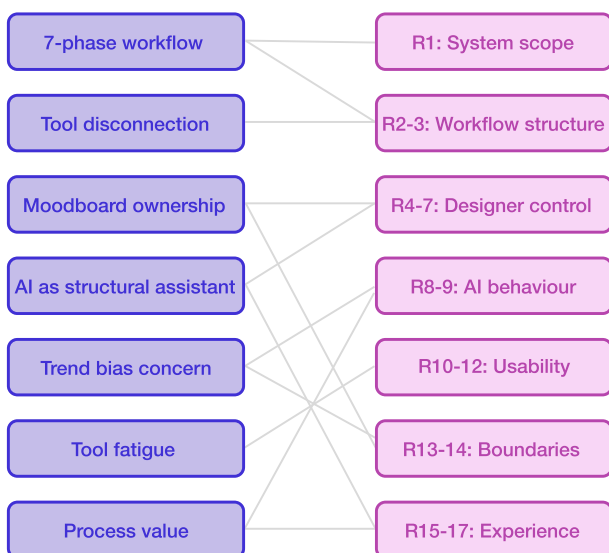


Figure 17. Traceability from exploratory findings to design requirements.

System scope

- R1 The system should cover workflow phases 1 through 6: discovery, strategy, concepting, identity design, touchpoint design, and guidelines/delivery.

Workflow and structure

- R2 The system should connect the phases so that outputs from one phase flow into the next as inputs.
- R3 The designer should be able to understand how each phase's output connects to the inputs from the previous phase.

Designer control

- R4 The designer must be able to decide which brand elements (such as logo, colour palette, and typography) become the final brand identity direction.
- R5 The designer must curate the visual references that shape each concept direction.
- R6 In the phases where the designer works hands-on, they must be able to select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they are used in the brand system.
- R7 The designer must be able to create their own brand elements outside the system (for example in Figma or Illustrator) and integrate them back into the workflow.

AI behaviour

- R8 The system should offer directions and possibilities the designer would not have thought of on their own.
- R9 The system should produce varied but brand-consistent outputs. Variation should stay within the boundaries defined by the brand direction.

Usability

- R10 The system should be usable by brand designers without requiring programming knowledge or detailed AI expertise.
- R11 The system should be structured as a reusable workflow that can be saved, shared, and used across different projects or by different team members.
- R12 The system should work within realistic time constraints of a professional branding project.

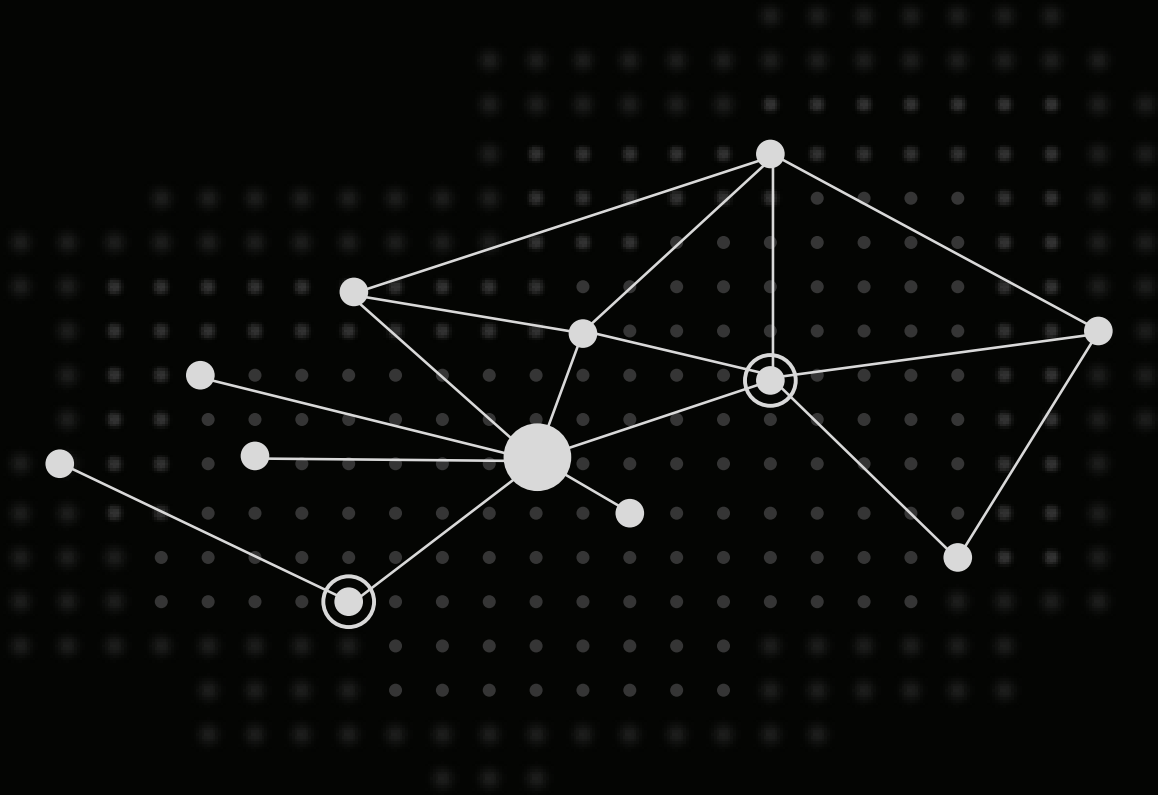
System boundaries

- R13 The system should extend the designer's exploration rather than making creative choices for them.
- R14 The system should produce outputs that feel like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.

System experience

- R15 The system should feel like a co-creation process between designer and AI, where both contribute to the outcome.
- R16 The system should feel like a creative sparring partner: something that thinks along, offers alternatives, and helps push ideas further.
- R17 The system should contain built-in knowledge of brand design fundamentals (such as colour theory, typography pairing, and composition principles), so that the AI produces professionally grounded outputs without the designer having to specify basic design rules.

Figure 18. List of Design Requirements for the node-based brand identity system.



06

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Designing the node-based brand identity system in Krea.ai

This chapter presents the development of the node-based brand identity system, which corresponds to the Develop stage of the Double Diamond (Design Council, 2005, 2019). It answers the second sub-question: how can a node-based AI system be designed to support the brand identity development workflow? Section 6.1 describes the methodology, Section 6.2 explains the platform selection, Section 6.3 details the system architecture and design decisions across six phases, and Section 6.4 reflects on the findings that emerged from the development process. The full node-based brand identity system in Krea.ai is in Appendix Q and the development log in Appendix R.

6.1 Methods

This section describes the methodology behind the node-based brand identity system. Research through Design (RtD), as defined by Zimmerman et al. (2007), serves as the main methodology for this stage. The iterative creation of an artefact in RtD is a type of research in and of itself; information is produced during the building process rather than only via observation or analysis (Gaver, 2012).

Because a generative AI system does not behave like traditional software with known inputs and outputs, RtD is especially well-suited for this research. Prompt wording, node connectivity, and the spread of design decisions all affect the output quality and character. The only way to fully understand these dynamics is to build, use, and change the system in practice. This strategy is consistent with recent HCI research on AI-powered creative tools like CreativeConnect (Choi et al., 2024), Inkspire (Lin et al., 2025), and DesignWeaver (Tao et al., 2025), all of which have a similar structure: formative research creates design requirements, which are then translated into a working system through iterative development, followed by user evaluation.

Within the RtD framing, three methods structured the concept development work.

Iterative prototyping with prompt engineering. Iterative prototyping was used to build the system (Nielsen, 1993). This means that the system was not designed on paper first and then built, but developed through repeated cycles of making, testing, and improving. Each cycle included connecting nodes, creating or changing prompts, running the system with test brand inputs, analysing results, and fine-tuning. Throughout this process, prompt engineering served as an ongoing design practice rather than a single setup phase. Prompt engineering, which differs from traditional prototyping in that the designer's primary material is language rather

than code or interface elements, is identified by recent HCI research as a key design activity when prototyping generative AI applications (Subramonyam et al., 2025). Every stage of the brand system needed a different prompt strategy, and as outputs showed what worked and what did not, prompts changed together with the system design (Weisz et al., 2024).

Development log. Important design decisions, iterative prompts, evaluations of output, and changes to the system were recorded in a development log. Such a log serves as reflective documentation in design research, providing an organised record of the design process that allows for further analysis and transparency (Dalsgaard & Halskov, 2012). In line with Dalsgaard and Halskov's (2012) description of the role of process documentation in RtD, the log focused on documenting decision points and their rationale rather than extensive real-time recording. The development log is integrated into a detailed user guide (Appendix R) that provides step-by-step instructions for building and operating the system, so that designers or researchers who wish to recreate or adapt the workflow can do so independently of specific model versions or platform updates.

Theory-guided design decisions. The theoretical framework from Chapter 3 served as a guide for design choices. The node-based structure was shaped by Keller's (1993) network model; the dimensions of personality (J. Aaker, 1997) and the brand archetypes (Mark & Pearson, 2001) shaped the brand scenarios and concept creation; the nodes that should be fixed and variable were determined by Felsing's (2010) dynamic identity logic; and the COFI framework (Rezwana & Maher, 2023) guided the designer's and AI's co-creation roles. Each theory was implemented as a system element during the building process, rather than being applied after the design was finished. The designed system was then assessed in the evaluation phase.

6.2 Platform selection

The platform for the node-based brand identity system was chosen using a Harris profile (Van Boeijen et al., 2020). This method ranks potential solutions according to a set of criteria using a five-point scale ranging from very poor fit (– –, scored as –2) to very strong fit (+ +, scored as +2), allowing for systematic evaluation of different alternatives.

The results of the exploratory phase led to a set of eleven criteria. The focus group informed the standards for price, non-technical usability; browser accessibility was informed by the COFI framework (Rezwana & Maher, 2023); and structured data flow between nodes was

informed by design requirement R3. Two practical criteria were added: suitability for quick solo testing and availability in early 2026.

Six platforms were compared: Krea.ai, ComfyUI, Flora, Adobe Project Graph, Figma Weave (formerly Weavy), and Magnific Spaces. Scoring was based on the researcher's hands-on exploration of each platform combined with publicly available documentation.

Krea.ai received the highest score with 22 points, followed by Flora (18), Figma Weave and Magnific Spaces (both 17), ComfyUI (15), and Adobe Project Graph (10). Krea.ai's main strengths were its ability to transfer brand parameters between nodes throughout the whole workflow, fast solo ideation, and LLM Call

nodes that produce structured text. These features are crucial for a system where brand identity decisions must flow as structured inputs from early to later stages. ComfyUI scored lower on browser accessibility and non-technical usability because it requires local installation and technical expertise, which contradicts the focus group's need for easily available tools. Adobe Project Graph was not yet publicly accessible at the time of development. Based on the Harris profile, Krea.ai was chosen as the foundation for the node-based brand identity system.

Criteria Harris Profile	Krea	ComfyUI	Flora	Adobe Project Graph	Figma Weave/ Weavy	Magnific Spaces
Multiple AI model types Morph. chart: system needs image, text, style nodes	++	++	++	++	++	++
LLM node available Morph. chart phase 1: extract from brief and create text	++	++	+	0	+	+
Browser-based (no install) Focus group: tool fatigue, need low barrier	++	--	++	0	++	++
Accessible for non-technical designers Focus group: designers are not programmers	++	--	++	+	++	++
Shareable / reusable workflows System architect: designer should build reusable systems	++	+	++	++	++	+
Designer control over parameters Felsing (2010): fixed vs variable elements need fine control	++	++	+	++	++	+
Image-to-image + style transfer Morph. chart phase 3: should be able to generate from references	++	++	++	+	++	++
Currently available (early 2026) Practical: must be usable for this research	++	++	++	-	+	++
Affordable for small agency / student Focus group: credit costs are a concern	++	++	++	0	+	++
Fast solo concepting / experimentation Morph. chart phase 3: designer needs rapid iteration on visual directions	++	+	+	+	+	+
Structured data propagation between nodes R3: outputs from one phase flow into the next as inputs	++	+	+	+	+	+
Total score	22	15	18	10	17	17

Figure 19. Harris profile for platform comparison.

6.3 System architecture and design decisions

In Krea.ai, the node-based brand identity system was developed in six phases, covering the branding process from discovery and research to delivery and guidelines. Each phase's architecture and the key design choices made throughout development are covered in this section. The links to the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), the exploratory results and the design requirements (both Chapter 5) are made clear for every stage. The detailed node maps per phase are shown in Appendix G. Appendix R has an in-depth development log as discussed in Section 6.1.

6.3.1 System-level architecture

Two fundamental concepts from the theoretical framework are reflected in the system's overall structure. Keller's (1993) network model is structurally expressed in the node-based design, where brand components are represented as separate nodes and the relationships among them dictate how the brand identity develops. The dynamic brand identity logic proposed by Felsing (2010) makes a distinction between items that can change within defined boundaries and elements that stay constant. This difference defined which nodes in the system are flexible (AI-generated explorations that the designer analyses and may or may not accept) and which are locked (the designer's final choices on logo, colour, and typography).

In this node-based brand identity system, the output of one phase is used as input for the next. Each phase uses five recurring node types shown in Figure 20. Every node

is a single building block that performs one specific task. It works similarly to an AI agent: the designer creates a system prompt that specifies the node's function, like "act as a brand strategist with 25+ years of experience", followed by guidelines for what should be extracted, how the output should be organised, and what should be avoided. The node performs the same action each time it receives input after it has been set up. The designer creates a workflow by connecting nodes; each node processes data in line with its own set of instructions before passing the processed data on to the next node. This approach aligns with what Subramonyam et al. (2025) characterise as a fundamental feature of generative AI design: language, not code or interface elements, is the designer's primary material. This is described by Lindley and Whitham (2025) as "prompt craft", a type of tacit knowledge that grows by frequent construction and modification.

A system prompt and any associated inputs are sent to a large language model by an **LLM Call** node, which then provides a text answer. Krea.ai allows the designer to select from a variety of models, including Gemini, Claude, and ChatGPT. Several models were tested on the same prompts during the development of the workflow, and their output quality was compared. Claude Opus was chosen as the default for most nodes based on these comparisons. **Image generation** nodes generate a visual output by taking a text prompt and, if required, referencing images. Because different generators have varying strengths (Figure 21), the model chosen by the designer is important in this case as well. When a downstream node requires the complete context from what has been created so far, **combination nodes** combine outputs from several nodes into a single input. **Text** nodes provide the designer with a place within the

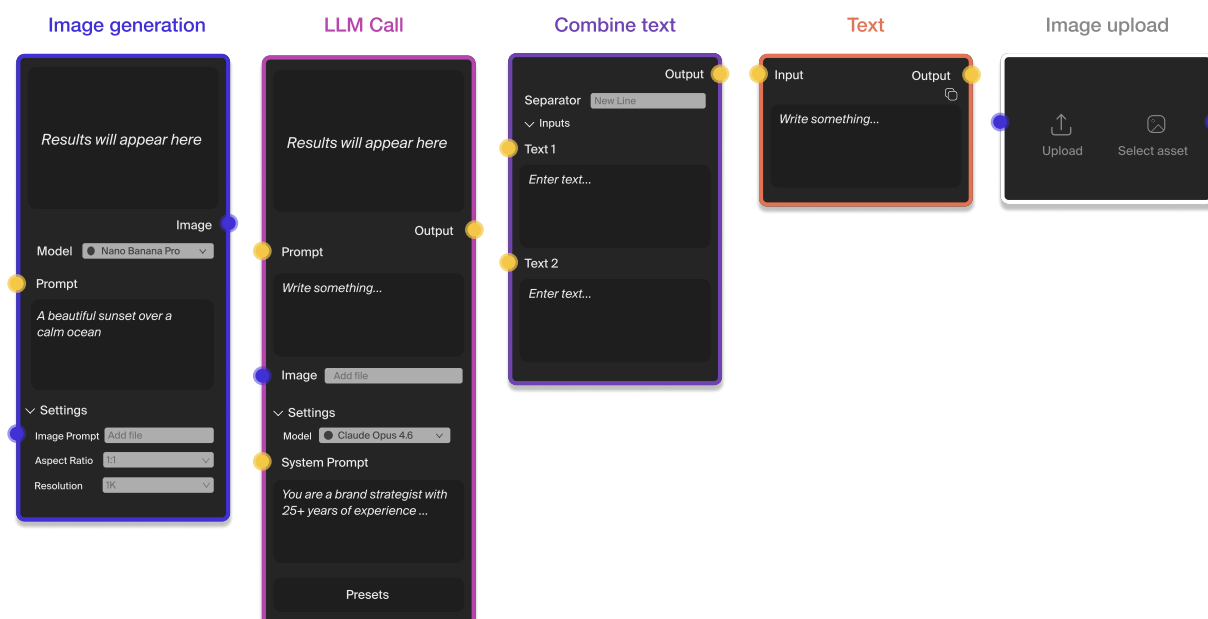


Figure 20. The five different node types used in the node-based brand identity system.

Task	Model chosen	Reason
LLM calls	Claude Opus	Consistently produced the highest quality structured text outputs when compared against other models on the same prompts.
Text-in-logo generation	Ideogram V3	Most reliable at accurately rendering legible text within logo compositions.
More art-directed graphics	Recraft V4	Best suited for flat vector graphic elements, avoids the textured or three-dimensional artefacts other models produced.
Positioning maps, diagrams, and logo concepts	GPT Image 1.5	Strongest at following layout instructions and keeping text legible; it handles images where labelled elements sit in specific places.
Product and lifestyle photography	Nano Banana Pro	Accurately preserves the visual qualities of a reference product, especially in complex compositions involving settings or humans.

Figure 21. Usage of different models in the node-based brand identity system.

system where they can insert customer feedback, create observations, and view outputs. The **image upload nodes (white in Figure 20)** made it possible for the designer to upload their own reference images or created designs. The workflow follows the same logic in each phase: the LLM creates content, is divided or mixed and transferred to the appropriate nodes, and the designer verifies the outcome before proceeding.

6.3.2 Phase 1: Research and discovery

The designer begins by pasting the client brief into a text node. This node then connects to a client brief analysis node, which extracts the brand name, category, target audience, competitors, and key differentiators. To ensure that no mistakes go unnoticed, a quality check node compares the raw brief with the extracted analysis. This node was added in response to Study 1, where the focus group revealed that designers wanted the AI to act as a quality-assurance step in the process. Then, mistakes are corrected by a revision node before the input is sent downstream. After testing showed that the client brief analysis node occasionally created false market positions from unclear brief language, this feedback loop was created. A competitor research node (with web search enabled), a tension mapping node that finds two positioning axes and four quadrant directions, a positioning map generator (using GPT Image 1.5), a target audience persona node, and a competitor visual analysis node where the designer uploads competitor references are all provided with the analysed client brief. Phase 1 (Figure 22, complete annotated map in Appendix G1) produces five outputs: target group personas, a competitor analysis, a visual competitor analysis, a brand positioning framework, and a client brief analysis. During this phase, the COFI framework is implemented (Rezwana & Maher, 2023). The AI handles research and structure, while the designer maintains control over evaluation through the quality check loop and addresses design requirements R2, R3, and R17.

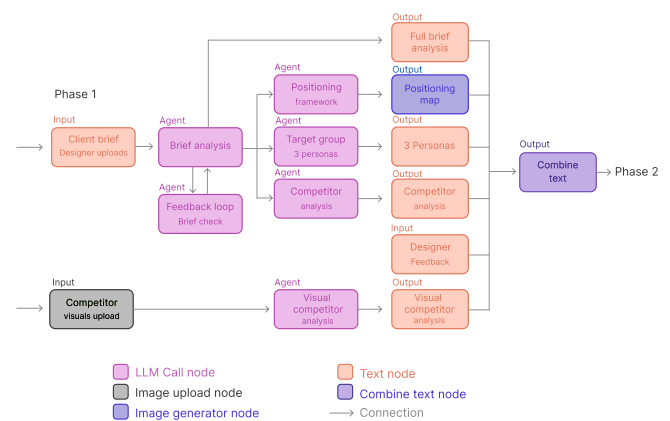


Figure 22. Phase 1 workflow structure, research and discovery. The complete annotated node map is provided in Appendix G1.

6.3.3 Phase 2: Brand strategy

Four brand scenarios are created in Phase 2 (Figure 23, complete annotated map in Appendix G2), one for each of the Phase 1 positioning map quadrants. Each of the four brand scenarios produced by a brand scenario generator node includes a positioning statement, vision, purpose, values, style descriptors, one or two brand archetypes, brand strategy, strategic pillars, visual and tonal direction, main risks, and competitive advantages. These are divided into four parallel streams by extraction nodes, each of which has a summary node that simplifies the entire scenario into a one-page client-facing overview.

The designer creates a moodboard for each brand scenario after going over the created scenarios and making any necessary changes. This is a purposeful designer control point because, according to the focus group from Study 1 (Chapter 5), curating visual references is a step that designers believe is crucial to their creative process and do not wish to assign to AI, meeting design

requirements R5 and R7. Phase 2 follows a turn-taking pattern in COFI terms (Rezwana & Maher, 2023): the AI creates the strategic framework, after which the designer evaluates, changes, and adds visual content. The client reviews all four options and chooses one or two to move on to Phase 3 when the designer presents them.

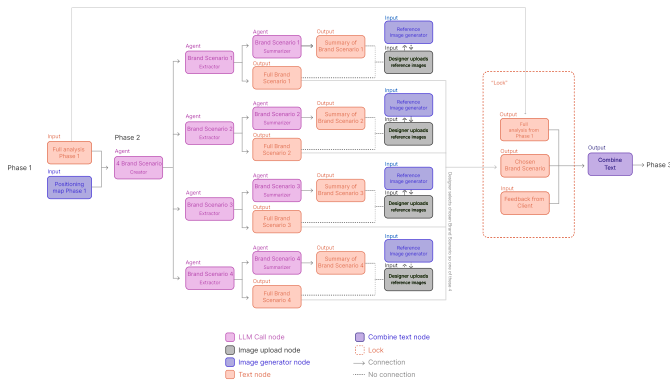


Figure 23. Phase 2 workflow structure, strategy and positioning. The complete annotated node map is provided in Appendix G2.

6.3.4 Phase 3: Concept development

In order to generate three unique concepts for the chosen brand scenario, a concept generator node adjusts the profiles of J. Aaker's (1997) personality dimensions while keeping the archetype fixed. The three concepts represent low, medium, and high creative risk. This was an intentional design decision: Phase 3 (Figure 24, complete annotated map in Appendix G3) uses the personality dimensions to create significant differences because the quadrant position in Phase 2 already defines the archetype. Depending on their personality profile, two brands may have the same archetype but feel very different, as was covered in Section 3.1.2. By addressing R8 (directions the designer would not have considered) and R9 (varied but brand-consistent outputs), the system takes structural advantage of this difference. As in Phase 2, the designer reviews the generated concepts, makes adjustments where needed, and then creates a moodboard for each concept direction. This repeats the same designer control pattern: the AI provides the strategic and creative foundation, and the designer can first change and then enrich each concept with curated visual references that reflect their own taste and cultural

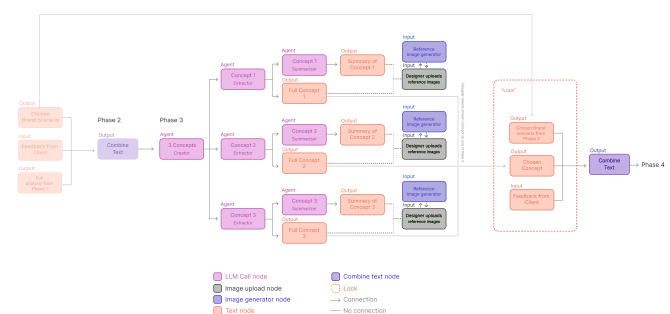


Figure 24. Phase 3 workflow structure, concept development. The complete annotated node map is provided in Appendix G3.

judgement before presenting the three directions to the client.

6.3.5 Phase 4: Identity design

AI exploration nodes for logos (five styles, produced using two different models), colour palettes (three directions), typography (a suggestion document), graphic elements (five categories), and visual language (five photographic directions) make up the first part of Phase 4 (Figure 25, complete annotated map in Appendix G4). For each of these components, there are designer upload nodes in the second part. The discovery by Palani and Ramos (2024) that designers collaborating with generative AI go from creation to curation is immediately operationalised by this split: in the first part, the AI makes explorations, and in the second part, the designer makes decisions. The exploratory material from the first part is not mandatory. The designer has the option of using it as inspiration, rejecting it completely, or using it as a starting point for further development. The designer adds their own work to the upload nodes in the second part, such as a logo created in Figma, a colour scheme refined in Adobe, or typography chosen based on personal preference. Because of this, the system is never intended to replace the designer's skill; rather, it provides a bigger picture within which the designer can work, but ultimately, the designer has complete control over the identity.

Iterative testing was used to choose the models: Nano Banana Pro for atmospheric photography, Recraft V4 for flat vector graphic elements, GPT Image 1.5 for positioning maps, and Ideogram V3 for text-in-logos (Figure 21). These decisions are what Subramonyam et al. (2025) refer to as the fit between task needs and model capabilities. A "style lock" group sits between Phase 4b and Phase 5, locking all finalised brand elements into fixed image and text nodes. This applies Felsing's (2010) fixed/variable concept: once the designer has made their choices, those choices carry forward as constants. This decision was directly influenced by the focus group's discovery that designers have difficulty maintaining consistency when using disconnected AI tools (Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3).

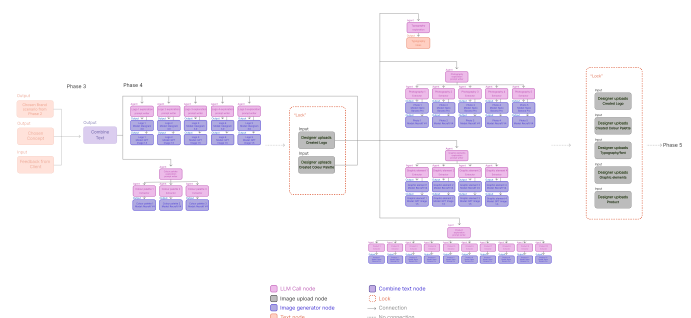


Figure 25. Phase 4 workflow structure, identity design. The complete annotated node map is provided in Appendix G4.

6.3.6 Phase 5: Touchpoint design

In Phase 5 (Figure 26, complete annotated map in Appendix G5), the brand identity that was “locked” in Phase 4 is used to create stickers, product images, and social media formats. The designer has direct creative control over the final product because stickers are created by connecting the selected concept, logo, and colour scheme to a sticker prompt that they write. In parallel to the stickers, there are three types of product photography in this Krea.ai system: photographs of the product taken from various perspectives and under different lighting conditions, shots of the product in natural settings, and shots of the product with people engaging with it. Nano Banana Pro was chosen as the model for these image generation nodes due to its ability to accurately preserve the visual qualities of a reference product, especially in complex compositions involving settings or humans. The product’s appearance is passed in as a separate image reference, while the LLM only generates the scene direction prompts (lighting, setting, composition). In addition to the stickers and product photography, the designer can transform any created image to a new aspect ratio, making it suitable for social media sites such as Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Instagram Stories, all without having to crop or rework the image by hand. R13 (the designer’s exploration) and R14 (the outputs as useful starting points for actual brand deliverables) are both addressed in this phase.

6.3.7 Phase 6: Guidelines and delivery

Phase 6 (Figure 27, complete annotated map in Appendix G6) combines all the elements created into one clear overview, completing design requirement R1. The locked brand elements from Phase 4, campaign imagery from Phase 5, and strategic content from Phases 2 and 3 are combined into a brand guideline structure. This phase serves as a structured export point rather than a generative one, as the creative and strategic work has already been completed in earlier phases.

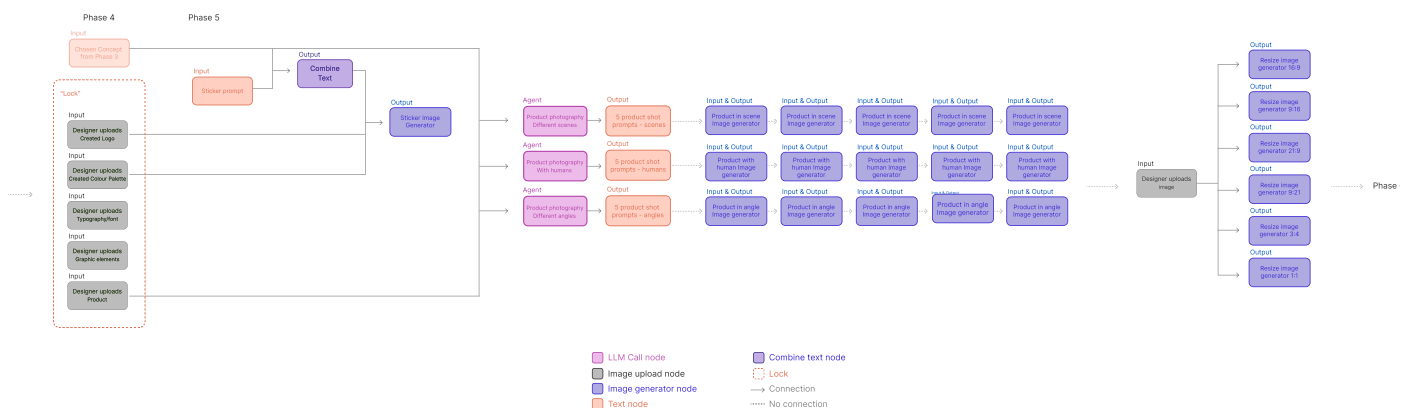


Figure 26. Phase 5 workflow structure, touchpoint design. The complete annotated node map is provided in Appendix G5.

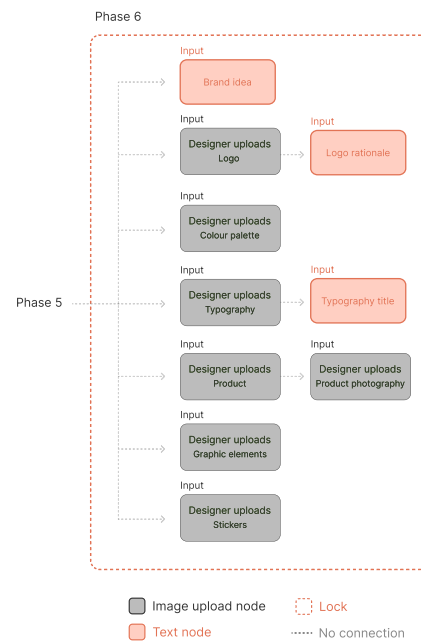


Figure 27. Phase 6 workflow structure, guidelines and delivery. The complete annotated node map is provided in Appendix G6.

6.4 Reflection on the development process

Developing the system through Research through Design surfaced several findings that would not have emerged from designing the system on paper alone.

The most significant finding was that the designer's contribution to a node-based AI system centres on architectural decisions rather than visual ones. The output quality was shaped more by choices about which nodes to connect, what data format to use between them, which model to assign to which task, what system prompt to write, and where to insert human involvement than by any single prompt. This aligns with Palani and Ramos's (2024) observation that creative practitioners using generative AI are moving from direct creation towards coordination and curation. The node-based system takes this a step further: the designer does not just curate outputs but designs the conditions and architecture under which those outputs are produced.

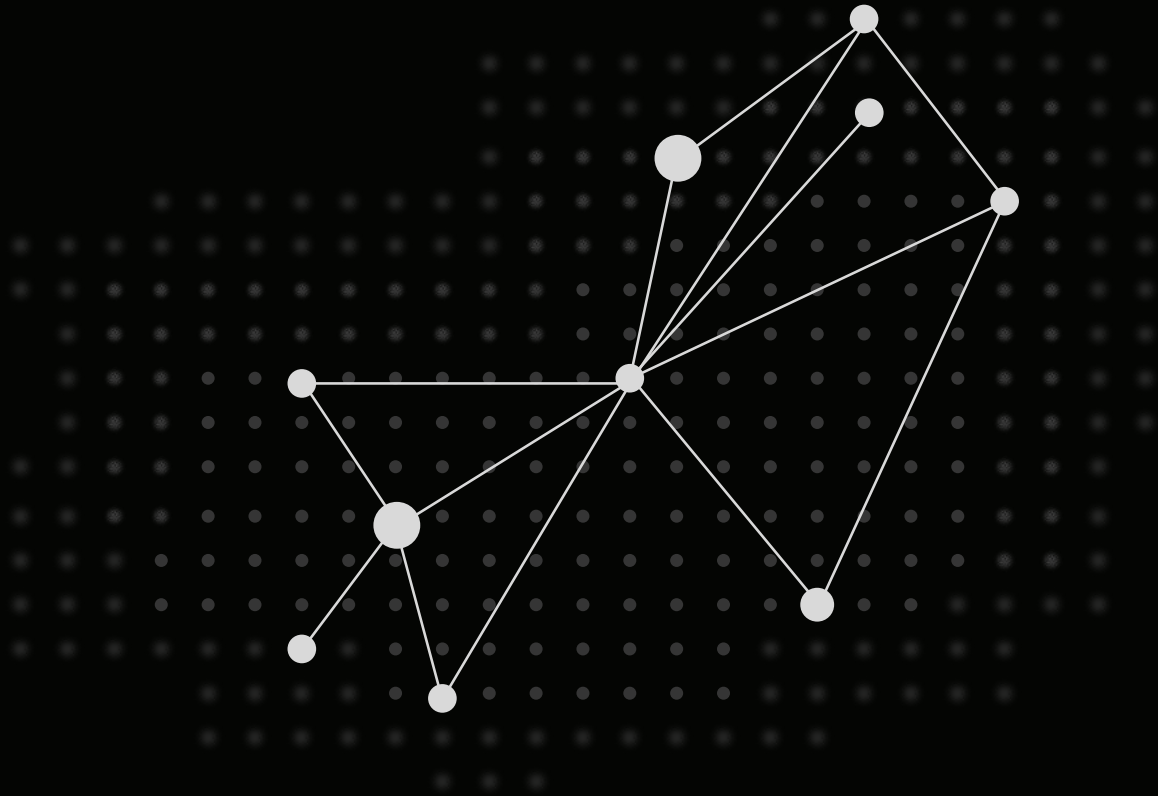
Prompt engineering proved to be an iterative design activity rather than a one-time setup task. As the system architecture evolved, so did the prompts. When the colour palette node generated textured, three-dimensional swatches instead of flat colour blocks, the solution was a more constrained prompt combined with a different model (Recraft V4). Testing with a second brand (Yield, a wine brand) revealed that prompts tuned for a wellness brand produced generic or aesthetically flat results, requiring a round of anti-slop refinements that added explicit constraints against oversaturated colours, plastic textures, and stock photo compositions. Strategies that worked well in one context, such as detailed and precise instructions for strategic analysis, proved ineffective in another, where overly specific visual prompts suppressed the variation needed for exploration. This supports the finding by Weisz et al. (2024) that generative AI outputs are highly sensitive to small changes in prompt wording and system setup, and aligns with what Lindley and Whitham (2025) describe as "prompt craft": a form of tacit knowledge built through repeated construction and modification.

The iterative process also exposed recurring points of AI failure, and these limitations became structurally significant. Typography cannot be consistently produced by current image generation models, making it a fundamentally designer-controlled component. In human-in-frame compositions, product identity tends to weaken, therefore the architectural decision to separate scene description from product reference was made. Rather than treating these as failures, the system frames them as intentional designer control points where human judgement is structurally necessary. In Felsing's (2010) terms, these represent fixed elements of the system itself:

not brand elements, but boundaries of the architecture's capabilities.

The development process also confirmed that the theoretical framework from Chapter 3 guided the design phase as intended. The node-based structure drew on Keller's (1993) network model. J. Aaker's (1997) personality dimensions and Jung's (1969) and Mark and Pearson's (2001) archetypes were embedded in the brand identity system in Phases 2 and 3. Felsing's (2010) fixed/variable distinction positioned the designer upload nodes and the style lock nodes. The COFI framework (Rezwana & Maher, 2023) guided the turn-taking pattern between designer and AI throughout all stages. These theories informed specific design choices during development rather than being applied retrospectively. This approach aligns with what Zimmerman et al. (2007) characterise as the role of theory in RtD: theory provides a framework that directs and justifies design decisions rather than predicting outcomes.

Finally, the development process revealed that the platform itself acts as a design constraint. Krea.ai's limitations directly shaped the architecture: canvas performance issues with long processes, changes in model availability, and occasional node instability all influenced decisions about system complexity and phase boundaries. In dense phases with multiple parallel streams, poor contrast between the canvas background and the yellow node connections made it difficult to visually track the workflow. Krea.ai also lacks built-in annotation features such as graphic phase separators, text labels for titles, and directional arrows, all of which are essential for the system's usability, especially for new users. To work around this, titles, arrows, and phase labels were created in Figma and uploaded as image files into the system. This time-consuming workaround would have been unnecessary had the platform supported basic canvas annotation. Additionally, the inability to upload or export PDFs limits the system's compatibility with typical design deliverables. The final node-based brand identity system contains approximately 90 nodes across six phases, achieving a workable balance between platform stability and completeness. Future iterations could benefit from an integrated chat feature, similar to Claude, that would let the designer converse with the system rather than relying solely on node configurations and prompts. Direct connections to design tools such as Adobe Creative Cloud or Figma would also allow designers to move seamlessly between the brand system and their own creative environment. These suggestions and their implications are discussed further in Chapter 8.



07

EVALUATION PHASE

Testing the node-based brand identity system with designers

Chapter 6 documented the development of the node-based brand identity system; this chapter evaluates it. The evaluation assessed whether designers found the system usable within their own workflow (SQ3) and whether working through it reshaped their role in the branding process (SQ4). To examine this, a usability evaluation was carried out with six experienced designers from different fields and analysed through reflexive thematic analysis. The chapter sets out the method (7.1), presents the results (7.2), and discusses them against the design requirements, Study 1, and the literature (7.3).

7.1 Methods

A product usability evaluation with experienced designers was used to assess the system (Van Boeijen et al., 2020). This method measures how effectively a product does its job for the target group it is designed for. Designers were shown the system and guided through the process using a test brand case. Their input was gathered via semi-structured interviews, think-aloud verbalisation during the assignment, observation, and a Likert-scale survey.

7.1.1 Participant selection

Purposive sampling with a maximum variation technique was used to choose participants (Patton, 2015). Participants were chosen to reflect the diversity of design jobs that often interact with brand identity work in practice, rather than only with brand designers. These included strategic designers, brand designers, creative directors, and other designers with different levels of AI tool expertise. This selection method was chosen as the node-based system is designed to be used by diverse design teams, not only branding professionals. Testing with a varied group of designers reveals whether different designers perceive the system's controls and outputs differently and gives a more realistic view of how the system would function in a professional context. By including both brand designers, who engage in branding on a daily basis, and designers from related roles, it is possible to find out whether familiarity with branding processes affects how designers interact with the system, how critically they evaluate its outputs, and how they perceive their own role within the workflow. Of the six participants, four were drawn from inside the agency and two from outside it (Figure 28). This split matters because the system was developed within the agency and partly shaped by Study 1, which ran there too. Including designers from outside the agency, with no prior exposure to its branding approach or to the system, tested whether the system's logic held beyond the context that produced it. Before each session, participants gave written informed consent (covering audio and screen recording and the anonymous use of quotes) and completed a short pre-session questionnaire

on their demographics, current role, years of branding experience, and familiarity with AI and node-based tools (Appendix H). These background responses were used to confirm the spread of profiles that the maximum variation sampling aimed for.

Six participants is enough by qualitative standards, but a small number by quantitative standards. In reflexive thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022) argue against predetermined minimum sample sizes, highlighting that the goal is data richness rather than statistical representation. Similar sample sizes have been successfully employed in design study assessments of AI-powered creative tools: Gmeiner et al. (2023) evaluated with five participants, Lin et al. (2025) with twelve, and Tao et al. (2025) with eight. This evaluation's goal of identifying patterns in how designers experience and navigate the system is made possible by the mix of think-aloud observation, semi-structured interviews, and survey data from six participants with various design backgrounds.

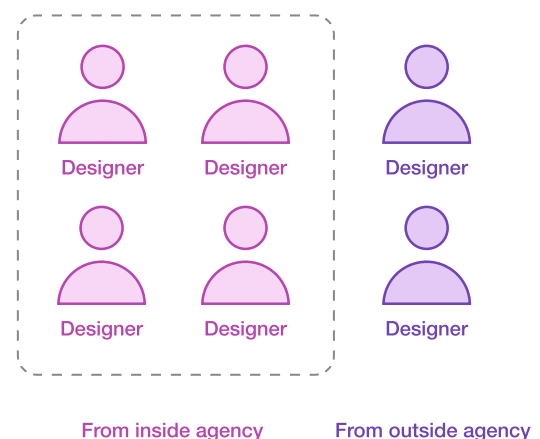


Figure 28. Participant selection: four designers from inside the agency and two from outside.

7.1.2 Evaluation procedure

The evaluation session was structured into four parts, lasting approximately 70 minutes per participant (Figure 29).

Part 1: Guided walkthrough (~20 minutes). Using an imaginary test brand case ('Yield', a wine brand, Appendix I), the facilitator introduced the participant to the node-based system and guided them through the six branding phases using a walkthrough script (Appendix J). During this walkthrough, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and share first impressions as they experienced each node and its outputs. In addition to introducing participants to the structure of the system, this phase recorded initial impressions and moments of confusion or surprise. The facilitator's

role in this phase was similar to the peer guide approach used by Gmeiner et al. (2023), who found that human guides helped designers learn to co-create with AI tools by giving detailed walkthrough instructions, responding to expressions of uncertainty, and encouraging reflection on generated outputs. Similarly, the facilitator in this study observed participants' responses and provided explanations when they showed confusion, being careful not to steer them towards specific system interpretations.

Part 2: Independent assignment with think-aloud protocol (~20 minutes). After the walkthrough, participants completed two hands-on tasks while thinking aloud. The full assignment can be found in Appendix K. By asking participants to express their thoughts while doing a task, the think-aloud approach allows the researcher to observe cognitive processes such as mental model formation, problem-solving techniques, and moments of uncertainty (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). This method recorded not only what participants did but also what they thought of AI-generated outputs and decided whether to accept, reject, or modify them. The facilitator observed the participants in silence and made notes during this phase on an observation sheet (Appendix L), focusing especially on situations in which participants used hedging language to express doubt (e.g., "I think", "maybe", or "I'm not sure"), since these moments often highlight gaps between the behaviour of the system and the designer's expectations (Gmeiner et al., 2023). To understand how designers manage control within the system, the facilitator also highlighted situations in which participants tried to modify or reject AI-generated results.

Part 3: Semi-structured interview (~20 minutes). After the assignment, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants to discuss their experiences. The interview was grouped into three question clusters. The first cluster focused on usability, including whether participants were confused by the system's structure. The second cluster focused on how participants perceived their own role while using the system, including times when they felt most and least like designers, how making a logo themselves differed from watching the system turn it into assets, and where their judgement was important. This cluster is especially important to the thesis argument, as Gmeiner et al. (2023) discovered that designers regularly changed what they wanted, to fit AI tool capabilities, sometimes at the cost of their original aim. The third cluster focused on the future, exploring what would need to be changed for actual project use and whether the system affects the type of work designers do or how quickly. Appendix M contains the full facilitator guide including the interview.

Part 4: Structured Likert-scale survey (~10 minutes). Following the interview, participants completed a

Likert-scale survey (Appendix N) to determine whether the system met the design requirements from the Define phase. Participants rated their agreement with a set of statements (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The survey acted as a structured addition to the qualitative data, offering a format for comparing participant replies and helping to identify trends that may be further investigated through the findings of the think-aloud and interview.

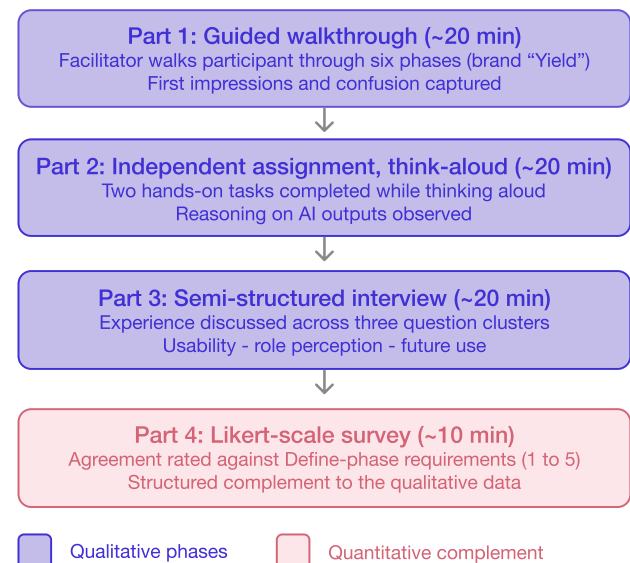


Figure 29. The structure of the Study 2 evaluation session.

The evaluation of the node-based brand identity system involved three extensions and modifications to the evaluation approach employed by Gmeiner et al. (2023). First, while Gmeiner et al. evaluated designers using a single AI tool inside a single design phase, this study covers the six-phase branding process. As a result, the method recorded the evolution of designer-AI dynamics over several phases. The guided walkthrough was carried out to go over each phase prior to the assignment to make sure that participants could reason about the entire system rather than just one phase. Second, the observation sheet was expanded to include more co-creation indicators in addition to usability issues: for example, moments in which participants expressed uncertainty about AI outputs using hedging language; moments in which they tried to reclaim creative control by rejecting, changing, or overriding AI results; and moments in which they positioned themselves in relation to the AI (as collaborator, director, or recipient). These indicators were created using the design fixation patterns described by Wadinambiarachchi et al. (2024) and the COFI framework (Rezwana & Maher, 2023). Third, to address both SQ3 and SQ4, the semi-structured interview was categorised into three clusters: usability, role perception, and future use. This was done instead of an open-ended interview. By combining real-time

behavioural observation with retrospective reflection and structured evaluation, this method allows triangulation across the data sources and evaluation of both system usability and role change in a single session.

7.1.3 Evaluation criteria

Two dimensions that were related to the study's sub-questions were evaluated (Figure 30):

Usability of the system (SQ3): How do professional designers evaluate a node-based brand identity system's usability in their workflow? This was evaluated using the Likert-scale survey, the interview's usability, role-perception, and forward-looking questions, and observation during the walkthrough and independent assignment. The study observed whether participants were confused or needed assistance (a sign of ineffectiveness), whether information flowed smoothly from one phase to the next, and whether they thought the system could handle real-world project tasks. Problems with the layout of the nodes or the interaction design were seen to be interface-level usability challenges, whereas problems with understanding, interpreting, or guiding AI-generated outputs were considered to be co-creation challenges. This reasoning follows Gmeiner et al. (2023) and is important because the two types of difficulties require different solutions: co-creation challenges indicate the need for improved structuring of the designer-AI relationship, while usability issues require interface improvements.

Role reshaping (SQ4): How does the designer's role in the process of developing a brand identity change when working with a node-based system? The role-perception questions in the interview and the role-shift indicators on the observation sheet were the main tools used to evaluate this. This observation sheet captured moments in which participants positioned themselves as creative lead, curator, or system architect versus moments in which they submitted to the system. Research on designer-AI co-creation has shown how AI co-creation tools dominate the design process, forcing designers to accept undesired outcomes, find ways to work around them, or stop using the tools altogether (Gmeiner et al., 2023). The main point of this thesis is that AI-powered branding changes designers from creators to curators of the systems with which they can design. The question is whether the node-based system, with its designer control points and human-in-the-loop checks, reduces or reproduces these dynamics.

7.1.4 Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data from the think-aloud sessions, semi-structured interviews, and observation sheets following Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). This approach was selected because it makes it possible to find trends in

participants' experiences while still taking into account differences in how designers viewed and used the system. Gmeiner et al. (2023) and Wadinambiarachchi et al. (2024) are two examples of HCI studies that use reflexive thematic analysis to evaluate AI-powered design tools. This type of evaluation is ideal for qualitative research with smaller groups of participants, as it aims to provide rich contextual understanding instead of statistical generalisability.

A brief statement on positionality is necessary since reflexive thematic analysis views the researcher as an active, interpretive instrument rather than a neutral observer. In this study, I worked for the participating organisation, designed and built the system being evaluated, and personally led and facilitated the sessions. I became quite familiar with the logic of the system and the practice setting because of this close contact, yet there is a risk that my interpretation of the data may have favoured the system's intended framing. To address this, I coded interface friction independently of architectural evaluation, recorded participants' exact critical reactions (such as P5's "very ugly" and P2's "stock") instead of smoothing them away, and treated contradictory answers as independent findings. Consistent with Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022), I did not use a second coder or seek inter-rater reliability: in reflexive thematic analysis coding is an interpretive act rather than a measurement to be reproduced, so a single reflexive analyst is appropriate, and the aim is a transparent, defensible reading rather than a replicable one.

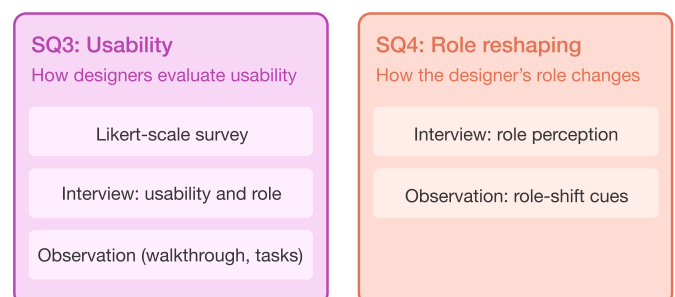


Figure 30. The two evaluation dimensions of Study 2 and the data sources informing each.

Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-phase process was followed in the analysis. First, all session recordings were transcribed and read alongside the matching observation sheets to get an understanding of the data. Second, initial codes were created for every dataset. Deductive codes were created from the evaluation criteria (usability issues, co-creation difficulties, and role-shift indications), whereas inductive codes were generated directly from the content of the data. In line with reflexive thematic analysis, codes were actively constructed by the researcher rather than treated as features waiting to be found in the data. Third, codes were categorised into potential themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and compared to the coded data to assess whether they made sense and stood out from the rest of the data. Fifth, themes were identified and refined. Sixth, the themes were described in the context of the research sub-questions. All steps of the Study 2 reflexive thematic analysis are in Appendix O. Full coded transcripts for all six evaluation sessions are available in the online appendix.

The interview data and think-aloud data were analysed together because they both show different sides of the same experience: the think-aloud data shows what participants did and thought in that moment, while the interview data shows what they thought about it after. Self-reported experiences and observed behaviour throughout the sessions could be compared using the observation sheets, which functioned as a triangulation source.

The Likert-scale survey was analysed with descriptive statistics only (Field, 2018): the median and range for each statement across the six participants. It served as a structured snapshot of where agreement clustered and where it spread, and as a guide to the qualitative themes that explain those patterns. It was not interpreted independently of the think-aloud and interview data.

7.2 Results

The reflexive thematic analysis produced 47 initial codes, which were then clustered into four themes through an iterative processes. The themes show how designers interacted with the system in two areas: workflow integration and usability (SQ3), and changes to their professional role (SQ4). Prior to discussing the themes, a summary of the post-session survey data gives the results a structured quantitative direction (Table 2).

7.2.1 Post-session survey overview

Items related to workflow structure (Q1, median = 5, Q2, median = 4.5) and the importance of uploading their own designs (Q5, median = 5) showed the most agreement.

The phase-based logic was consistently understood by designers, and they appreciated being able to add their own designs into the system. Strong agreement was also found on designer control (Q3 median = 5, Q4 median = 4), indicating that participants believed they could make significant choices regarding which brand features were included in the finished product.

The responses about AI behaviour were the most varied. The lowest agreement was on Q7 (median = 3.5, range 1–4), where responses were genuinely split. Q6 showed a wider nominal range (1–5), though this was driven by a single low score. At six participants these spreads are not interpreted statistically; a two-point gap between participants is not a finding here. They are read only as a sign that designers experienced AI output quality differently, a difference that the qualitative analysis traces to prompt specificity, as discussed in Theme 4 (Section 7.2.6).

There was a spread in usability on Q8 (system workable without technical AI expertise, median = 4, range 2–5). P2 and P4 each scored 2, P5 and P6 both scored 5, and P1 and P3 sat in between at 4. The responses therefore varied across participants without pointing to a single cause, a variation the qualitative analysis attributes to interface friction rather than the node-based logic itself (Theme 1). The system's ability to work within reasonable project time frames was rated as positive by participants (Q10, median = 5, range 3–5), with only P4, who scored 3, appearing a little hesitant. These items are treated as descriptive context for the interface discussion in Theme 1 rather than as independent results.

The system experience questions tell a different story: here the medians cluster at moderate agreement, with Q13, Q14 and Q15 all at 4, but two of the three items divided participants. The item about whether the system understands design principles without being told was the most split (Q15, median = 4, range 2–5). The co-creation item (Q13, median = 4, range 3–5) was also divided: four participants felt the interaction was co-creative, while two rated it as neutral. Together, these responses show the qualitative tension that Theme 4 (Section 7.2.6) addresses, which is the conflict between the system's strategic competence and its visual design limitations.

Table 2. Post-session Likert-survey results (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). N = 6.

#	Statement	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Median	Range
1	Outputs carried forward logically	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4-5
2	Understood phase connections	4	5	5	4	4	5	4.5	4-5
3	Could decide brand elements	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4-5
4	Could select/reject AI outputs	4	4	4	5	3	5	4	3-5
5	Valuable to upload own design	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4-5
6	Offered unexpected directions	4	4	4	1	4	5	4	1-5
7	Outputs varied but coherent	3	4	4	2	1	4	3.5	1-4
8	Usable without technical knowledge	4	2	4	2	5	5	4	2-5
9	Reusable across projects/teams	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3-4
10	Realistic project timelines	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	3-5
11	Extends exploration over choices	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4-5
12	Outputs as usable starting points	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	3-5
13	Felt like co-creation	4	4	3	5	3	4	4	3-5
14	Felt like creative sparring partner	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3-4
15	Understood design principles	4	2	4	2	5	4	4	2-5

7.2.2 Thematic overview

Four themes emerged from the data. While the last two themes focus on how the system changes the designer's role and professional self-understanding (primarily SQ4), the first two themes focus on how designers experienced the system in practice (primarily SQ3). The themes are connected: the interface frictions discussed in Theme 1 affect how designers take back control in Theme 2, and the curatorial behaviours in Theme 2 carry out the unchangeable vision discussed in Theme 3, which in turn explains the shifting nature of the designer's contribution across the workflow discussed in Theme 4. Think-aloud data, interview responses, and observation sheets are used to support each theme below. Survey questions that triangulate the qualitative findings are cited.

7.2.3 Theme 1: Structured process, unfinished interface

A consistent tension occurred through every session: designers praised the system's branding and node-based logic while critiquing the interface that delivers it. The six-phase structure was described as professionally sound and instantly recognised, starting with research and positioning and continuing through concept development, brand design, asset generation, and final delivery. P6 described it as "super practical" and pointed out that "all the steps are also immediately described (on the yellow post-its) and also in the phases, so you can skip a step if you want". "That's something we miss in our process because we leave the concept behind," P3 said, pointing out that the concept in this node-based brand identity system existed in every stage that followed. P1 said the node-based brand identity system was "based

on real knowledge" and "very well set up".

However, there was always friction with the node-based Krea.ai interface. At least one experience of visual disorientation occurred for each participant. Before being able to interact with any of the nodes, P6's first question was, "How do I zoom in?" When P2 tried to use the hand tool, it did not work: "Why can't I use the hand?" P1 described it as "continuously distracting" since it was "unclear" whether nodes were connected due to the yellow connection lines on the pink background. Two system crashes stopped P5's session due to Krea.ai usage overload, but the system recovered, and she was able to navigate on her own after restarting. Rather than being a result of the system's design concept, these interface problems are directly related to the contrast and visibility issues that exist in Krea.ai's current application.

The second aspect of this theme was information density. Participants considered the outputs from LLM-generated text nodes to be thorough yet challenging to process during the session. The system was "a little bit overwhelming at first because it is a lot of information, but it is also good to have everything altogether," according to P4. P5 asked, "Can you underline things in this part?" about commenting on or highlighting specific parts of node outputs. P1 thought the LLM output could be "a bit more straight to the point" and thought it was "too elaborate and too much". P4 recognised the text's strategic worth for post-hoc reasoning: "I see myself reading this before starting a meeting just to build up proving points."

Participants were able to differentiate between Krea.ai's specific canvas implementation and the system's architectural logic. The participants pointed out that the platform, not the node-based structure itself, was responsible for the friction caused by Krea.ai's interface (contrast problems, scrolling behaviour, and spatial disorientation). New front-end layers, including guided views (P4), embedded tool integrations (P5), and simplified interaction modes (P6), were proposed by participants as ways to improve the system's accessibility. Importantly, these recommendations showed that participants had effectively internalised the logic of the system to reason about how it may be presented differently for other use scenarios, rather than rejecting the underlying node-based architecture.

These findings are supported by survey data, which showed that the interface was the main cause of friction and that the workflow-logic items showed some of the highest agreement throughout the sample (Q1, median = 5; Q2, median = 4.5). This suggests that while the system's process design has been verified, its interaction design still has to be improved before it can be used by professionals.

7.2.4 Theme 2: Claiming the work: how designers reclaim ownership from AI

The second overarching pattern is a behaviour that appeared in all of the sessions: when given AI-generated results, designers actively reclaimed creative authorship in three different ways. This theme examines the co-creation dynamic that sits at the core of SQ4, highlighting the fact that the designer's role in the process of AI content generation does not decrease but rather evolves into curatorial judgement, prompt authorship, and selective integration.

The most common tactic was selective curation. Instead of looking for finished outputs, designers scanned AI outputs for pieces that might be extracted. Despite preferring a different model overall, P4 selected a particular font from one model's output: "I'm choosing the one of ChatGPT just because the font was looking nicer to me." "I see an element which I'm thinking to use from ChatGPT, which is this shape," she added. P6 said she was "happily impressed" by something she "hadn't expected AI would come up with" when she used an unexpected table composition from the AI-generated logos as inspiration for her own design. An AI logo's design logic was discovered by P3: "It looks like the tip of the wine top, and then you have the finger... it creates a connection." In each case, the designer's role was to identify the parts that had creative potential rather than creating the content itself. The designer's skilled eye recognised a practical typeface, an eye-catching form, or an unexpected composition within the larger output; the AI created these aspects without any intention.

The second tactic was prompt editing as creative direction. Some designers changed or created their own prompts instead of using the pre-written ones provided by the system. P6 changed the sticker prompt, adding style terminology such as "Stickers are shiny and bedazzled" based on her expertise in prompt engineering. P5 expressed her creative direction over the system's defaults by completely rejecting the pre-written prompt and creating her own from scratch. P3 incorporated her logo direction into the sticker prompt. Through these actions of authorship, the designer was positioned as a creative director influencing the system's outputs rather than as an operator following it.

The third and most emotionally important tactic was using original creation as an identity anchor. Each participant reported feeling most like a designer while they were creating their own logo, whether on paper or in Figma. P1 happily described "this beautiful little martini glass" after drawing a monogram of a martini glass on paper. "Ooh I love this, I love the way this is looking," P6 commented after creating a composition of a heart. P5 experimented with fonts in Figma until she felt comfortable: "This I feel". P4 stated clearly: "I felt like a designer when I went to Figma". For each participant, creating something by hand, even for a short while and imperfectly, served as the session's emotional core.

The opposite pattern revealed just as much. The AI's visual impression may differ significantly from the designer's mental vision, resulting in limited ownership and strong negative responses, even when designers gave creative direction through prompts. P5 expressed a clear creative intent by creating her own sticker prompt from scratch, yet she responded to the results with the most emotional reaction in the study: "Oh oh. Very ugly. This shocked me". She thought: "I just see something very different than this," highlighting the gap between what an AI creates visually and what a designer can express in words, further discussed in Theme 3. Similar concerns were expressed by P4 at the concept level: "I do not feel like I own the concept because it is based on AI."

This finding is directly related to the Q5 survey findings, where submitting the designer's own design scored among the dataset's highest median values (median = 5, range 4–5). The designer upload nodes highlight the stage at which the collaboration becomes genuinely co-creative: before the upload, the system creates content for the designer to review; following the upload, the system creates content that builds upon the designer's work.

7.2.5 Theme 3: Vision is hard to prompt: the irreducible core of the designer

The third theme focuses on elements of designers' work with AI that they believe are fundamentally human. Participants had a consistent viewpoint throughout the interviews: the designer's worth is found in creative vision, taste, criticality, and tacit knowledge, all of which AI cannot access, rather than execution expertise, which AI can imitate.

"That vision, AI can't take that away from me," is how P6 put it most clearly. "And even though everything surrounding it might be artificial intelligence, I still have a vision of what I want to accomplish." This presents AI not as a replacement for human creativity, but rather as infrastructure built around it. P6 went on: "You can't be as critical as a designer if you do not have that [vision]. Additionally, I believe that it is more crucial than ever for designers to be critical."

P4 highlighted an essential limitation of prompting: designers possess information that they are unable to properly express. "You may not always be able to express the knowledge you possess since it may be hidden in your head. You just act based on your life's lessons and experiences, but you are unable to truly contextualise prompts". This is what Polanyi (1966) refers to as "tacit knowledge", which is expertise developed over years of practice that directs choices automatically without the designer being able to explain it. Although explicit language is necessary for prompts, much of what makes a designer successful happens beneath the surface. P3 described taste and quality judgement as the differentiator. "There was, like, so many things wrong with the whole illustration," she said of her housemate, a non-designer who had started selling AI-generated illustrations. "Designers have great taste," she said. "Also, we understand how things should be for the brand and positioning." The implication is that AI lowers the barrier to producing visual content, but how you evaluate it becomes more important. "The really good brands and the people who really, really know about it [design], really immediately see: this is AI," P5 said in the context of expert recognition.

P2 used two analogies to provide the study's most philosophical interpretation. The first made a comparison between design and cuisine, saying, "A good dish can of course be simple, but it is something made with passion and love. Is it possible for a dish prepared without love and passion to be delicious at all?" The second contrasted lab-grown diamonds with AI-generated designs, saying that while they looked the same, "They do not have the same value." For P2, the intention and effort that went into creating the result characterise the designer's contribution rather than its aesthetic qualities. Despite these strong views on what only a human

designer can bring, no participant felt threatened by the system. Every participant responded "more important" (P1, P3, P4, P6) or "equally important" (P2, P5) when asked if working with the system makes the designer more or less important. "You do not take that away from anyone with this system," said P1. P5 clarified her response by saying, "I think equally important, or maybe even more important since the system requires more curatorial judgement than a procedure that is entirely human". "If I just let the AI do everything for the whole process, then it just is not going to be mine anymore," P3 stated as a limitation for responsible use. In other words, participants did not experience the system as replacing their judgement but as making it more necessary.

7.2.6 Theme 4: From designer to system architect: designing how AI contributes

The fourth theme shows how working in an organised node-based brand identity system reshapes the designer's relationship to AI. Participants found the system helpful across the entire workflow (Phases 1 to 6); what varied from phase to phase was not whether AI helped but the mode of engagement it called for. Four modes recurred across the sessions (Figure 31): an analytical mode in the research and strategy phases, where designers read and analysed AI-generated material; a curatorial mode in the exploration phases, where they selected, rejected, and recombined AI outputs; a directive mode in the identity and asset-generation phases, where they steered the system through their own prompts and added nodes; and a structural mode in the final phase, where they created the full overview. Read together, these four modes describe the orientation of a system architect: someone concerned with the structure that produces brand assets rather than only the assets themselves. The participants did not build this system, so the theme evidences that designers readily adopt this orientation towards a system they operate; designing that structure in the first place is evidenced separately in the construction account in Chapter 6.

All participants responded most positively to AI in the research and strategy phases (Phases 1 and 2). Competitor analysis is "super interesting," according to P4, who also mentioned that agency deadlines usually hinder this level of work: "I never do too much of competitor analysis because I never have the time." P3 concluded that the system adds the most value in brand strategy: "I think the first phase is extremely good." According to P6, the method makes strategy work "100 percent faster" because "all the steps are just there." The most sceptical participant, P2, agreed that the system's designed strategic material was valuable: "That part, before that of the text... if that can already be very detailed and prepared, that is amazing." P1 summarised: "What it mainly does for the team is, it just takes away the guesswork."

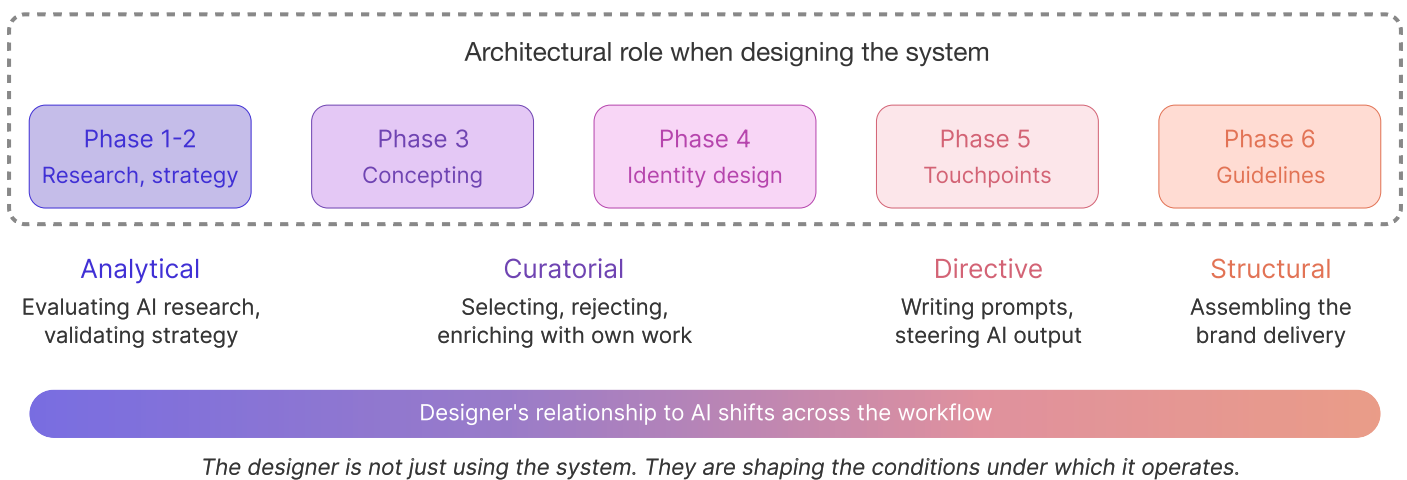


Figure 31. Designer role shift across six branding phases.

Participants understood and valued identity design (Phase 4), which was purposefully created as an exploratory phase. None of the participants handled the AI-generated logos as final deliverables. Rather, they began their own design work with the outputs as guided starting points. P4 observed: “They provide some guidance and a concept. It is fascinating to observe”. Additionally, P4 highlighted a particular benefit over traditional reference materials: “Here, I see the name already there, which is not something I can find through inspiration via the internet.” Participants liked the phase for what it was intended to do: offer a brand-specific visual exploration that feeds into the designer’s own creative process, even though they were critical of the visual quality (P2 called some outputs “stock”, P3 said that “the graphical elements aspect and typographical aspect... it really doesn’t do a good job”). The structure of the system, which purposefully separates AI-generated exploration from the designer’s own upload and design work, was perceived as an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

In Phase 5 (asset creation), participants excitedly responded, showing that the system’s value goes beyond exploration and strategy. P6 responded to the sticker generation with excitement, showing the most favourable response to any AI output throughout the study: “OOOOHHHH! This is really, yes this is really exactly what I meant.” She identified certain quality markers: “It has watercolour and has glitter on it. Plus pastel”. During this phase, P1 showed signs of inspiration: “I’m getting really inspired by this workflow now.” P5’s sticker output was less successful: “Very ugly. This shocked me”. As discussed in Theme 2, prompt editing functioned as a form of creative direction; here, the variation in prompt quality between participants reveals it as a design competence that directly shapes output quality. The difference seems to be related to the level of complexity of the prompt rather than the phase itself: P5

developed her own prompt with less prompt engineering precision, while P6 used professional experience to write a very detailed prompt. This suggests that the quality of asset production relies on the designer’s capacity to turn creative intent into useful prompts, which is a component of the system architect’s toolkit and a type of design talent in and of itself.

This pattern demonstrates that the designer’s relationship to AI changes throughout the workflow: analytical in the strategy phases, curatorial in the exploration phases, directive in the identity and asset-generation phases, and structural in the final phase, where the designer assembles the complete overview. It does not demonstrate that AI succeeds in certain phases and fails in others. In each instance, the designer is influencing the conditions in which the tool operates rather than just using it. This is the orientation of a system architect. In contrast to the designer who manually generates each asset from the start, the designer who designs the system prompts, chooses the models, creates the phase structure, and sets the control points where human judgement enters is doing fundamentally different work.

7.2.7 Summary of findings

Together, the four themes (Figure 32) explain how a co-creative node-based brand identity system is experienced and navigated by designers and how this experience changes their role. The brand identity system’s phase-based logic is solid and easily understood by designers, according to Theme 1. However, participants attributed the friction caused by Krea.ai’s canvas interface to the platform rather than to the node-based architecture itself. The second theme showed that designers do not just take AI outputs and proceed with them; they actively take back ownership of their work by curating it, writing prompts, and generating new ideas. The shift from the system generating for the designer to generating with the designer was made possible by the designer upload

nodes and the nodes where the designer could modify answers. At these steps, human-generated work enters the system. The third theme revealed the participants' perceptions of the role's intrinsic human aspects, including their creative vision, taste, criticality, and tacit knowledge that cannot easily be expressed in prompts. Every participant stated that the designer's job is equally or even more crucial when working with AI, and none of them perceived the system as threatening. Theme 4 showed how the designer's connection with AI changes throughout the branding workflow, going from analytical in the strategy phases to curatorial in the exploration phase to directive in the identity design and asset creation phase and to structural in the final phase. AI is valued across all phases rather than being accepted in some and rejected in others. The capability of the designer to turn a creative idea into useful prompts influenced the quality of outputs in the stages that followed, defining prompt engineering as an important design skill for future designers.

Taken together, these results support the central argument of the thesis: that working with the system expands the designer's role to include that of system architect. The research shows this at two levels. In operating the system, participants did not passively accept AI outputs but actively shaped the conditions of production through their curatorial decisions, prompt adjustments, and design contributions, taking up the architect's stance within a system they had not built. Designing that structure in the first place, reported in Chapter 6, is the architect's work in its fullest sense.

This was clearest at the designer control nodes. Where human judgement entered the system and modified its outputs, sessions consistently reached their emotional and creative peak. The system's co-creative character, then, comes from these nodes rather than from the AI-generated material itself.



Figure 32. The four themes that emerged from the evaluation study.

7.3 Discussion

The evaluation results are discussed in this section in relation to the design requirements, the exploratory results from Study 1, and the literature review.

7.3.1 Workflow structure: confirmed by practice

The evaluation's most obvious conclusion is that the phase-based workflow logic is effective. Participants ranked the logical flow of outputs as one of the system's strongest features (Q1, median = 5; Q2, median = 4.5) and instantly recognised the six-phase structure. This supports the structural reasoning based on Keller's (1993) network model as well as the branding workflow described in Study 1 (Section 5.2.1).

Also significant is P3's discovery that the concept remains connected across all phases. An issue with existing AI-assisted branding, according to Study 1 (Section 5.3.3), is the disconnection between tools: strategic choices made in one tool are not visible in another. In the node-based brand identity system, instead of being text that must be re-entered at every stage, brand decisions are carried forward through the node connections.

Additionally, all six participants criticised Krea.ai's canvas rather than the node-based idea itself for interface friction (poor contrast and spatial disorientation). Although the interface needs to be improved in the current implementation, the architectural concept is validated.

7.3.2 Designer control: the upload node as turning point

Survey agreement was also high for the designer upload nodes (Q5, median = 5). This result illustrates the point at which the collaboration becomes co-creative rather than sequential. The node-based brand identity system creates content for the designer to review. The designer can use it, take inspiration from it, or reject it, and then create and upload their own designs or content. In this way, the system creates material that builds on the designer's creations before and after the upload. The outcome is now a collaborative product.

This supports the claim made by the COFI framework (Rezwana & Maher, 2023) that co-creation quality depends not only on AI capabilities but also on the structure of the interaction. The upload nodes create what COFI would refer to as a contribution channel, where human creative input affects the AI's following output. Every participant reported feeling most like a designer when producing their own work, indicating that this is also the moment of most emotional engagement. It turns out that design requirement R7, which states that the designer must be able to create outside of the system and bring work

back in, is both a practical and an emotional necessity. It serves as a means for designers to keep control over the brand identity.

7.3.3 AI output quality: a skill-dependent variable

The responses about AI behaviour were the most diverse. Participants disagreed on whether outputs felt brand-consistent (Q7, median = 3.5, range 1–4). Two possible explanations for this variation are differences in the way participants interacted with the system and the possibility that the system prompts within some nodes required additional modification to generate more coherent outputs by default. Both the system's prompt quality and the designer's own prompt input contribute to output consistency because the AI has more freedom to move away from the brand direction when the pre-written instructions guiding a node are not detailed enough.

This is clearly shown by the difference between P6 and P5 in Phase 5. P6 gave the most positive response after writing a thorough prompt using particular style terminology, whereas P5 gave the most unfavourable response to a less precise prompt. The prompt was different from the rest of the system. This supports what Lindley and Whitham (2025) refer to as prompt craft: the capacity to transform creative intent into useful AI instructions is a skill that improves with practice. Additionally, it means that while design requirement R9 (diverse but brand-consistent outputs) is satisfied at the architectural level, it is still sensitive to the quality of individual prompts. This relates to the tacit knowledge problem (Polanyi, 1966) because prompts require the articulation of knowledge that designers possess but cannot always express.

This confirms Theme 3 (trend bias and generic outcomes) of Study 1. Although certain outputs were thought to be generic, P6's success and P4's identification of unexpected generations in AI outputs indicate that unique work is achievable when the creator gives enough precise guidance. The designer's contribution defines the difference between generic and unique output, highlighting the importance of the designer's skill.

7.3.4 Verdict against the design requirements

The majority of the seventeen requirements from Section 5.4 are supported by the evaluation, with two remaining conditionally met. System scope (R1) and workflow structure (R2, R3) were satisfied: participants assessed the logical flow of outputs as the system's strongest feature (Q1, median = 5; Q2, median = 4.5) and recognised the phase connections. Designer control (R4 to R7) was satisfied and created the emotional centre of the sessions, with the upload nodes (R7) receiving some of the highest agreement in the dataset (Q5, median = 5). AI behaviour (R8, R9) was satisfied at the

architectural level, but turned out to depend on prompt quality: variation stayed brand-consistent while prompts were accurate and drifted when they were not. The usability requirements (R10 to R12) were met in concept but qualified: reusability (R11) and timeline fit (R12) were supported in perception rather than tested across a full project, and the friction under R10 was attributed to the platform interface rather than the node-based architecture. The co-creation requirement (R15) varied most among participants, while system boundaries (R13, R14) and system experience (R17) were satisfied. R9 and R10 are therefore the two requirements best read as conditionally met, and in both cases the condition is external to the architecture: prompting skill for R9 and the platform interface for R10.



08

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Interpreting what the findings mean for the designer's role in AI-augmented brand development

This thesis set out to investigate how a node-based brand identity system can structure human-AI co-creation across the brand identity development workflow while maintaining the designer's strategic and curatorial role. This discussion reflects on usability, the designer's evolving role, conditions for adoption, and the broader implications for the profession.

8.1 Usability of the system

A recurring theme emerged from the evaluations: participants had no trouble understanding the branding logic of the system, but they struggled with the interface. The six-phase structure accurately represents the way branding actually works, and participants praised the system's logical flow between phases as its strongest feature (Q1, median = 5; Q2, median = 4.5). P1 referred to it as "based on real knowledge", P6 called it "super practical", and P3 highlighted that the concept stayed connected to each following phase.

Additionally, all participants experienced interface problems, including low-contrast connection lines, platform crashes during P5's session, trouble zooming, and non-working tools. Instead of the node-based approach itself, all six participants attributed to Krea.ai's canvas for these problems. A guided view that only displays the relevant phase was suggested by P4, annotation capabilities were requested by P5, and a simplified interaction mode was proposed by P6.

I experienced the same struggle as a designer who spent several months developing and using this technology. It felt like a highly creative process to link nodes, test model combinations, and observe how brand selections progressed through stages. However, this experience was frequently negatively impacted by the interface. If I were to create a node-based brand identity system from the ground up, I would include direct integration with design programs like Figma and Adobe Illustrator so that designers could switch between tools without leaving the workflow, a built-in chat feature for conversational interaction with the system, and PDF export and import for client deliverables. In the last section of this thesis, I will investigate developing a different interface in the form of an application that presents the logic of the system in a front-end that is easier to use.

8.2 Designer's role

Both studies found that designers perceived AI as a force that changes their role rather than threatens it. The focus group in Study 1 argued that strategic thinking and

the client relationship are key components of agency value (Theme 6). Every participant in Study 2 stated that while working with AI, the designer's role is at least as important. No one experienced the system as replacing their creative judgement.

The evaluation showed that the designers' contributions were analytical, curatorial, directive, and structural, and together amounted to an architect-like role rather than only visual design. This was clearest when P6 set the conditions under which stickers would be generated, P4 curated across AI model outputs, and P3 assessed system-level coherence. This result is in line with previous studies on structured co-ideation between humans and AI. In contrast to unstructured use or working alone, Wang et al. (2025) discovered that designers generated more novel and higher-quality ideas when following a structured co-creation framework with a customised GPT. This idea is expanded from a single brainstorming session to a full multi-phase branding workflow using the node-based system.

The evaluation's third theme (Study 2), however, suggested that the system architect role complements rather than replaces the designer's current identity. Making something by hand was the most creative moment for each participant: P1 drew a logo on paper, P4 and P5 worked in Figma, and P6 composed a heart shape. The shift from the system creating for the designer to generating with the designer's own work was signified by the designer upload nodes, which had one of the highest survey scores (Q5, median = 5)

It is also important to recognise that the evaluation (Study 2) confirmed Study 1's conclusions on AI's role in the branding process. The evaluation confirmed that designers did not treat AI outputs in the core design phase as final (Phase 4). The first part of Phase 4 was created to introduce more AI into the identity design process through the creation of graphic elements, colour schemes, and logo experiments. None of the six participants, however, viewed any AI-generated logo as a finished creation. Before producing their own work, each designer either rejected the explorations completely, picked out specific parts, or used them as inspiration. The designer created the identity, but the AI expanded the starting point.

This finding connects to a broader concern in the field of design. Designers are concerned that AI will replace them (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2024; Heigl, 2025). The quick development of generative tools has raised serious questions about whether long-developed creative skills will still be useful (Park et al., 2024; Hafez, 2025). According to this research, the worry is unfounded, but not in the way that designers would like. According to the evaluation in this research, designers who knew

how to guide AI through strategic model selection, well-crafted prompts, and critical output evaluation produced noticeably better results than those who did not. While P5's less precise prompt generated outcomes she described as "very ugly", P6's thorough prompt resulted in outputs she described as "exactly what I meant" (Figure 33). The system was the same. The capability of the designer to work with it made a difference. This suggests that the concern around AI can be reframed: designers should not be afraid of being replaced by AI. They should be afraid of being replaced by designers who know how to work with AI.

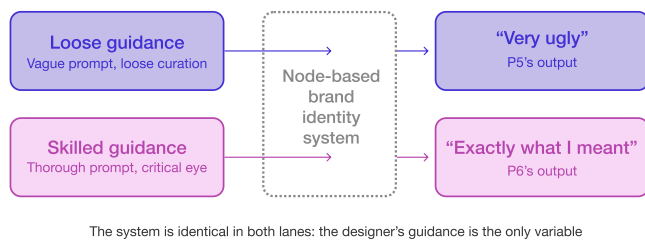


Figure 33. Same system, different guidance, different output (P5 and P6).

8.3 Feasibility, desirability, and viability

The existence and functioning of the system prove its feasibility. A usable node-based system with around 90 nodes was designed, tested, and assessed by six qualified designers who finished tasks within it. The system facilitates designer control points throughout the workflow, generates outputs at each phase, and communicates brand decisions through structured text. One session (P5) had platform-related issues, but the system recovered and the participant was able to resume. This confirms that developing a node-based brand identity system using platforms such as Krea.ai is feasible.

The evaluation gives strong support for desirability, with several designers saying outright that they would adopt the system. P1 was emphatic: "I am going to use it, I'm definitely going to use it", and P4 could "see myself doing it already, like, tomorrow if I had the time," describing it as "a tool that every one of us could just use." The feature designers valued most was the ability to upload their own work, which was also among the highest-rated survey items (Q5, median = 5).

Desirability was strongest in the research and strategy phases, where the system fills a genuine gap. P4 noted, "I never do too much competitor analysis because I never have the time", P6 said strategy work becomes

"100 percent faster," and P3 said that for real projects she "would take a lot of the strategy parts". In the visual identity phases, designers preferred to lead with their own creations. This reflects the system's intended division of labour rather than a shortfall: it is wanted most where it adds the most, while the designer's own hand leads where authorship matters.

The most variable of the three is viability. The viability of this type of system in professional practice depends on several factors.

First, the system has a learning curve. In order to critically evaluate AI outputs, designers must comprehend node-based logic, learn how to create effective prompts, and develop curatorial judgement. This indicates that the system does not speed the process right away. After the designer has spent time understanding how to use it, it speeds things up. This investment is a barrier for organisations with short project timelines.

Second, credit and token-based pricing methods are used by generative AI platforms. Credits are used for each LLM call, image creation, and model switch. Running all six phases for a single brand case can become a significant cost during the brand development. Whether the time savings from AI-accelerated design and exploration outweigh the direct expenses of operating the system is the economic question for an agency thinking about implementing it. Although this amount will change as AI pricing evolves, it is an important consideration that should not be ignored.

Third, using a commercial AI platform to develop a workflow leads to structural dependency. The entire workflow is impacted if Krea.ai modifies its pricing, eliminates a model, or stops providing its service. According to Cusumano et al. (2021), digital platforms produce power imbalances in which users take the risk and the platform sets the rules. Designers' growing reliance on AI platforms means that the tools designers rely on are controlled by companies whose goals may not align with their own. When a platform fails, designers encounter a "design block", which is the inability to carry on with their job due to the removal of the infrastructure.

How agencies charge for AI-assisted work is a fourth viability challenge. How is it represented on the invoice if the technology allows a designer to finish a competitor analysis that used to take a whole day in just 30 minutes? There is a dilemma for agencies that bill by the hour: speed lowers billable time. When clients find out that AI was used, they can wonder why a project costs what it does. Theme 6 of Study 1 showed how meaning-led agencies position themselves based on the quality of their thinking rather than the number of hours they put in. Value-based pricing, in which the client pays for the

strategic outcome rather than the time spent achieving it, might be the solution for these agencies. This brings the conversation back to curatorial judgement, taste, and strategic vision as the fundamental value proposition, requiring agencies to explain what they add beyond what AI can achieve.

8.4 The pace of AI

One of my concerns when I started this research in February 2026 was whether the topic I was researching would still be relevant when I was done. AI image generation tools are already improving at maintaining visual consistency: Recraft has improved the quality of its vector output, Adobe Firefly offers generative tools integrated into Photoshop and Illustrator, and Midjourney's style and character reference features allow teams to lock a visual style across generations. These developments indicate that limitations found in this study might be solved by improvements in technology.

However, the theoretical framework and the themes presented in this thesis are independent of the limitations of the current model. Even as image generators improve, the principle that brand decisions should be passed between phases as structured data stays the same. As AI advances, the idea that designers need intentional control points remains important. As outputs get more convincing, it becomes more important for curators to make good decisions because it becomes harder to spot "good enough" output that does not really serve the brand.

A node-based system may also have value beyond branding, although this thesis does not test that claim. Any multi-phase creative process that must carry strategic intent across stages faces the same structural problem addressed here: service design must hold value propositions, touchpoint specifications, and user research consistent across phases (Stickdorn et al., 2018); product design must transfer material and user requirements between concept, prototype, and implementation; interior design must keep spatial concepts, material palettes, and client briefs coherent from concept to purchasing. In each case AI tools support individual phases without structurally linking them. What plausibly transfers are the logic of nodes, connections, and control points; what changes is the substance carried between them (brand archetypes versus user personas versus spatial concepts). This is offered as a direction for further research, meant to show how far the framework could be used, not a result of the present study.

8.5 Ethics, AI risks, and the future designer

The application of generative AI in brand development raises the ethical concerns shown in Figure 34. Who owns a brand identity created by a system where the designer curates and AI generates? Although P4's statement that she did not feel she owned the concept "because it is based on AI" implies ownership is not straightforward, the evaluation revealed that designers maintain a strong sense of ownership after uploading their own work. As Anscomb (2025) argues, intentionality is central to creative authorship. The node-based system divides execution between humans and AI while maintaining intentionality.

Additionally, there is a risk of homogenisation. Brands could move towards aesthetic averages if agencies use similar AI-augmented workflows based on the same generative models. Brands are cultural artefacts (Holt, 2004; Beverland, 2009), and cultural uniqueness may need the kind of unexpected creative connections that AI cannot access. However, the system reduces this risk by using distinct archetype and personality combinations to push each brand in a different direction.

In general, questions regarding control and accountability are raised by the trend towards increasingly autonomous AI agents (Chan et al., 2023; Gabriel et al., 2024). The danger of relying too much on AI-generated outputs without proper evaluation rises as systems get more powerful. This is reduced by the designer control points of the node-based system, although they rely on the designer using critical judgement rather than accepting outputs without question.

This relates to a significant finding regarding design expertise. The assessment showed that the designer's current abilities had a direct impact on the quality of the result. Designers could critically assess AI outputs if they were educated in composition, colour theory, typography, and brand strategy. Without this knowledge, a designer lacks the foundation to differentiate between work that strengthens the brand and work that is only aesthetically pleasing. This is exactly what P3's comment about her non-designer housemate selling defective AI-generated illustrations captures: the housemate could create the illustration but was unable to recognise the issues. AI does not replace basic design knowledge, such as Gestalt principles, colour theory, and the typographic hierarchy. It becomes necessary knowledge for a designer in order to operate with it. AI competencies should supplement the existing foundations of design education, not replace them.

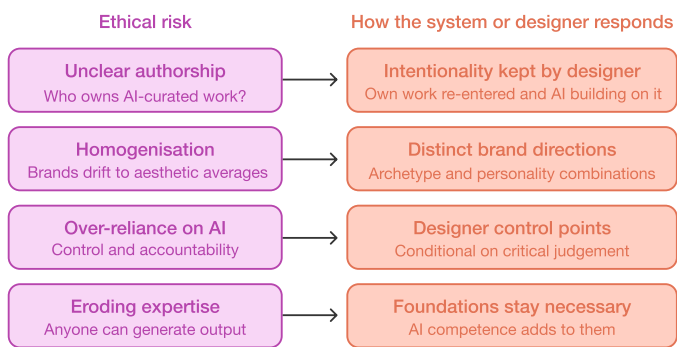


Figure 34. Ethical risks and how the system and the designer respond.

8.6 A method, not another tool

A fair objection follows from the problem this thesis set out to address. Tool fatigue is a real problem, according to Study 1 (Theme 5): the field develops more tools than anyone can learn, and the continual relearning takes time and focus. Adding to that pile could be a consequence of proposing a new system.

But what is different is that the node-based brand identity system is a method, not just another tool. Tools are operated through a specific interface, and that interface is exactly what tool fatigue is about. When an interface changes or is replaced, the designer's familiarity is lost. A method is independent of any single interface. What the designer learns is how it works: how a node is defined through a system prompt, how nodes connect, how brand decisions flow from one phase to the next, and where to place the control points that keep human judgement in the loop. If a designer understands this, the model inside any node becomes a swappable component. The designer only needs to know what the model can accomplish. During the development, several models were tested and eventually assigned by fit: Claude for most LLM nodes, Nano Banana Pro for photography, Recraft V4 for flat vector elements or photography with more integrated creative direction, and Ideogram V3 for text-in-logos (Chapter 6). When a stronger model emerges, the designer can just swap the model in the same node, and the workflow does not change. The designer does not relearn an interface; they reassign a component.

This reflects a principle that came directly from the field. At the BNO hackathon and in the focus group (Section 5.2.3, Theme 5), designers argued that learning the underlying principles of working with AI is more important than mastering separate tools that may not exist in six months. A node-based method makes the method itself

the durable skill. The designer can compose nodes, write prompts, decide what flows where, and judge output, and that skill carries across model generations. Node-based logic is not new; it is a type of dataflow visual programming where each node does an operation, and the connections carry data between them. It has been used for a long time in many technical fields, from engineering and instrumentation to scientific computing (Johnston et al., 2004). One issue that needs to be made clear is that while the method does not rely on a specific model, the implementation still uses Krea.ai and has the platform dependency that was discussed in Section 8.3. Krea.ai does not own the logic of nodes, connections, and control points; it might be constructed somewhere else. The full workflow and development of the system are documented in the development log in Appendix R. Because the models within the method are replaceable, the workflow can be rebuilt and implemented in other node-based tools.

8.7 Limitations

Six limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings.

First, while the six-person evaluation sample offers significant qualitative insight, statistical generalisation is not supported. The results may not apply to designers in other organisational contexts or careers, even though the sample was purposefully varied.

Second, potential bias is introduced by the researcher's dual function as system creator and evaluation facilitator. It is possible that participants minimised criticism out of politeness, even though several did voice strong unfavourable sentiments.

Third, instead of using an actual client project, a fictional brand case was used to evaluate the node-based brand identity system. A test case cannot simulate the customer interactions, financial restrictions, and iterative feedback loops involved in professional brand development.

Fourth, participants did not run all of the roughly 90 nodes across the whole workflow. This would have taken far longer than the session allowed. As a result, the evaluation only recorded reactions to the logic and the structure of parts of the system but not the experience of a whole end-to-end project, where decision-making and output inconsistencies could emerge.

Fifth, the evaluation recorded immediate reactions rather than long-term, consistent use. It is unclear whether the system architect position becomes more stable with

experience and whether the initial favourable reactions are maintained.

Sixth, the system is limited by the generative AI models that were available at the time of development and Krea.ai's existing capabilities. These capabilities are changing quickly, as covered in Section 8.4, and as models improve, certain architectural choices regarding designer control points would need to be revised. Regardless of the specific tasks that call for it, the general idea that designer control should exist wherever AI creation is unreliable is still relevant.

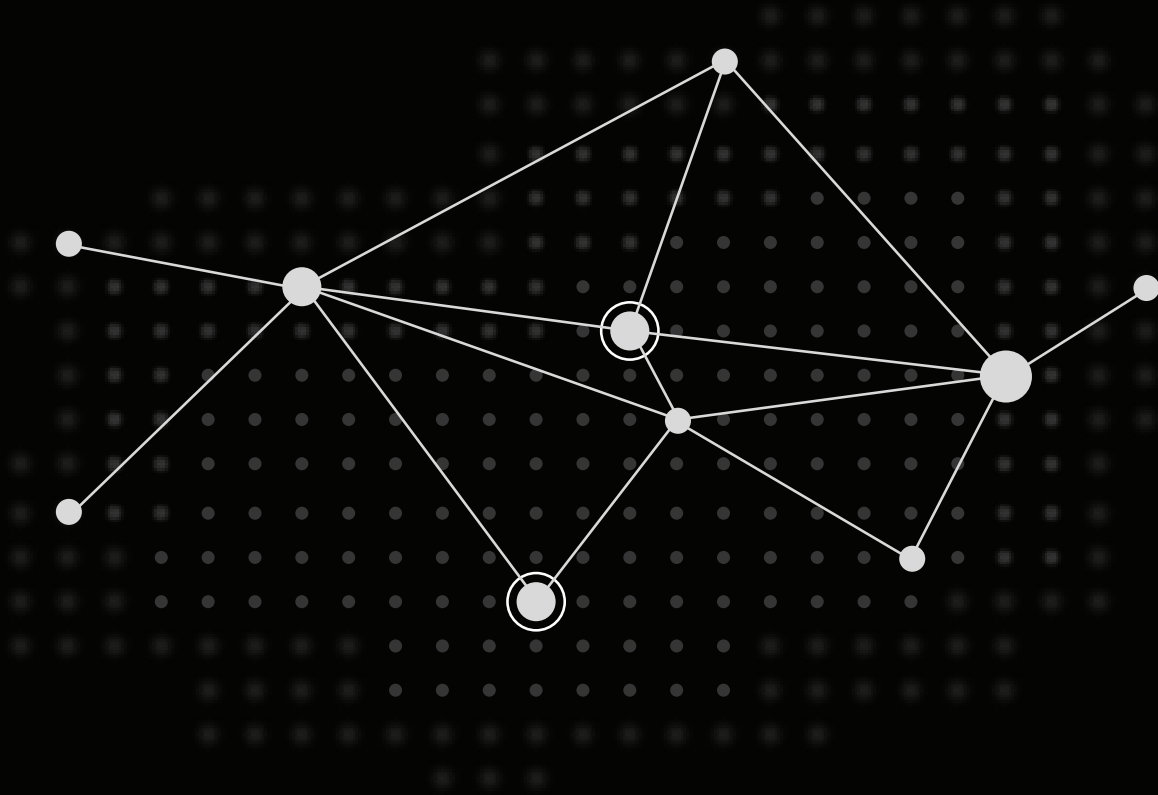
8.8 Future development and research

This research opens several directions for future work. The system needs to be validated in actual work situations. Research where designers apply it to real client projects over an extended period would indicate whether the system architect position becomes stronger with experience and whether designers improve at creating prompts as they practise. To assess whether the connected structure itself makes a difference, it would also be useful to compare how designers work with node-based systems versus disconnected AI tools.

The extent to which the quality of the output depended on how well the designer constructed their prompt was one of the evaluation's most notable findings. This raises the question of what is considered a good prompt in a branding context and whether it can be taught.

Whether the framework transfers to other multi-phase design domains, such as service, product, and interior design, is a further direction for research, as discussed in Section 8.4.

There will also be two other significant issues that require ongoing attention. The line between what AI can do well and what it needs a person to do will keep changing as AI models improve. Human control points will need to be reviewed on a regular basis by researchers and designers, and further research is necessary to fully understand the risks associated with relying on commercial AI platforms. When designers base their whole process on an unpredictable platform, they run the risk of that platform changing or disappearing. To maintain the independence of the profession, it will be crucial to create open-source alternatives or platform-independent formats.



09

CONCLUSION

Answering how a node-based brand identity system can be created and how it reshapes the designer's role

AI-assisted brand identity development has become a tool-by-tool process: designers move between generative tools, prompting each in isolation, with nothing holding the brand together across them. The result is strategic drift, where context, intent, and earlier decisions fade with every handoff, and the tool, not the designer, ends up steering the brand. This thesis addressed that mismatch. The objective was to create and assess a node-based brand identity system that maintains the strategic and curatorial role of the designer while structuring human-AI co-creation throughout the whole brand identity development workflow. Four sub-questions were used to support the main research question, “How can a node-based brand identity system be designed to structure human-AI co-creation across the brand identity development workflow while maintaining the designer’s strategic and curatorial role?”

The first sub-question focused on the current structure of the brand identity development workflow and the role AI plays in it. The exploratory phase produced a seven-step workflow divided into four stages: understanding, creating, delivering, and sustaining. The use of AI varied throughout the stages. In the phases of research, strategy, and application, designers employed AI for structural and supporting work; in concept development, they resisted it selectively; and in the creation of core identity, such as logos, they largely rejected it. When AI supported the designer’s ideas without claiming authorship, it was appreciated; when it touched the tacit and emotional judgement that gives a brand its meaning, it was rejected.

How such a system could be designed while maintaining the curatorial role of the designer was the focus of the second sub-question. Chapter 3’s theoretical framework guided the design. It incorporates five concepts: brand identity as a relational network; brand personality and archetype as structured inputs; fixed and variable logic; a co-creative interaction architecture; and the designer as system architect. The framework was converted into a working system in Krea.ai with about 90 nodes spread across the six branding phases. In this system, intentional control points keep the designer responsible for evaluation, curation, creation, and prompt authorship, and brand decisions are carried forward through node connections rather than manually re-entered.

In the third sub-question, which asked how professional designers evaluate the system’s usability and applicability, designers rated the system’s flow between phases as its strongest feature and judged the branding logic to be professionally sound and instantly recognisable. They explicitly noted that the friction was found in the platform interface rather than the node-based architecture itself, and that the system was most useful when designers uploaded their own work and the system built on it.

The fourth sub-question focused on how the designer’s position changes when working with the system. The answer is role transformation, not role reduction. Throughout the workflow, the designer’s role changed, going from analytical in the strategy phases, to curatorial in exploration, to directive in asset generation, and structural in the final phase. At each phase, the designer shaped the conditions in which the tool functioned. The architect role is most fully evidenced by the construction of the system itself (Chapter 6); the evaluation adds that designers who only operate the system already take up this role, because operating it still demands architectural judgement: authoring prompts, setting fixed and variable conditions, and curating what the tool returns. None of the participants perceived the system as a threat and all judged their role to be equally or more important when working with it.

When combined, these responses address the main research question. A node-based brand identity system can structure human-AI co-creation while maintaining the designer’s strategic and curatorial role. It does this by mirroring the networked nature of brand identity in its structure, carrying strategic decisions forward as structured inputs, maintaining consistency through fixed and variable logic, defining the roles of designer and AI at each step, and placing intentional control points where the designer assesses, curates, and authors prompts.

A change in the designer’s role is the main implication. In a node-based system, the designer becomes a system architect instead of only an asset creator, creating a structure that generates brand assets. This increases the value of newer skills, including turning creative ideas into precise prompts, and points towards design expertise becoming more, not less, decisive (Figure 35). Additionally, it reframes a common fear: according to the research shown here, designers should be more worried about being outpaced by designers who know how to work with AI than they are about being replaced by AI. Node-based logic is a method, not just another tool, and because it organises any multi-step creative process where strategic purpose needs to be carried across stages, the same method could extend to design fields parallel to branding.

Several boundaries frame these contributions. The system was evaluated with six designers, each in a single session working on a fictional brand case, on one platform and at a single moment in a fast-moving field, and without running the full workflow end to end. The findings are therefore best read as a proof of concept and an account of the designer’s role, rather than as evidence of how the system performs across a complete client project. Chapter 8 sets these limits out in full.

The directions they open are just as clear. The most

important is to test the system on real client projects, with the stakeholders, deadlines, and iteration that a single session cannot capture. Beyond that, rebuilding the method on an open-source, node-based platform would free it from any single tool; a longitudinal study would show how the designer's role and skills develop with practice; and further work could test whether the method holds in adjacent multi-phase fields such as service and product design. These directions are developed in Section 8.8.

In closing, the contribution of generative AI to brand development lies not only in the assets it can produce, but also in the systems designers build to direct it. As these tools enter everyday practice, the designer's work expands from making each asset to designing the conditions under which assets are made, and it is in that shift, from asset creator to system architect, that design expertise becomes more decisive, not less. That is a role worth claiming.

THE FUTURE DESIGNER

From asset creator to system architect

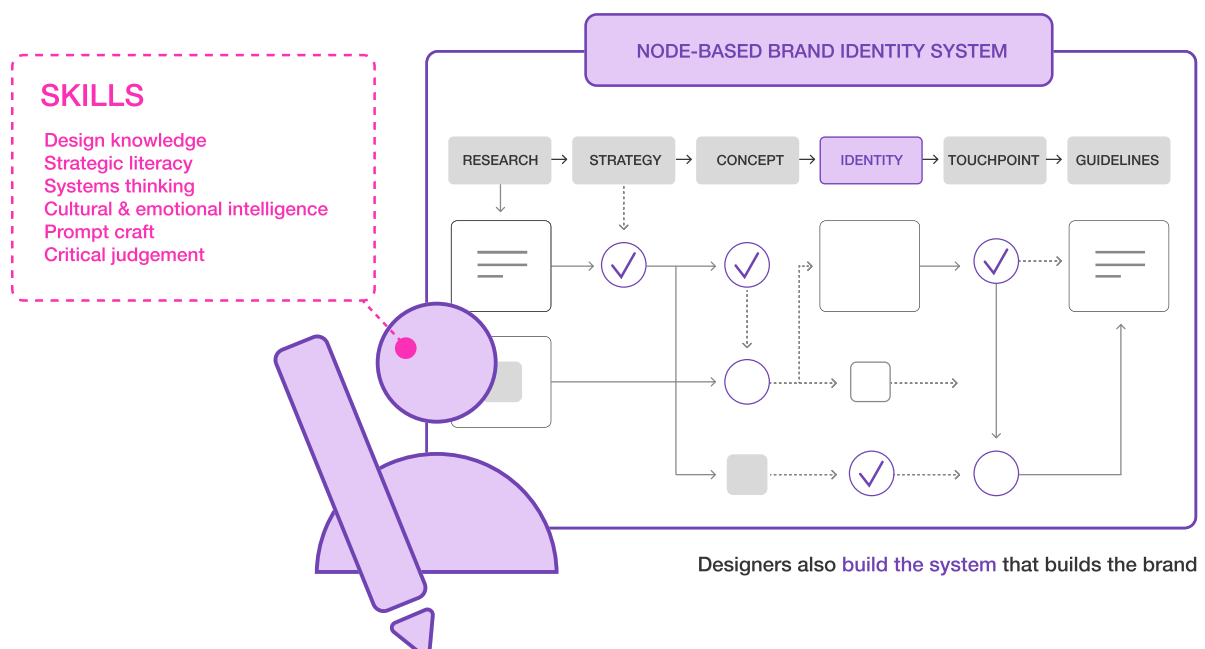
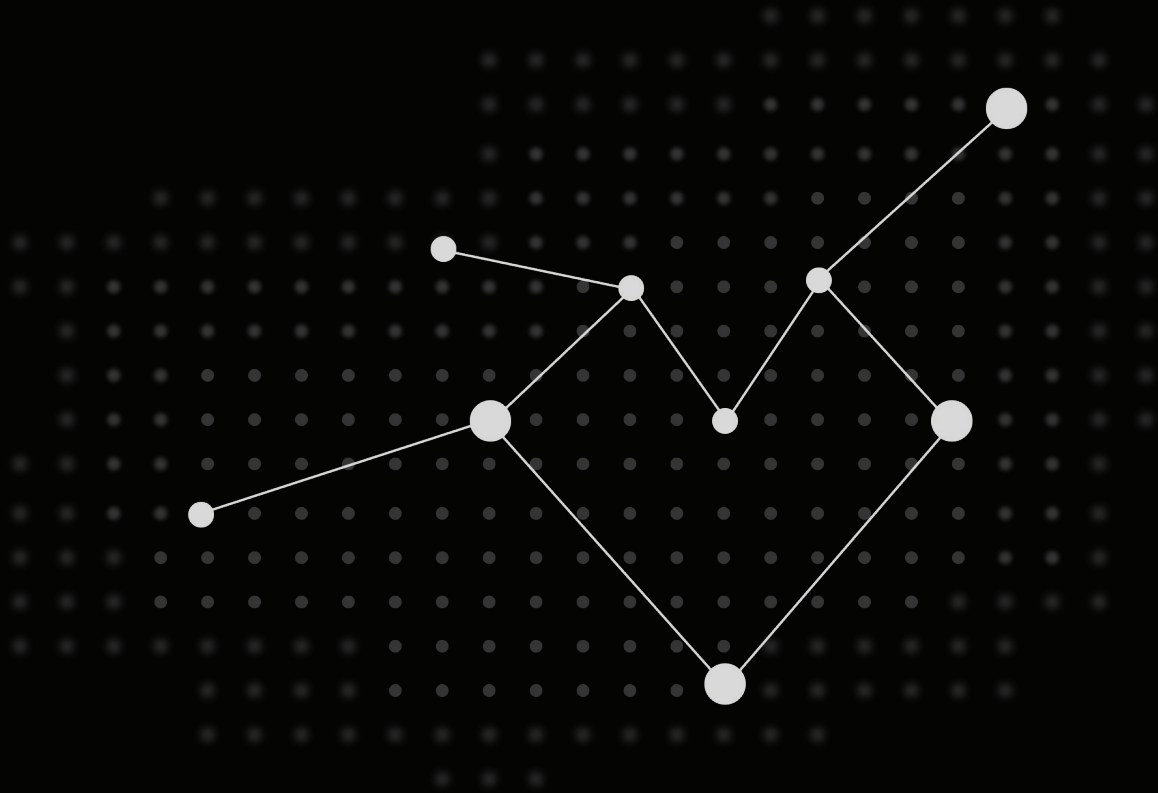


Figure 35. The future designer as system architect: the skills they bring and the node-based system they build.



10

REFLECTION

What the project taught me about designing with AI, and about my own role as a designer

10.1 Reflecting on the research process

Looking back at the research process, I can see that several decisions and challenges helped shape this thesis and taught me a lot about creating and doing research in a field that is constantly changing. I have included the most important moments below, what they required of me, and what I learned from them.

The theoretical framework as a turning point

Using the theoretical framework to direct the design was the most important turning point. Designing a node-based system is an interesting task, as the landscape is enormous and the system is never fully finished. There is always a node to improve and a relationship to map. In the beginning I was looking for ground to stand on, something that would help me design this system without losing the bigger picture. The theoretical framework proved to be that foundation. It helped me make decisions and move forward. By building this system, the main claim that node-based brand development transforms the designer from only an asset creator into also a system architect, became something I could really test rather than only explain.

Organising the sessions

My favourite part was designing the system and running the two studies, which also revealed the project's limitations. Watching designers think aloud as they moved through the node-based brand identity system, hearing where they hesitated and where the system surprised them, gave this research a level of depth that is hard to produce through desk work alone. These sessions improved my facilitation skills.

The main challenge was scope. Although the system's six brand development phases and around 90 nodes provided a complete picture of the process, it was hard to explore any single phase in much depth. Since depth is frequently where the more unexpected results occur, I would focus on two or three phases in future research and test them more thoroughly.

Lessons in adaptability

I did not realise beforehand how fast the ground would shift. Throughout the project, a number of the models and tools I incorporated into the system changed, and some of the decisions I made were outdated by the time I wrote them up. In order to ensure that the system outlasts any specific model, I learned to design and document at the level of methods and roles rather than

named tools. Therefore I worked with node-based tools to build a method in which the underlying models can change without breaking the system.

Key takeaways

In addition to the results, this project gave me a set of skills that I will use in the future. I gained experience in planning and setting up a five-month research project, managing a large scope while sticking to deadlines. From leading focus groups and evaluation sessions to analysing interview data and developing themes using reflexive thematic analysis, I gained practical experience in conducting qualitative research. I learned how to read a room, follow participants' real actions rather than my expectations, and sit with unstructured data until patterns emerged from running the sessions. Additionally, I gained new technical expertise in node-based AI design by creating an entirely new system and learning its logic through its creation. Working closely with other designers let me see how they think differently, where they trust AI and where they don't, and how different their working habits are.

10.2 Reflecting on myself

These five months flew by. As I am a strategic product designer myself, I was genuinely curious about how my own field is going to change, and that curiosity is really what carried the project. As a result, my perspective on design, on artificial intelligence, and on my own role has changed.

Finding distance

Diving deep into AI can quickly become chaotic, and there were moments when I spent close to ten hours a day behind a screen. To counter that, I made a point of going offline to reflect, often by painting (Figure 36) or taking a walk. Especially at the start of the project, with so much information about AI coming at once, I sometimes could not think clearly because it was simply overwhelming. Stepping away from the screen gave my thoughts room to settle and made space for more creative thinking. It also reminded me what I actually value. Even though AI is becoming part of everyday design practice, real design, the kind you make by hand, stays very important to me.

Staying current

At the same time, I wanted to stay close to a field that changes weekly. I subscribed to TLDR, a newsletter on AI, and built a small agent that gives me an update on the latest AI and design news. I also followed accounts on social media that posted tutorials, all to stay aware of what was happening around me. I tried new AI tools like Luma Labs, Recraft, GenSpark, Gemini, Fyxr, Claude Design, and Claude Code. Towards the end of my project, I built an app of my node-based brand identity system (Figure 37, and full design in Appendix P). I put my development log into Claude Code, and it built my node-based system in a different interface. This was not within the scope of my research project, but it was great fun to build and develop, and to see what was possible

Testing the possibilities

Alongside the thesis I kept experimenting through a personal project of mine called Amaize, where I like to produce campaign-style image generations (Figure 38) to test ideas and sharpen my own prompting. What I like most is that almost any idea I have can become real. That has a downside and an upside. People will say it is AI-generated, and there is a creative tension you have to find a place for. I do not see that as a reason to hold back. New technology is meant to be tried and tested, and when was it ever not cool to try? The strongest work, in my view, are built where real design and AI coexist as layers. It is not about choosing a side, but about designing the relationship between them.

Personal growth

My personal growth shows up in a few ways. I feel real confidence about this topic now, and I notice enthusiasm whenever someone wants to talk about it with me. Having worked in a new environment again at a design agency, I also know more clearly what I want from my own practice. Above all, my growth is in adaptability: to new contexts, new information, new tools, and to accepting that something which was true at the start can become irrelevant by the end. Learning to hold knowledge lightly, and to update without resistance, is the skill I will carry with me.

Looking ahead

After my studies, I want to keep developing at the intersection of AI and strategy, whether that is for a brand, the public sector, or somewhere I have not pictured yet. Amaize stays my longer-term anchor, a place to keep testing and building. Wherever I land next, the question that interests me is the same one this project circled: not whether to use AI, but how to design the relationship between humans and technology well.



Figure 36. One of the paintings I've made during reflection.

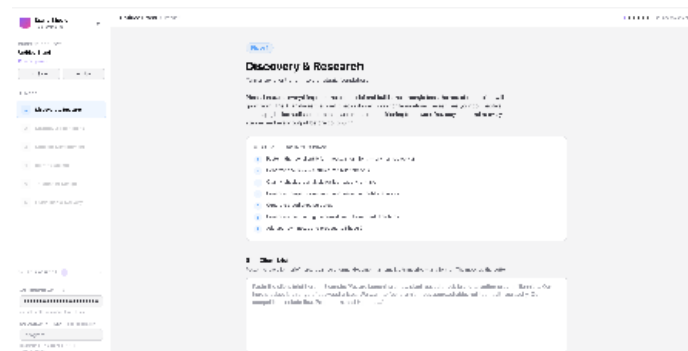
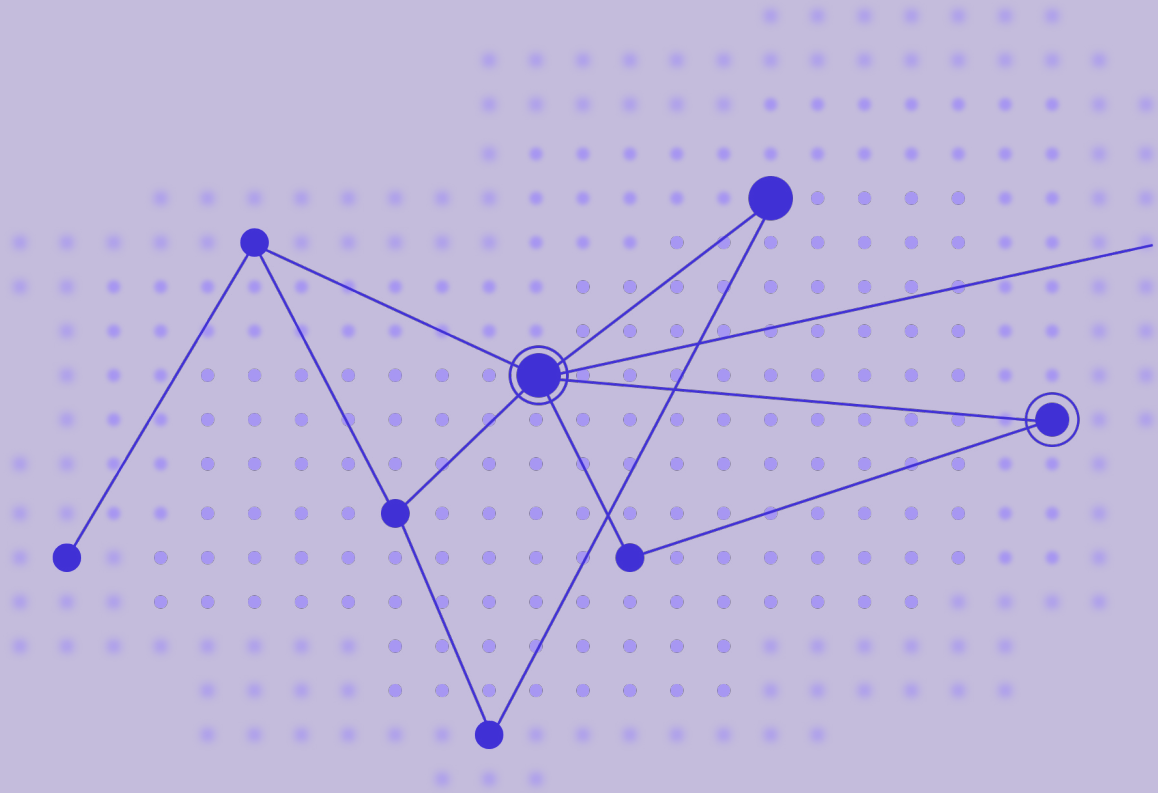


Figure 37. The node-based brand identity system with a different interface through Claude Code.



Figure 38. Campaign-style imagery I created as concepts for brands, made with AI.



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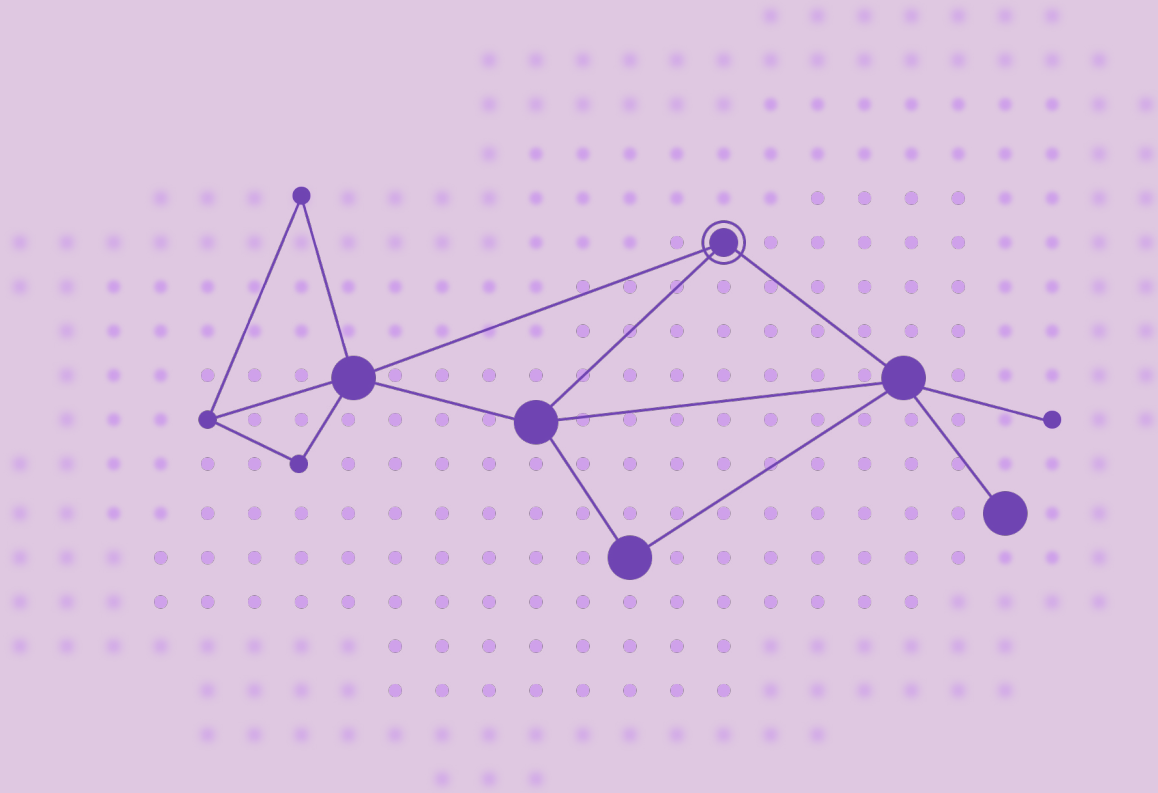
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APPENDIX

Supporting materials for both studies and system development

Appendix A: Study 1 consent form

Project Title: From designer to system architect: Designing a node-based system that structures human-AI co-creation in brand identity development.

Researcher: Tessa Scholing, MSc Strategic Product Design, TU Delft,

Responsible Researcher (Supervisor): Evangelos Niforatos

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Hi!

You are invited to participate in a focus group as part of a TU Delft Master's thesis conducted in collaboration with the agency.

The purpose of this study is to map current branding workflows and to identify the components and requirements of a node-based branding system. The session will contribute to the development of a conceptual brand system framework.

This research is conducted as part of a formal graduation agreement between TU Delft and the agency.

--

What participation involves:

If you agree to participate, you will:

- Take part in a 60–90 minute focus group session
- Discuss current branding workflows
- Contribute to building a morphological chart
- Help identify requirements for a node-based brand system

The session will be audio recorded for transcription purposes.

Photographs may be taken of the created charts (without personal identifiers).

You are not being evaluated. The system and research approach are being evaluated.

Voluntary participation:

Participation is entirely voluntary.

Your decision to participate or not participate will have no consequences for your employment or professional standing at the agency

You may:

- Refuse to answer any question
- Request that specific comments not be quoted
- Withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason

If you withdraw before data analysis begins, your data will be deleted.

Potential risks:

This study involves minimal risk. However, the following may occur:

- Mild professional discomfort when discussing workflows
- Risk of indirect identification due to the small team context
- Discussion of commercially sensitive information

To mitigate these risks:

- No names will be used in transcripts or publications
- Quotes will be anonymised and generalised
- Client names and sensitive company information will not be included in public outputs

- Sensitive background information may be placed in a confidential appendix in line with the graduation contract
- Findings will be reported in aggregated form

Confidentiality and data protection:

The following data will be collected:

- Audio recording of the focus group
- Transcribed discussion
- Professional opinions and workflow descriptions
- Photographs of charts (without names)

Data handling:

- Audio recordings will be transcribed and then deleted
- Transcripts will be pseudonymised
- Personal contact details (if collected) will be stored separately from research data
- All data will be stored on TU Delft secure, encrypted storage
- Only the researcher and TU Delft supervisor will have access

No special category data (Article 9 GDPR) will be collected.

No medical or criminal data will be processed.

Identifiable personal data will be deleted after completion of the graduation project (July 2026).

Anonymised research data may be stored securely for academic documentation purposes.

Data retention:

- Identifiable data: deleted after July 2026
- Pseudonymised transcripts: retained securely for academic documentation
- Audio recordings: deleted after transcription verification

Questions or complaints

If you have questions about the study, you may

contact: Tessa Scholing

Prof. Evangelos Niforatos

Thank you in advance!! 😊

Tessa Scholing

EXPLICIT CONSENT

Please tick the appropriate boxes.

General agreement	
I have read and understood the participant information dated ____ / ____ / 2026 and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I consent voluntarily to participate in this focus group and understand that I can withdraw at any time without consequences.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I understand that participation involves discussing branding workflows and contributing to a morphological chart in a recorded session.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I understand that I am not being evaluated and that the research focuses on system development.	☐ Yes ☐ No
Recording and data use	
I give permission for the session to be audio recorded for transcription purposes.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree that anonymised quotes from my contributions may be used in the Master's thesis and related academic outputs.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I understand that commercially sensitive background information will not be disclosed publicly.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I understand that taking part in the study also involves collecting specific personally identifiable information (PII) (design level, age, job position) and associated personally identifiable research data (PIRD) (Screen-recorded Interaction Logs, Audio/Video Interview Recordings, Professional Views & Critique, Job Position/Seniority, Years of Industry Experience, AI/Technical Literacy Level) with the potential risk of my identity being revealed.	☐ Yes ☐ No
Data protection	
I understand that my data will be pseudonymised and stored securely in accordance with TU Delft data management procedures.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I understand that identifiable data will be deleted after July 2026.	☐ Yes ☐ No
Publication and thesis	
I understand that the research results will be included in a TU Delft graduation thesis and public presentation, in anonymised form.	☐ Yes ☐ No

Signatures

Participant Name (printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / 2026

Researcher Name: Tessa Scholing

Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / 2026

Appendix B: Study 1 facilitator guide

Focus Group Facilitator Guide

Study 1: Branding Workflow & AI Opportunities

Overview

Goal: Map the current branding workflows at ***, understand how designers currently perceive and use AI tools, and identify the key pain points and opportunities that a node-based branding system would need to address.

Research question this session serves: How do professional designers at **** currently structure and execute branding workflows, and what are their perceptions of AI as a tool within these workflows?

Output of this session: A rich understanding of the current branding workflow, documented pain points, current AI tool usage, designer attitudes toward AI in creative work, and emergent requirements for a co-creative AI branding system.

Materials Checklist

- 4x Consent forms (Study 1)
- 4x Pens
- This facilitator guide (printed or on screen)
- Camera / phone for photographing outputs
- TU Delft audio recorder or meeting recording tool (charged and tested)
- Room booked and table set up in advance
- No managers present in the room
- Researcher notes template ready

Note: Arrive 15 minutes early to set up the room, test the recorder, and lay out consent forms before participants arrive.

Session Agenda

11:00 Welcome and Setup (5 min)

Welcome participants, offer water/coffee. Distribute consent forms.

"Welcome everyone, and thank you so much for making time for this. My name is Tessa, I'm a master's student at TU Delft doing my graduation project here."

"Before we dive in, I'll ask you to fill in a short consent form. This is a requirement from TU Delft. Everything you share today is confidential, will be anonymised, and will only be used for my research. There are no right or wrong answers. You're not being evaluated. You can stop participating at any time, and you can ask me to remove any statement you made."

11:05 Consent Forms (5 min)

Hand out and collect signed consent forms. Start audio recording once all forms are signed.

"Now that everyone has signed, I'm going to start the audio recorder. Is everyone okay with that? Great, let's begin."

11:10 Introduction Round and Context Setting (10 min)

Brief round of introductions. Set the context for the research and introduce the five AI+branding trends identified in the literature review.

"Let's start with a quick round. Could each of you say your name, your role, and roughly how long you've been working in branding? Just a few sentences is fine."

After introductions, present the research context:

"My research is about how branding workflows can be supported by AI, specifically through a node-based system. I reviewed around 400 papers and identified five current trends: (1) generative brand systems, so dynamic models instead of static brand books; (2) AI as a creative collaborator, not just a tool; (3) hyper-personalisation; (4) the authenticity paradox, whether AI-generated content can be authentic; and (5) ethical and transparent AI branding. My thesis focuses on the first trend: building a generative brand system."

"Before I design anything, I really need to understand how you actually work today. What are the phases you go through, where does AI already play a role, and where does it not? That's what this session is about."

11:20 Concept Introduction and Initial Reactions (10 min)

Introduce the generative brand system concept and the idea of selling systems/assets instead of billing hours. Allow participants to react openly. This section is intentionally provocative to surface honest attitudes.

"The idea is that you could build a node-based system, a kind of structured AI workflow, that takes a client brief and guides the designer through research, positioning, concept development, visual exploration, and asset creation. Each node does one specific task. You connect them together into a workflow."

"One possibility is that this could shift the business model: instead of selling hours, you could sell a system or an asset. But it could also work purely for internal use, to speed up the early phases or generate more options quickly."

Probe questions if the discussion needs direction:

- What is your first reaction to this idea?
- Where do you see this working? Where not?
- Would you trust a system like this for client work?

Note: This section may generate scepticism. Let it. The critical reactions are the most valuable data.

11:30 Current Branding Workflow and AI Usage (20 min)

Open discussion about current branding workflows and where AI currently fits. This is the core of the session. Guide the conversation through the branding phases: discovery, strategy, concepting, identity design, production, and delivery.

Discussion questions:

- Walk me through a recent branding project from start to finish. What were the main phases?

- Where in the process do you feel the most friction or lose the most time?
- Where do you currently use AI tools? Which ones? For what tasks?
- Are there parts of the process that feel repetitive or mechanical?
- Where does AI work well for you, and where does it fall short?
- What does AI miss that you as a designer bring to the process?
- How do you currently generate alternatives or explore directions?

Note: Probe deeper with: 'Can you give an example?' / 'How does the rest of the group feel about that?' / 'Does anyone have a different experience?'

Key topics to listen for and probe if they emerge naturally:

- The role of client conversations and reading between the lines
- Embodied/offline inspiration sources (books, walks, physical spaces)
- The distinction between AI as assistant vs AI as creative decision-maker
- Concerns about generic/trend-driven AI outputs
- The iterative nature of prompting (never right on first try)
- Speed vs quality trade-offs

11:50 The Designer's Role and AI's Limits (15 min)

Shift the conversation toward the broader implications: how does AI change what it means to be a designer? Where are the boundaries? This section surfaces the philosophical and identity-related responses.

Discussion questions:

- How do you think the branding world will change for you as a designer because of AI?
- Does using AI in a project give you a different feeling than doing it yourself?
- Where is your judgment as a designer most important in the process?
- Are there things AI simply cannot do in your work? What are they?
- If AI can generate everything faster, what happens to the value of design?
- Do you see AI making your role more important, less important, or just different?

Note: Let silences sit. These are big questions and participants may need time to formulate their thoughts.

Key topics to listen for:

- Tacit knowledge and unconscious design decisions
- The value of process vs the value of output
- Craft, authenticity, and the 'handmade' quality of design
- Scarcity arguments: if everyone can generate, nobody is special
- Historical parallels to other technological disruptions
- Tool fatigue and the burden of keeping up with AI changes

12:05 Reflection and System Requirements (8 min)

Close the session with a quick reflection round. What would a system need to do to actually help them?

Closing questions:

"Looking at everything we've discussed: if a system could take over or speed up any parts of the branding workflow, which would matter most to you?"

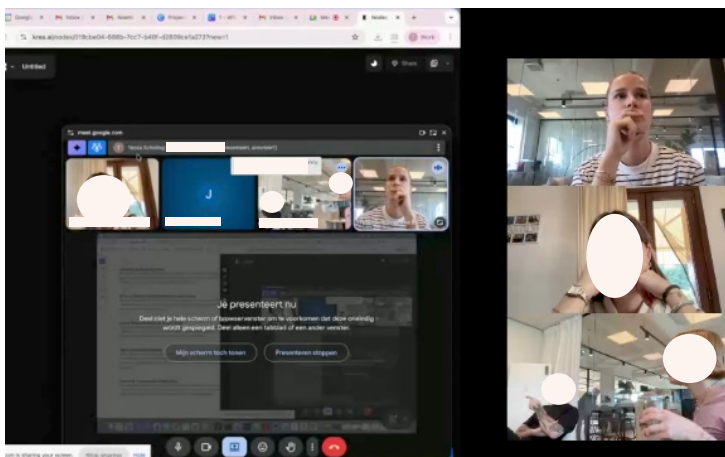
"What would that system absolutely have to do well to be useful in your daily work?"

"And what would make you not trust it or not use it?"

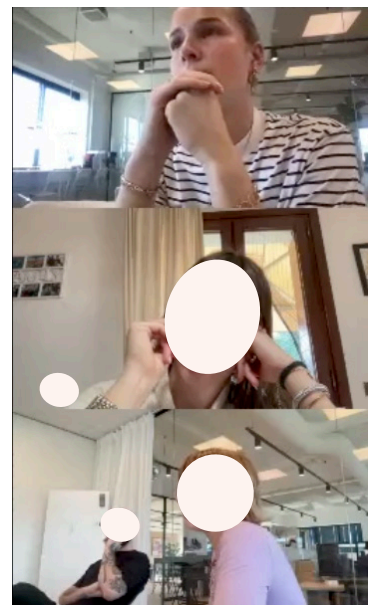
12:13 Wrap-up and Thank You (2 min)

Stop recording. Thank participants. Let them know next steps.

"That's everything. Thank you so much. This has been really valuable. I'll transcribe and anonymise everything, and the results will feed into my thesis and into the design of the system. You're welcome to reach out if you have any questions. I'll stop the recording now."



Screenshots from focus group session. One participant joined online, the rest was together in the room.



Appendix C: Study 1 reflexive thematic analysis

This appendix documents the reflexive thematic analysis process for Study 1, following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-phase approach. It includes three components. First, the initial coding table, listing all 41 codes generated during familiarisation and initial coding, with references to the participants whose data informed each code. Second, the clustering process, showing how initial codes were grouped into candidate themes using a Miro board. Third, phase summaries documenting each stage of the analysis from familiarisation through to final theme definition, forming the audit trail for the study. The six final themes and their supporting quotes are presented separately in Appendix D.

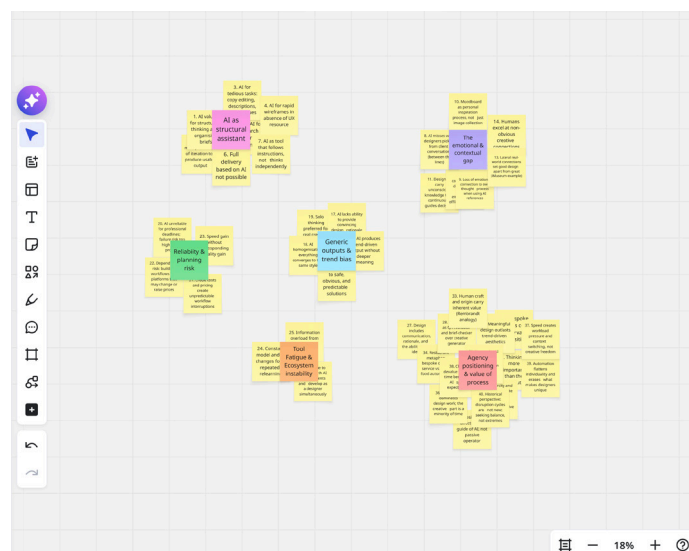
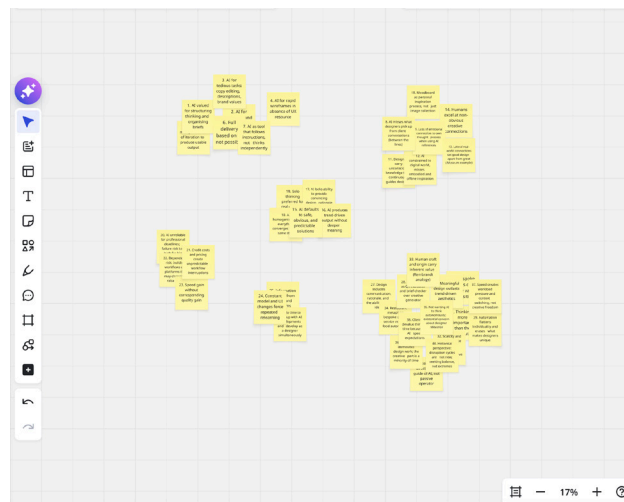
C1. Forty-one codes were generated from the focus group transcript during familiarisation and line-by-line coding. Each code captures a distinct idea expressed by one or more participants, labelled with the participant references (P1 through P4) that informed it. The codes are grouped under eight preliminary categories that emerged during coding; these categories were later refined into the six final themes through the clustering process described in C2.

Study 1: Reflexive Thematic Analysis – 41 initial codes table

#	Code	Present in
AI as Thinking Partner		
1	AI valued for structuring thinking and organising briefs	P2, P3
2	AI for research and literature organisation	P2, P3
3	AI for tedious tasks: copy editing, descriptions, brand values	P3
4	AI for rapid wireframes in absence of UX resource	P2
5	AI requires multiple rounds of iteration to produce usable output	P3
6	Full delivery based on AI not possible	P3
7	AI as tool that follows instructions, not thinks independently	P1, P2
Client Conversation and Tacit Knowledge		
8	AI misses what designers pick up from client conversations (between the lines)	P2
9	Loss of emotional connection to own thought process when using AI references	P2
10	Moodboard as personal inspiration process, not just image collection	P1, P2
11	Designers carry unconscious knowledge that continuously guides decisions	P2
Real-World and Lateral Inspiration		
12	AI constrained to digital world, misses embodied and offline inspiration	P2
13	Lateral real-world connections set good design apart from great (iMuseum example)	P2
14	Humans excel at non-obvious creative connections	P1, P2
AI Outputs: Quality and Originality		
15	AI defaults to safe, obvious, and predictable solutions	P1, P2
16	AI produces trend-driven output without deeper meaning	P3
17	AI lacks ability to provide convincing design rationale	P1, P2
18	AI homogenisation: everything converges to the same style	P4
19	Solo thinking preferred for real creative breakthroughs	P2
AI Reliability and Cost		
20	AI unreliable for professional deadlines; failure risk too high for big projects	P1
21	Credit costs and pricing create unpredictable workflow interruptions	P2
22	Dependency risk: building workflows on platforms that may change or raise prices	P2
23	Speed gain without corresponding quality gain	P1
Tool Overload and Constant Change		

24	Constant model and UI changes force repeated relearning	P2
25	Information overload from AI tools and platforms	P2
26	No time to keep up with AI developments and develop as a designer simultaneously	P2
Design as Communication and Selling		
27	Design includes communication, rationale, and the ability to sell ideas	P2
28	AI preferred as QA evaluator and brief-checker over creative generator	P2
Meaning, Scarcity, and Brand Value		
29	Meaningful design outlasts trend-driven aesthetics	P3
30	Bespoke work as core agency value proposition	P1, P2
31	Thinking is more important than the output	P1, P2
32	Scarcity and meaning create value; easy accessibility devalues creative work	P1
33	Human craft and origin carry inherent value (Rembrandt analogy)	P1
34	Restaurant metaphor: bespoke design service vs fast-food automation	P1
Designer Role and Identity		
35	Not wanting AI to think autonomously; existential concern about designer relevance	P1, P2
36	Production dominates design work; the creative part is a minority of time	P2
37	Speed creates workload pressure and context switching, not creative freedom	P1, P4
38	Clients devalue thinking time because of AI speed expectations	P2
39	Automation flattens individuality and erases what makes designers unique	P2
40	Historical perspective: disruption cycles are not new; seeking balance, not extremes	P2
41	Designer as director and guide of AI, not passive operator	P2

C2. The 41 initial codes were transferred to a Miro board, where they were spatially arranged and iteratively grouped based on shared patterns and relationships. Codes were moved between clusters until coherent groupings emerged, at which point candidate themes were defined. This process corresponds to Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) third and fourth phases: generating and reviewing themes.



C3. In phase 5, each of the six candidate themes was given a final name and a written definition specifying what the theme captures, what story it tells, what it does not cover (and which theme does), and which codes belong to it. Defining boundaries between themes ensured that each one is internally coherent and externally distinct. The full theme definitions are presented below.

Study 1: Phase 5 RTA: Defining and naming themes

Theme 1: AI as Structural Assistant, Not Creative Partner. This theme captures designers' shared model of productive AI use: AI works well when it structures thinking, organises briefs, and accelerates preparation tasks, but it fails when it attempts to replace creative judgment. The theme covers AI for structuring thoughts, organising research, copy editing, wireframing, and repetitive production tasks, as well as the consistent finding that AI requires iterative prompting and cannot produce a full delivery on its own. The theme tells the story of a tool that is welcomed as an obedient assistant but resisted as an autonomous creative agent. It does not address why AI falls short creatively or what it misses from the human design process; those patterns belong to Themes 2 and 3. Relates primarily to SQ1. Codes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (7 codes).

Theme 2: The Emotional and Contextual Gap. This theme captures the types of knowledge and experience that designers identified as fundamentally inaccessible to AI: the non-verbal cues from client conversations, the emotional connection to one's own thought process, the embodied inspiration from physical spaces and chance encounters, and the lateral creative connections that distinguish good design from great. The theme tells the story of a gap between what AI can process (text, images, data) and what designers draw on (intuition, tacit knowledge, lived experience, relational understanding). It does not address the quality of AI's actual outputs; that belongs to Theme 3. Relates primarily to SQ1. Codes: 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 (7 codes).

Theme 3: Generic Outputs and Trend Bias. This theme captures designers' consistent observation that AI gravitates toward safe, predictable, and trend-driven outputs. This is not experienced as a bug but as a structural feature of how generative models work, and it is fundamentally at odds with how the agency positions itself as a provider of meaningful, bespoke identity work. The theme covers AI defaulting to obvious solutions, producing visually appealing but meaningless output, lacking convincing design rationale, and converging toward homogeneous styles. It also captures the preference for solo thinking when genuine creative breakthroughs are needed. It does not address the practical risks of integrating AI into workflows; that belongs to Theme 4. Relates primarily to SQ1. Codes: 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 (5 codes).

Theme 4: Reliability and Planning Risk. This theme captures the practical barriers to integrating AI into professional branding workflows with tight deadlines and client commitments. AI's unpredictable output quality makes it difficult to plan for, credit and token costs introduce secondary interruptions, and dependency on platforms that may change pricing or capabilities creates long-term risk. The theme tells the story of a tool that promises speed but cannot guarantee reliability. It does not address the creative or experiential shortcomings of AI; those belong to Themes 2 and 3. Relates primarily to SQ1. Codes: 20, 21, 22, 23 (4 codes).

Theme 5: Tool Fatigue and Ecosystem Instability. This theme captures the cognitive overload driven not by any single AI tool but by the constant churn across the entire AI tooling landscape. Designers described a cycle of learning a tool, having its interface or model updated, relearning it, and then discovering that a different tool is now considered better. This instability competes directly with the time designers need to develop their own craft and taste. The theme tells the story of a professional environment where keeping up with AI actively disrupts the practice of design. It does not address how designers value their own work or position their agency; that belongs to Theme 6. Relates primarily to SQ1. Codes: 24, 25, 26 (3 codes).

Theme 6: Agency Positioning and the Value of Process. This theme captures the shared belief, running underneath the entire conversation, that the agency sells thinking and process rather than outputs. It encompasses three sub-patterns that were initially coded separately but merged during review because they tell the same underlying story. The first sub-pattern covers

design as communication, rationale, and selling, including the preference for AI as a quality checker rather than a creative generator. The second covers meaning, scarcity, and brand value: meaningful design outlasts trends, bespoke work is the agency's core proposition, human craft carries inherent value (the Rembrandt analogy, the restaurant metaphor), and accessibility without meaning devalues creative work. The third covers designer identity: the existential concern about AI autonomy, the pressure of speed without creative freedom, the flattening of individuality through automation, and the conviction that designers should direct AI rather than be replaced by it. Together, these sub-patterns tell the story of an agency and its designers defining their value proposition in an era of generative AI, and concluding that AI saturation strengthens rather than weakens the case for human-led, meaning-driven design. Relates primarily to SQ1. Codes: 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 (15 codes).

C4. In the final phase, the six themes were woven into the results and discussion sections of Chapter 5. Each theme was integrated into the narrative rather than reported in isolation: Themes 1 through 3 structure the findings on what AI can and cannot do in brand identity work, while Themes 4 through 6 address the conditions under which designers are willing to adopt it. Direct quotes from participants were selected to ground each theme in the data, and connections to existing literature were drawn in the discussion (Section 5.3). The writing-up phase is not documented separately in this appendix, as its output is Chapter 5 itself.

Appendix D: Supporting quotes for each theme

Study 1 Thematic Coding Table with Supporting Quotes

This table presents the six final themes generated through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2022). It complements the initial coding table by showing how the 41 initial codes were clustered into six themes, and grounds each theme in verbatim extracts from the focus group transcript. For every theme the table gives the theme definition, the range of initial codes it draws on, and a set of supporting extracts, each labelled with the specific code it evidences and the participant who spoke it. Extracts are lightly tidied for readability; an ellipsis in square brackets [...] marks elided material and square brackets mark minor clarifications.

Constituent code	Supporting extract from transcript
Theme 1. AI as Structural Assistant <i>Participants value AI most as a structural support that helps organise briefs, research, copy and rapid drafts. It works only when directed, needs several rounds of iteration, and cannot produce a finished deliverable on its own.</i> Initial codes clustered into this theme: 1 to 7	
(1) Structuring thinking and briefs	P2: "Sometimes you get the brief, the scope of a project, and it is so big and there are so many important things to take in consideration that it is a little bit hard to structure. [...] What helps me is just to think along with someone else, that it is AI in this case, and really direct AI to define phases or help me writing down what my thoughts are."
(2) Research and literature organisation	P3: "I use ChatGPT, of course, for research, to structure, also throwing the information at it to organise it."
(3) Tedious tasks: copy, descriptions, brand values	P3: "Also for copy, because English is not my main language, and for all the, well, let us say boring stuff, when I need the description or when I need the values for the brand."
(4) Rapid wireframes without a UX resource	P2: "We do not have UX, so most of the time we can ask chat or Figma Make just to have a draft, a wireframe. Because just having to do a wireframe takes a long time and we do not have the time here."
(5) Needs multiple rounds of iteration	P3: "It is never okay, give me this, and then it is great at the first interaction. You always need to interact. [...] So it is always refining and refining."
(6) Full AI delivery not possible	P3: "We will never be able to do a full delivery based on AI."
(7) Obedient tool, not autonomous thinker	P2: "I do not mind when I give it instructions and it does what I wanted to do, just like a normal tool."
(7) Obedient tool, not autonomous thinker	P1: "But I do not necessarily want it to think for itself."

Constituent code	Supporting extract from transcript
Theme 2. The Emotional and Contextual Gap <i>AI misses the tacit and emotional knowledge designers rely on: what clients communicate between the lines, the personal connection to one's own references, and the lateral, real-world inspiration that sets good design apart from great.</i> Initial codes clustered into this theme: 8 to 14	
(8) AI misses what is said between the lines	P2: "The design hooks you get from actually speaking with the clients, and listening to what they say in between the lines, I have yet to see that AI really picks up on this."
(9) Loss of emotional connection to own process	P2: "If the AI would then create a mood board for me, it is all very nice, but then I am just looking at images. There is for me no emotional connection to my own thought process."
(10) Moodboard as personal inspiration process	P1: "It is the things that triggered me, like, ah, I should probably do something with this, or this angle is interesting."
(11) Tacit knowledge continuously guiding decisions	P2: "AI is just prompting you an idea, but you know that idea would not work in this case. [...] It is just something that you have already in your mind, and you are considering it along the process all the time."
(12) AI constrained to the digital, misses offline inspiration	P2: "AI lives online. [...] When I need inspiration, it could be that I am just walking around in the streets and see an angle in a building."
(13) Lateral real-world connections separate good from great	P2: "He based the navigation shape on the museum, because he was walking past and was like, oh, that is such an interesting shape. [...] That is generally what sets good from great apart."
(14) Humans excel at non-obvious connections	P1: "Maybe there is a connection that could be made to specific buildings, or a feeling that people have. Those are the things that generally humans do very well, but I have yet to see an AI do this."
Theme 3. Generic Outputs and Trend Bias <i>When asked to generate, AI defaults to safe, obvious and trend-driven outputs that look pleasing but lack meaning and rationale, pushing work towards sameness. Participants prefer to think alone for genuine creative breakthroughs.</i> Initial codes clustered into this theme: 15 to 19	
(15) AI defaults to safe, obvious solutions	P1: "The AI is a hundred percent going for the most obvious, straightforward design things."
(15) AI defaults to safe, obvious solutions	P2: "It is always going for the safe route and it is never going to something else."
(16) Trend-driven output without deeper meaning	P3: "The AI is still on the okay, beautiful maybe, but without meaning, and based on trends."
(17) AI lacks convincing design rationale	P1: "I have yet to see an AI give a good rationale on why they made certain decisions."

Constituent code	Supporting extract from transcript
(18) Homogenisation towards the same style	P4: "For designers, the whole dilemma is with AI: it gets very blunt and it gets very fast, in the same kind of style."
(19) Solo thinking preferred for breakthroughs	P2: "There are moments where I am thinking more alone, and those moments are way much better for me, because I can just take the time."
Theme 4. Reliability and Planning Risk <i>Unpredictable results, credit costs and platform dependency make AI risky to plan around for professional deadlines. The gain is mostly speed rather than quality, so designers avoid it on high-stakes projects.</i> Initial codes clustered into this theme: 20 to 23	
(20) Unreliable for deadlines; too risky for big projects	P1: "The issue with AI in a branding process is reliability. [...] AI is a killer. It can still not work at all. [...] I would still avoid it in a lot of cases, especially on big projects."
(21) Credit costs interrupt the workflow	P2: "If you generate a lot of videos, before you know it you are out of your credits and then you have to buy new credits. [...] And that also stops your creative thinking."
(22) Dependency risk on changing platforms	P2: "It is a bit scary to build a long reliance on the AI, because you never know what is going to change."
(23) Speed gain without a quality gain	P4: "I mostly see a speed difference. I do not necessarily see a quality difference."
Theme 5. Tool Fatigue and Ecosystem Instability <i>A constant churn of models and interfaces forces repeated relearning and creates information overload, leaving little time to keep up with AI while also growing as a designer.</i> Initial codes clustered into this theme: 24 to 26	
(24) Constant model and UI changes force relearning	P2: "I started with that two and a half years ago, and then two months later they updated their whole UI. [...] So I had to relearn everything. And then two months later they redid everything once more and I had to learn again."
(25) Information overload from tools and platforms	P2: "Now we are slowly starting to get into a stable state where things are somewhat usable. [...] It is also like the overload."
(26) No time to keep up with AI and grow as a designer	P2: "I also just do not really have the time. I am already trying to keep up to date with everything, because you need to dive into AI, but you also want to develop yourself as a designer and expand your taste."
Theme 6. Agency Positioning and Value of Process <i>In a market where anyone can generate content, the agency's value shifts to meaning, bespoke craft and the thinking process rather than the output. Designers reframe their role as directors and guides of AI, defending the human judgement, individuality and creative freedom that give their work value.</i> Initial codes clustered into this theme: 27 to 41	

Constituent code	Supporting extract from transcript
(27) Design includes communication and selling	P2: "Design is not only the colours you put on the canvas or the screen. It is also how you communicate it and how you sell it. Designers tend to be very good at selling. A good designer should be able to sell something that is very, very bad."
(28) AI preferred as QA and brief-checker over generator	P2: "It would be amazing to have some sort of AI art director, not in the sense that it says this looks amazing, but more in evaluating. [...] This matches the brief, this is still missing, this needs to be added. Something like that would be so much more valuable, instead of something that tries to be creative."
(29) Meaningful design outlasts trend-driven aesthetics	P3: "At the agency we tend to create something that first has a meaning rather than an amazing design, because then it lasts longer and then it is more meaningful."
(30) Bespoke work as the agency value proposition	P2: "People come to this agency because they want something bespoke. They want something especially for them."
(31) Thinking is more important than the output	P1: "We do not sell the output, we sell the process that gets you there, and that story could actually make history."
(32) Scarcity and meaning create value	P1: "If everyone has something, no one has it. [...] When something becomes so readily available without any deeper meaning, then there is no point."
(33) Human craft and origin carry inherent value	P2: "Why do people enjoy a Rembrandt painting? There are plenty of people that can probably replicate what he did, but they want the Rembrandt. [...] A lot more people still want to buy from other people that they feel are good at their craft."
(34) Bespoke service versus fast-food automation	P1: "You go to the machine at McDonald's because you just want your hamburger fast. But you go to a nice restaurant because the food is good and the service is good and people talk to you. [...] That is the difference."
(38) Clients devalue thinking time	P2: "People that idolise AI so much expect you to do the same, and they do not value anymore the time you need to think."
(39) Automation flattens individuality	P2: "To want to automatise things puts everybody in the same box. [...] You are missing the thing that makes you special. So you generalise everything with AI and then everything becomes the same."
(40) Historical perspective; seeking balance not extremes	P2: "All these arguments have been given for years, not only on AI but on the Industrial Revolution. There have always been shifts in these industries. It is really not as grim as all these AI prophets are explaining to us. [...] There is probably some harmonic way to find the best way to do things that still provides us the creative freedom."
(41) Designer as director and guide of AI	P2: "I do not necessarily want the AI to be creative with all new concepts. I just want to direct it. [...] It needs to stimulate your brain rather than take over your brain."
(35) Existential concern about the designer's role	P1: "I do not necessarily want it to think for itself, because then, why am I there?"

Appendix E: Full BNO hackathon report

HACKATHON REPORT

AI x Design x Education

The Future Designer

BNO Werkgroep AI x Design | Tuesday 24 March 2026 | Tessa Scholing

About the event

On Tuesday 24 March 2026, the BNO (Beroepsorganisatie Nederlandse Ontwerpers) AI x Design working group organised a hackathon about education and the 'new designer.' The central question was: what knowledge, skills, and attitude does the future designer need now that AI is changing the design profession so deeply? And what does the future of design actually look like, according to students themselves?

The event brought together students, designers, educators, and researchers. Instead of just talking about the topic, the idea was to get hands-on and work toward concrete output: think of a profile sketch of the future designer, a position paper, an educational tool, or the outline for a follow-up event.

Programme

12:00 Walk-in

12:15 Networking lunch

12:45 Setting the direction

13:30 Working session (subgroups)

15:30 Review and next steps

16:00 Closing



BNO Hackathon AI x Design x Onderwijs, 24 March 2026

What we discussed

The hackathon focused on one big question: what does it take to be a real designer in the age of AI, and how will designers have to work together with AI in the future? We split into subgroups and worked on different angles of this question. In my group, we discussed what the future designer needs to know for the job market, what skills matter, and what kind of attitude is required.

From the group discussion, several important points came up. First, we agreed that the future designer still needs all the basic design knowledge. Think of the Gestalt principles, understanding form, shapes, and visual forces, and knowing how a design process works from start to finish. For my own field of strategic product design, this also means understanding things like stakeholder mapping, user research, and systems thinking. These fundamentals do not go away just because AI enters the picture.

I then added to the conversation that in my opinion, the future designer also needs basic knowledge of AI itself. Not in a deeply technical way, but enough to understand what AI is and how it works at a high level: that it learns from patterns, that it generates based on statistical probability, and that it has limits. I argued that future designers should know the main types of AI tools out there and what they can do. They should know how to write a

good prompt and how to structure it. And they should know *where in the design process* AI can help, and where it cannot. This last point is basically what my own graduation research has been about: my workflow mapping and focus group showed exactly where AI adds value (structuring, organising, production) and where it falls short (concept development, embodied inspiration, creative judgement).

The idea behind this is that when the future designer knows these basics, the specific tools can change without it being a problem. Tools come and go. If you understand the principles behind them, you stay adaptive. You do not freeze when the tool you learned last year is suddenly replaced by something new.

Our group also talked about attitude. We agreed that the future designer should feel the need to keep on learning, should enjoy learning new things, and should stay open-minded. Getting stuck on old ways of working is not an option, because the field will keep changing. This connects to what the focus group at the agency also described: tool fatigue is real, but the designers who navigate it best are the ones who see learning as part of the job, not as an interruption to it.

The divide in the room

One of the most noticeable things during the hackathon was the divide between participants. There was a clear split between people who were genuinely open to exploring AI in design, and people who were quite sceptical about it. The scepticism came mostly from designers and educators who were trained to design by hand and who see making things with your hands as core to what design is. Their worry was that AI removes the craft, the tactile connection to the work, and the thinking-through-making that is central to many design disciplines.

This divide is not surprising. It mirrors what I found in my own focus group at the agency. Brand Designer 1 described embodied inspiration, walking past a building and using its shape in a navigation design, as something AI simply cannot replicate. Brand Designer 2 argued that AI makes things that are “beautiful” but not things that have “meaning.” These are the same concerns that surfaced at the hackathon, just in a different context.

What I found interesting is that both sides have a point. The craft-focused designers are right that making with your hands builds a kind of understanding that you do not get from prompting. But the AI-curious participants are also right that ignoring these tools completely is not a realistic strategy for the future. The question is not whether AI belongs in design, but how and where.

Notes from the working session

During the working session, my group mapped out what a future designer needs for the job market. The handwritten notes from the session cover several themes:

- **Basic AI literacy:** What is AI? How do you write a prompt? Which major programs and tools are out there (ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity)? How is a prompt structured?
- **AI as assistant, not replacement:** Using AI for advice, reflection, planning, checklists. Even helping with job applications.
- **The designer as a person:** The future designer is not just a skill set. It is a person who works in a collective, who brings their own individual way of thinking, and who knows when to apply which tools in which parts of the process.
- **The invoice question:** An interesting practical question came up: what do you write on the invoice for the client when AI did part of the work? This touches on the value question that also came up in my focus group, where designers talked about clients no longer valuing the time it takes to think.
- **Context switching and attitude:** Being able to switch between different tools, contexts, and ways of working is important. Attitude matters as much as skill.
- **Frames:** The group referenced 'frames' as a way to think about how designers structure their approach, moving from six to five (possibly referencing a reduction or simplification of design phases or competency areas).

My key takeaways

1. The basics do not disappear. Whether it is Gestalt principles, understanding design processes, or knowing how to run user research, the foundation of being a good designer does not change because AI arrives. What changes is that AI literacy gets added on top. The future designer needs both.

2. Know where AI helps and where it does not. This is the most important takeaway for me, because it connects directly to my own research. My workflow mapping and focus group showed that AI works well for structuring, organising, and production tasks (phases 1, 2, and 5), but is resisted in concept development (phase 3) because it lacks embodied inspiration and emotional connection. The future designer should understand this pattern, not just for branding but for design in general.

3. Tools change, principles stay. If you teach designers to use one specific tool, they are stuck when that tool changes. If you teach them the principles behind AI (how it works, what it is good and bad at, how to write a prompt), they can adapt to whatever comes next. This is the same lesson as tool fatigue from my focus group: the designers who kept up were not the ones who mastered every new tool, but the ones who understood what they needed from a tool.

4. The divide is real but bridgeable. The scepticism from craft-focused designers is valid and should not be dismissed. But it also does not have to be the end of the conversation. The node-based system I am building in my thesis is an example of something in between: it gives the designer control over the rules and parameters while letting AI handle generation within those boundaries. That is not replacing craft. That is extending it.

5. Attitude over aptitude. The group agreed that curiosity and openness to learning matter more than being technically skilled with any one AI tool. The future designer is someone who sees change as part of the job and who stays curious rather than defensive.

Connection to my research

This hackathon confirmed several things I have been finding in my own research. The idea that designers need to understand where AI fits in the process (not just how to use individual tools) is the same argument my workflow mapping makes. The tension between craft and technology mirrors what came out of the focus group at the agency. And the shift from 'designer as maker' to 'designer as system architect' (Palani & Ramos, 2024), which is the central argument of my thesis, was present in the room even if people did not use those exact words.

What the hackathon added was a broader educational perspective. My thesis focuses on one agency and one system. But the questions being asked at BNO are about the entire profession: how do we train the next generation of designers? That is a bigger version of the same question I am trying to answer in a smaller context.

Appendix F: Morphological chart

This appendix presents the morphological chart made during the exploration phase and used during the concept development phase of the project. The chart maps out the phases of the node-based system and lists alternative sub-solutions for each. By combining options across parameters, it supported a structured exploration of possible system configurations before converging on the final concept. The full chart is shown below.

MORPHOLOGICAL CHART

Solid black options show the path that was built into the system. *Grey italic options were considered but not pursued.*

Workflow phase	Brand input	AI node type	Designer control point	System output
1. Discovery & research <i>Understanding</i>	-> Client brief (text) -> Competitor visuals (uploaded) -> <i>Stakeholder interview transcripts</i> -> <i>Existing brand assets (for a rebrand)</i> -> <i>Market and trend reports</i> -> <i>Customer reviews and social listening data</i>	-> LLM node: extract keywords, values, themes from brief -> LLM node, image analysis node: tag visual patterns in the competitor set -> Persona generation node: create 3 target group personas from the brief -> Feedback LLM node: compare whether the output fits the client brief -> <i>Sentiment analysis node: find emotional drivers in customer reviews</i> -> <i>Trend clustering node: group competitor visuals into style clusters</i> -> <i>SWOT node: draft strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats</i>	-> Designer does the physical client intake and puts the information into nodes -> Designer curates the competitor set visuals -> Designer reviews and refines the generated answers -> Designer reviews the feedback node -> <i>Designer writes the brief from a discovery workshop</i> -> <i>Designer ranks competitors by relevance before tagging</i> -> <i>Designer validates the personas with the client before continuing</i>	-> Brand analysis (brand snapshot, market context, target audience, competitive landscape, brand personality and tone, visual design and context, project context, strategic signals, assumptions to challenge, gaps in brief) -> Target group personas (age, needs, visual preferences) -> Competitor visual brand analysis and competitive landscape -> Positioning framework -> <i>Research summary one-pager for client alignment</i> -> <i>Visual trend map of the competitor set</i>
2. Strategy & positioning <i>Understanding</i>	-> Competitor visual analysis and competitive landscape analysis from phase 1 -> Brand analysis from phase 1 -> Positioning framework from phase 1 -> Target group personas from phase 1 -> Extra information box (important things to mention, optional) -> <i>Client business goals and KPIs</i> -> <i>Existing brand equity to preserve</i>	-> Create 4 brand scenarios node including quadrants, brand vision, purpose, positioning statement, personality, archetypes, values, expressions, brand strategy, strategic pillars, visual & tonal direction -> Tone of voice guide node: capture how this brand communicates -> Brand DNA nodes: positioning, purpose, personality based on phase 1	-> Designer reads and reflects on the answers given by the system -> Designer makes moodboard for different brand scenario's by uploading reference images -> Designer selects one scenario to carry forward -> Designer implements feedback -> <i>Designer rewrites the tone of voice in the brand's own words</i> -> <i>Designer presents the strategy to the client for approval</i>	-> Brand DNA (purpose, positioning, personality) -> Visual direction ranges (colour, warmth, contrast, density) -> 4 brand scenario's: each for one of the quadrants from the positioning framework -> 4 moodboards created by designer -> Chosen Brand Scenario including a quadrant, brand vision, archetypes, values, expressions, brand strategy, strategic pillars -> <i>Brand naming shortlist</i> -> <i>Messaging framework (pillars and proof points)</i>
3. Concepting & ideation <i>Creating</i>	-> Brand DNA (purpose, positioning, personality) -> Visual direction ranges (colour, warmth, contrast, density) -> Chosen Brand Scenario including a quadrant, brand vision, archetypes,	-> Image text prompt LLM node: create text prompts for the image generator node to produce the moodboard -> Concept direction node: create 3 different concepts for the brand	-> Designer curates the input references (the moodboard) -> Designer selects or rejects generated directions -> Designer manually connects nodes based on the output	-> 3 concept directions: safe, middle, explorative -> Visual moodboards per direction created by designer -> Feedback from client -> <i>Keyword set per direction</i>

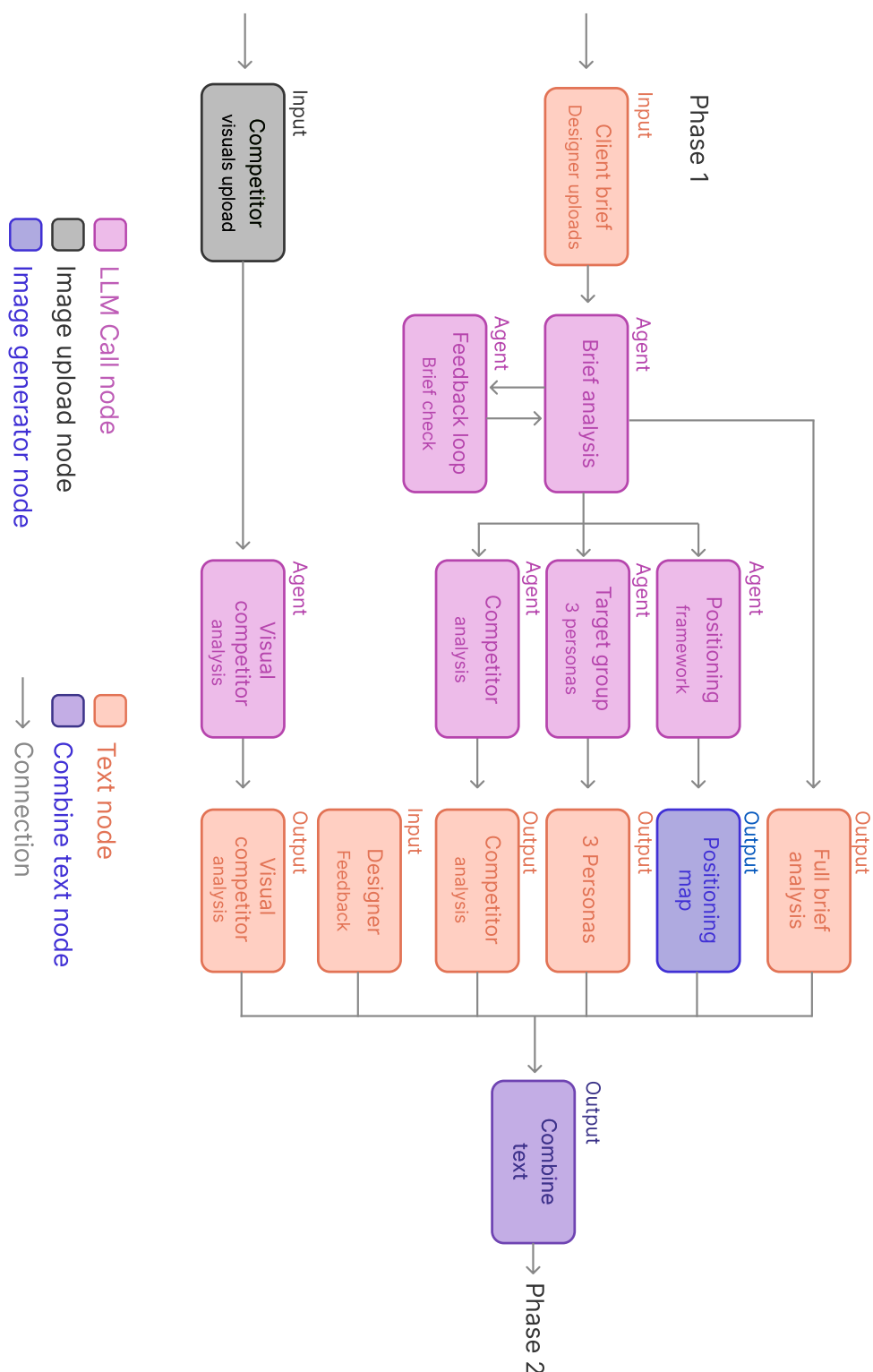
Workflow phase	Brand input	AI node type	Designer control point	System output
	values, expressions, brand strategy, strategic pillars -> The selected brand scenario from phase 2 -> feedback from client -> Designer sketches or hand drawings -> Keyword or metaphor list to anchor the concepts	-> Text-to-image node: generate moodboard images based on the prompt and brand parameters -> Upload image node: let the designer add own image references to the moodboard -> Style transfer node: apply a reference style to generated images -> Metaphor node: generate conceptual metaphors for the brand -> Variation node: expand a chosen direction into more options	-> Designer can add sketches or drawings as input -> Designer names each concept direction -> Designer writes a rationale for each direction	-> A single recommended direction
4. Identity design <i>Creating</i>	-> Chosen concept direction from phase 3 -> Brand DNA and visual direction ranges from phase 2 -> Feedback from client in phase 3 -> Existing logo to evolve (rebrand case) -> Brand naming from phase 2 -> Accessibility requirements (contrast, legibility) -> Application constraints (print, screen, embroidery)	-> Logo exploration node: generate 5 logo styles -> Colour palette node: generate 3 colour directions -> Typography suggestion node (LLM): produce a typography suggestion document with pairings and rationale -> Graphic elements node: generate 5 categories of graphic elements -> Visual language node: generate 5 photographic directions -> Designer upload nodes: one per component for logo, colour, typography, graphic elements -> Style lock group: locked image and text nodes for every finalised element, connecting into phase 5 -> Logo vectorisation node: convert a raster logo to clean SVG -> Icon set node: generate a matching icon family -> Accessibility check node: test colour contrast against WCAG -> Logo animation node: generate motion versions of the logo	-> Designer reviews the explorations and decides to use, reject, or develop them -> Designer creates or refines the logo externally (Figma) and uploads it -> Designer finalises the colour palette (Adobe) and uploads it -> Designer selects and uploads the typography -> Designer locks the final brand elements in the style lock group -> Designer hand-draws logo concepts before generating -> Designer licenses or buys the final typeface -> Designer tests the identity at small and large sizes -> Designer defines logo construction and clear-space rules	-> Finalised logo (locked) -> Locked colour palette (locked) -> Locked typography (locked) -> Locked graphic elements and visual language (locked) -> Style-locked image and text nodes feeding phase 5 -> AI explorations retained as optional inspiration material -> Logo variations (primary, secondary, icon, monochrome) -> Accessibility-checked colour pairings -> Motion or animated logo version
5. Touchpoint design <i>Delivering</i>	-> Locked brand identity from phase 4 (concept, logo, colour) -> Product image reference (uploaded) -> Designer-written sticker prompt -> Designer-written scene direction notes (optional)	-> Sticker generation node: combine locked concept, logo, and colour with a designer-written prompt -> Scene-prompt LLM node: generate scene direction prompts only (lighting, setting, composition) -> Product photography node (Nano Banana Pro): generate shots from the reference image	-> Designer writes the sticker prompt as creative direction -> Designer writes or edits the scene direction prompts -> Designer uploads the product reference image	-> Stickers -> Product photography: studio shots (multiple angles and lighting) -> Product photography: in natural settings -> Product photography: with people interacting

Workflow phase	Brand input	AI node type	Designer control point	System output
	-> Target platform specs (sizes, safe areas) -> Campaign concept or key message -> Talent or model reference for lifestyle shots	while preserving the product's visual qualities, across angles and lighting -> In-context photography node: place the product in natural settings -> Lifestyle photography node: product with people interacting -> Aspect-ratio reframing node: reformat any generated image to new ratios without manual cropping -> Packaging mockup node: render the identity on packaging -> Ad layout node: assemble copy and image into ad formats -> Motion node: generate short video clips (Kling) -> Copywriting node: generate captions and ad copy per platform -> Background replacement node	-> Designer selects which generated assets to take forward -> Designer chooses the target platforms and aspect ratios -> Designer chooses the models -> Designer art-directs a real photoshoot instead of generating -> Designer writes the campaign copy -> Designer retouches generated images in Photoshop -> Designer builds final layouts in Figma or InDesign	-> Social-format variants (Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram Stories) -> Stickers -> product photography -> Packaging visuals -> Static ad creatives -> Motion and video assets -> Print collateral (business cards, posters)
6. Guidelines & delivery <i>Delivering</i>	-> Locked brand elements from phase 4 (logo, colour, typography, graphic elements) -> Campaign imagery from phase 5 (stickers, product photography, social formats) -> Strategic content from phases 2 and 3 (Brand DNA, positioning, tone of voice, concept direction) -> Usage do's and don'ts written by the designer -> Client feedback from earlier review rounds -> File naming and folder conventions -> Licensing and font ownership details	-> Assembly node: collect locked elements, imagery, and strategic content into one structure -> Guideline layout node: organise the content into a brand guideline overview -> Summary node: generate a short brand one-pager -> Guideline copywriting node: draft section text and usage rules -> Translation node: produce guidelines in a second language -> Web guideline node: format the guidelines as a shareable page	-> Designer assembles and orders the guideline content -> Designer decides what is included and excluded -> Designer prepares the final overview for client handoff -> Designer designs the guideline layout (Figma or InDesign) -> Designer writes the usage rules and rationale -> Designer prepares an editable template kit for the client -> Designer runs a handoff session with the client	-> Consolidated brand guideline overview -> One structured deliverable combining identity, imagery, and strategy -> Full brand guidelines document (PDF) -> Editable asset kit and template library -> Interactive or web-based brand portal -> Quick-reference brand one-pager

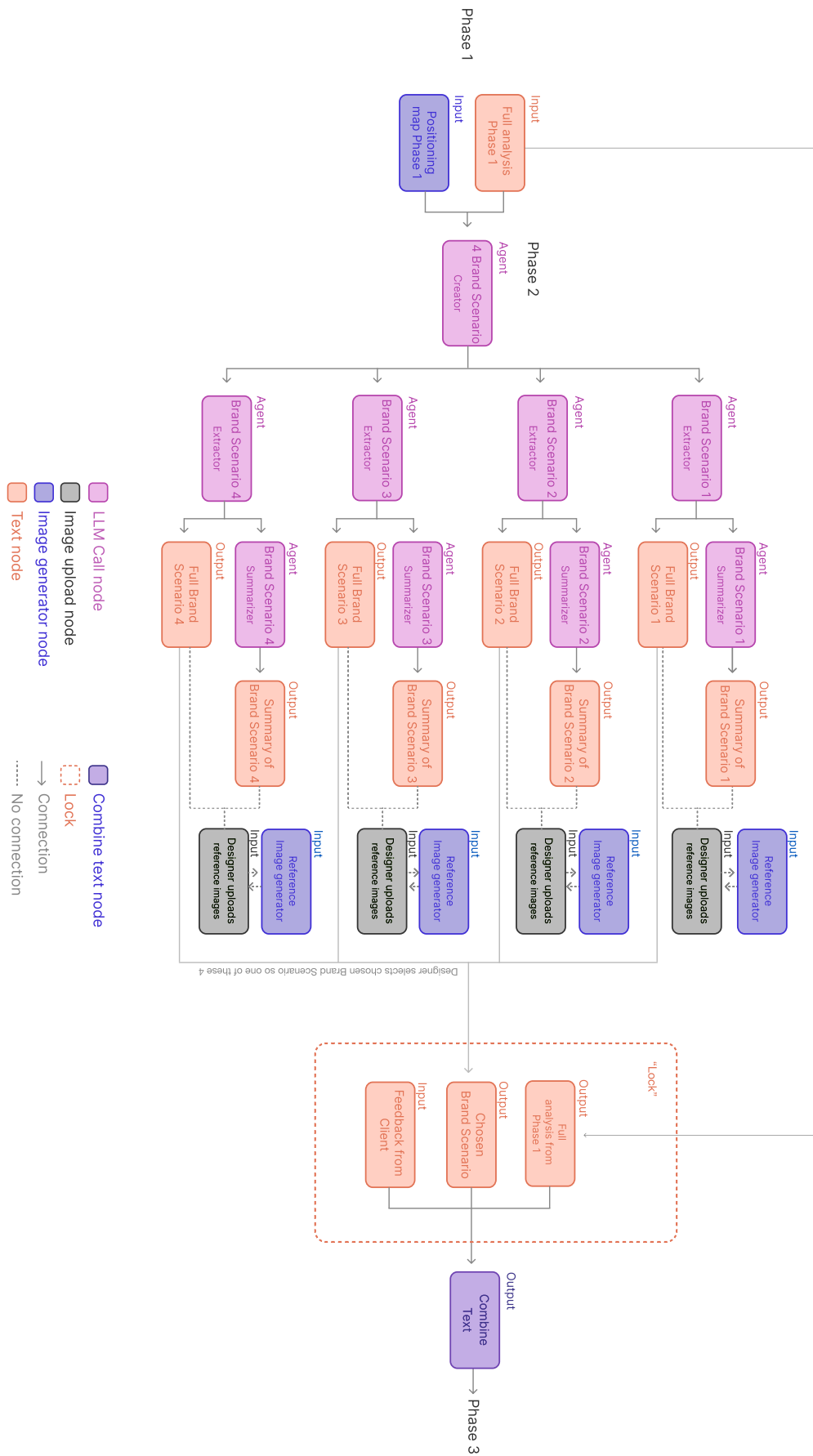
Appendix G: Full workflow maps all phases

This appendix presents the full workflow maps for all six phases of the node-based brand identity system. Each map shows the complete node architecture for its phase, including all node types, connections, and data flows. The maps use a consistent colour-coded legend to distinguish between LLM Call nodes, text nodes, image upload nodes, image generator nodes, combine text nodes, locks, and connections. Simplified versions of these maps appear in Chapter 6; the full-size versions here allow for detailed inspection of individual nodes and their relationships.

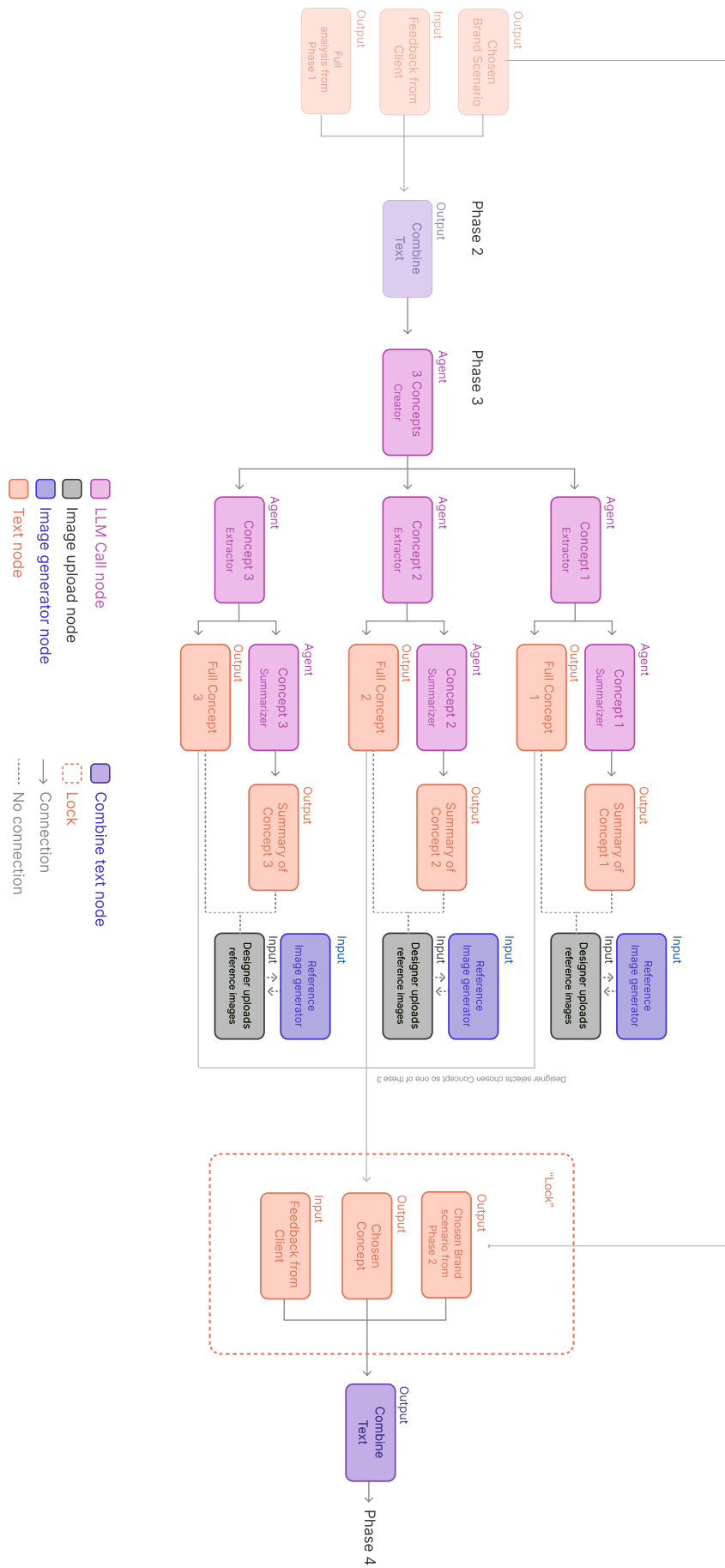
G1. Phase 1: Research & discovery (shown in landscape)



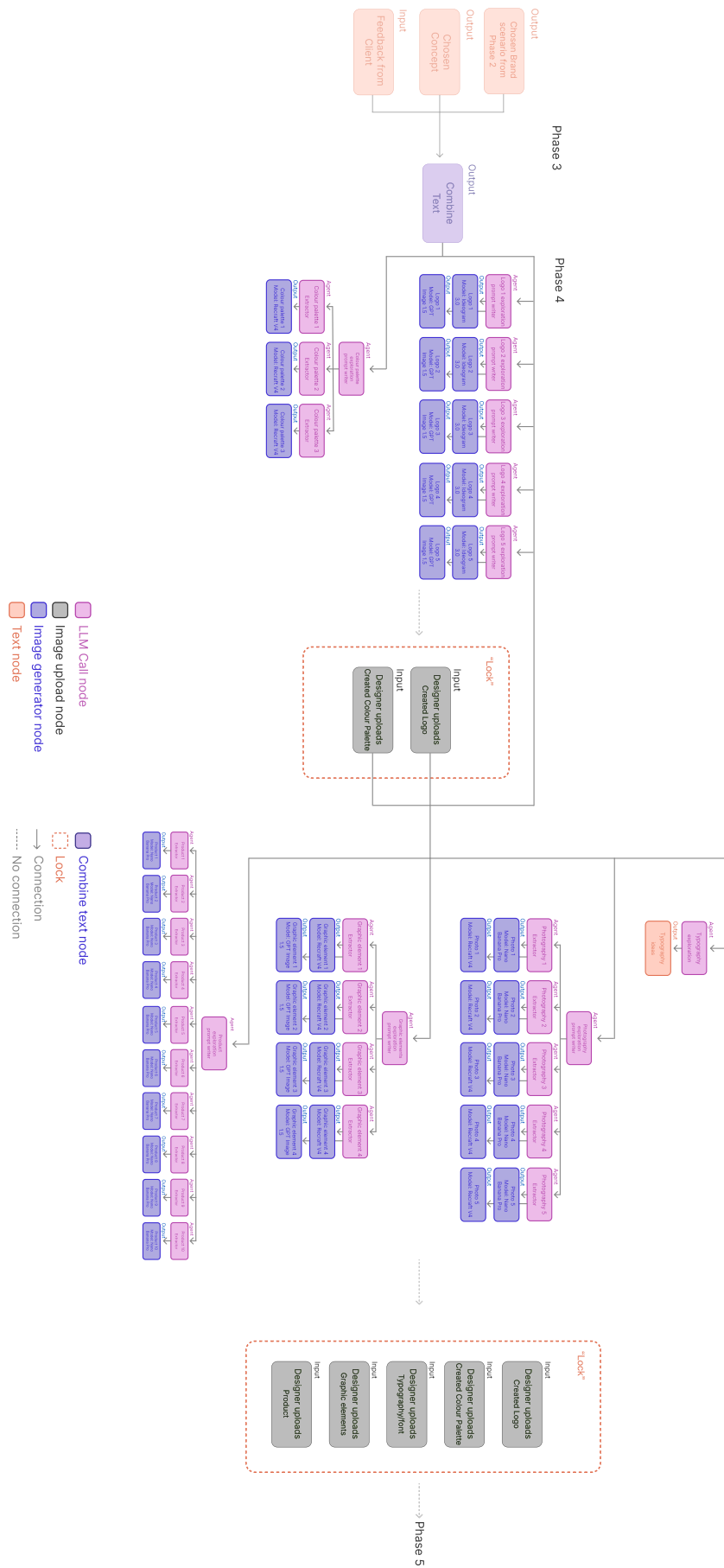
G2. Phase 2: Strategy & positioning (shown in landscape)



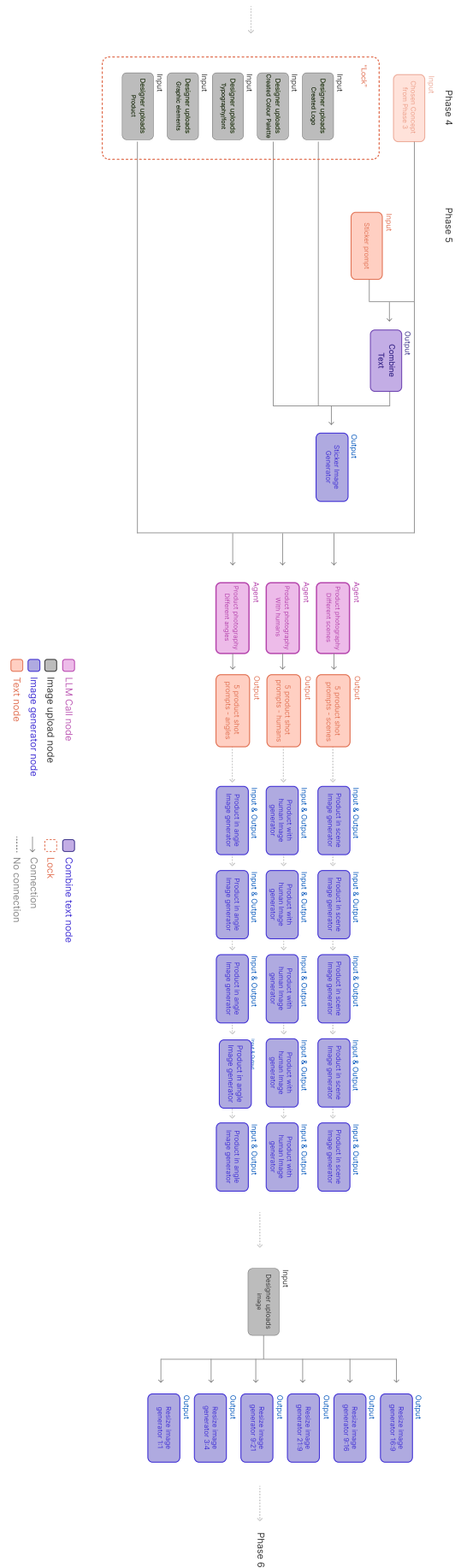
G3. Phase 3: Concept development (shown in landscape)



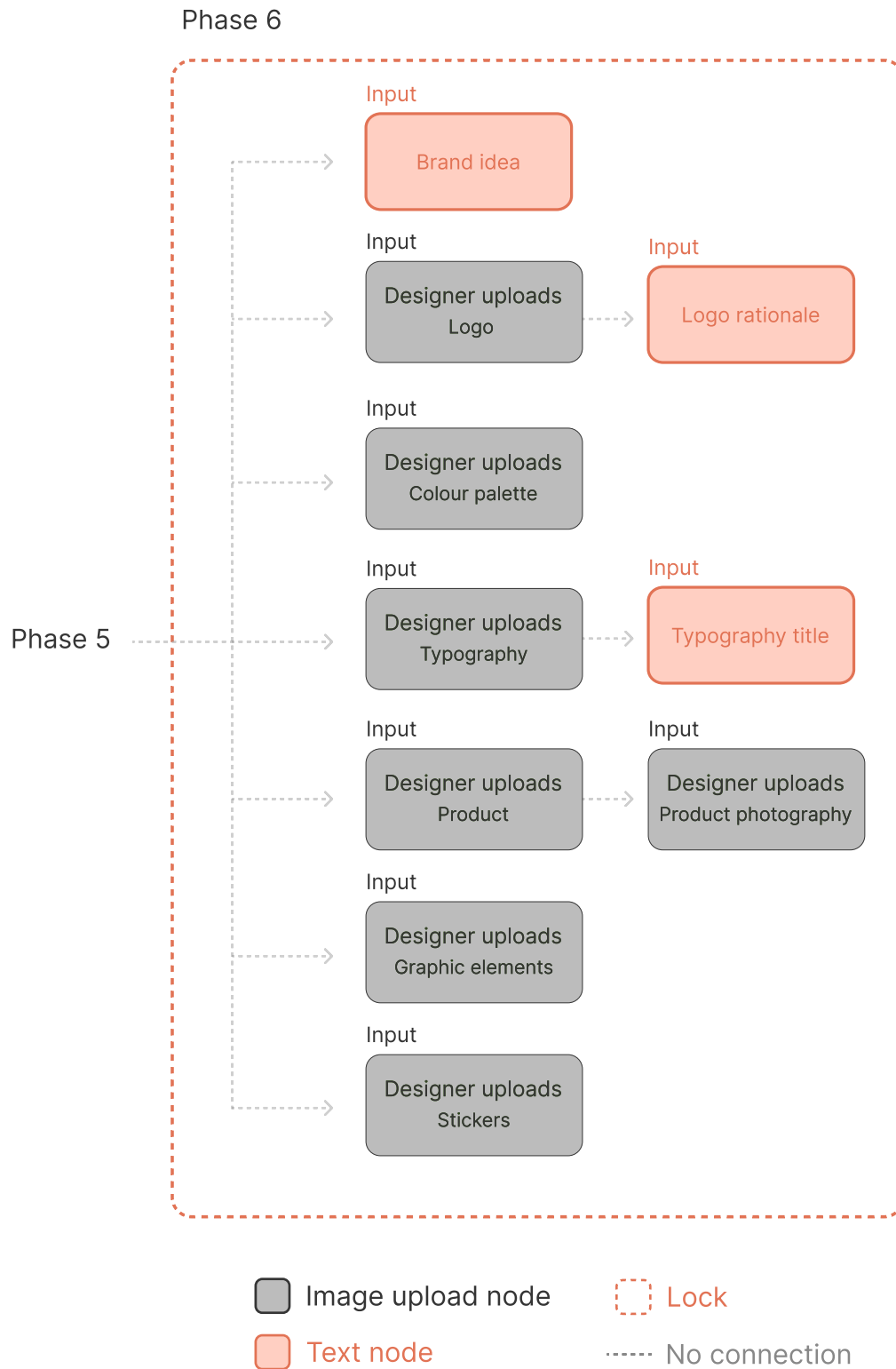
G4. Phase 4: Identity design (shown in landscape)



G5. Phase 5: Touchpoint design (shown in landscape)



G6. Phase 6: Guidelines and delivery



Appendix H: Study 2 consent form & demographics

Delft University of Technology INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Participant Information

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled *From designer to system architect: Designing a node-based system that structures human-AI co-creation in brand identity development*. This study is being conducted by Tessa Scholing from the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering at TU Delft, in collaboration with ^{***}, Amsterdam.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate a node-based AI brand system built in Krea.ai. The system translates the branding process into a structured network of generative AI nodes that designers can navigate, control, and curate. This evaluation focuses on the usability of the system and the designer's experience of their role when working with it. The evaluation does not focus on the quality of the system's outputs.

What you will be asked to do

The session will take approximately 60 minutes and involves:

- A guided walkthrough of the system with pre-generated outputs, during which you will be shown all six phases of the branding system (~20 minutes)
- A hands-on task in which you work through one phase of the system yourself (~20 minutes)
- A semi-structured interview about your experience, your perceived role, and the usability of the system (~20 minutes)
- A short anonymous survey (~10 minutes)

Data collection

The session will be recorded via screen capture and audio recording. The following personally identifiable information (PII) will be collected: your name and signature on this consent form, and demographic and professional background information in the pre-session survey. The following personally identifiable research data (PIRD) will be collected: audio recordings of your verbal responses during the walkthrough and interview, and screen recordings of your interaction with the system.

Risks and mitigation

There are no anticipated physical or emotional risks associated with participating in this study. To protect your identity, all data will be de-identified during analysis. Participants will be referred to by codes (e.g. P1, P2) in the thesis and any publications. Audio and screen recordings will be stored securely and deleted after the project concludes in August 2026. Consent forms will be stored separately from research data.

Voluntary participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question and may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. If you withdraw, you may request that your data be deleted, provided this request is made before the data has been fully de-identified and integrated into the analysis.

Contact

For questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

[Tessa Scholing — T.C.Scholing@student.tudelft.nl]

[Evangelos Niforatos — E.Niforatos@tudelft.nl]

Delft University of Technology

EXPLICIT CONSENT

Please tick the appropriate boxes.

A: GENERAL AGREEMENT	Yes	No
1. I have read and understood the study information on the previous page. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	☐	☐
2. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	☐	☐
3. I understand that taking part in the study involves: a guided walkthrough of a node-based AI brand system, a hands-on task within the system, a semi-structured interview (audio-recorded), a screen recording of my interaction with the system, and a short anonymous survey.	☐	☐
B: POTENTIAL RISKS AND DATA PROTECTION	Yes	No
4. I understand that there are no anticipated physical or emotional risks to participating in this study.	☐	☐
5. I understand that the following personally identifiable information will be collected: my name and signature (on this form), and demographic and professional background information (in the pre-session survey).	☐	☐
6. I understand that personally identifiable research data will be collected in the form of audio recordings and screen recordings, and that these will be stored securely and deleted after the project concludes.	☐	☐
7. I understand that the following steps will be taken to protect my identity: all data will be de-identified during analysis, participants will be referred to by codes (P1, P2, etc.) in the thesis and any publications, and consent forms will be stored separately from research data.	☐	☐
C: RESEARCH PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION	Yes	No
8. I understand that after the study, de-identified data will be used for an MSc graduation thesis at TU Delft, and may be used in related academic publications or presentations.	☐	☐
9. I agree that my responses, views, or other input can be quoted anonymously in research outputs.	☐	☐
D: DATA STORAGE	Yes	No
10. I understand that de-identified research data (anonymised transcripts, coded survey data) will be stored securely for the duration of the research	☐	☐

project and archived in accordance with TU Delft data management guidelines. Identifiable data (recordings, consent forms) will be deleted after the project concludes in August 2025.		
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Participant name [printed]

Signature

Date

Researcher name [printed]

Signature

Date

Study contact details:

[Tessa Scholing — T.C.Scholing@student.tudelft.nl]

Pre-Session Survey

Please complete before the session begins. This information helps contextualise your responses and will be de-identified in the analysis.

Participant #: _____

DEMOGRAPHICS	
Age	
Gender	
Occupation / current role	
Domain or field of work	
BRANDING EXPERIENCE	
How many years of experience do you have with branding or brand identity work? ☐ None ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–3 years ☐ 3–5 years ☐ 5–10 years ☐ More than 10 years	
In what capacity have you worked on branding projects? (select all that apply) ☐ Academic / student projects ☐ Freelance ☐ Agency (employed) ☐ In-house brand team ☐ Personal projects ☐ Other: _____	
Which phases of branding have you personally worked on? (select all that apply) ☐ Brand strategy / positioning ☐ Visual identity design (logo, colour, typography) ☐ Naming / verbal identity ☐ Brand guidelines / systems ☐ Campaign / content design ☐ None of the above	
AI TOOLS AND PERCEPTION	
How often do you currently use AI tools in your design work?	

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely (a few times a year)
- ☐ Sometimes (monthly)
- ☐ Regularly (weekly or more)
- ☐ Often (everyday)

Which AI tools have you used? (select all that apply)

- ☐ ChatGPT / Claude / other LLMs
- ☐ Midjourney / DALL·E / image generation tools
- ☐ Krea.ai
- ☐ ComfyUI / Stable Diffusion (node-based)
- ☐ Adobe Firefly / built-in AI features
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ None

I am comfortable using AI tools as part of my creative process.

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 <i>Strongly disagree</i> | 2 <i>Disagree</i> | 3 <i>Neutral</i> | 4 <i>Agree</i> | 5 <i>Strongly agree</i> |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

I believe AI tools can meaningfully support brand identity design.

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 <i>Strongly disagree</i> | 2 <i>Disagree</i> | 3 <i>Neutral</i> | 4 <i>Agree</i> | 5 <i>Strongly agree</i> |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

NODE-BASED TOOLS

Have you used node-based or visual programming tools before? (e.g. ComfyUI, Grasshopper, Unreal Blueprints, TouchDesigner)

- ☐ Yes, extensively
- ☐ Yes, a few times
- ☐ No, but I understand the concept
- ☐ No, this is completely new to me

Appendix I: Testbrand Yield

Client Brief

Yield

Wine, without the performance.

Yield is a wine brand built around the gap between what people drink and what they're supposed to know about it.

We source, blend, and bottle single-region wines and sell them directly. No cellar door theatre, no vintage mythology, no back label that reads like a Wikipedia article about soil drainage. The wine is good. We can tell you why it's good without making you feel like you've failed a test. That's the whole offer.

Our range is small on purpose: a white, a red, a natural, a sparkling. Rotates quarterly. You don't need to know anything about wine to drink ours. But if you want to know more, we'll actually tell you. in language that treats you like an adult who just hasn't had the right entry point yet, not like a customer who needs to be managed.

The audience

Our audience is 26 to 40. People who drink wine several times a week and feel a low-level, background embarrassment about it. They can't tell you what "tannic" means in practice. They've nodded along to wine lists they didn't understand and pointed at the second-cheapest bottle more than once. They're not uncurious, they're just uninterested in the performance that seems to accompany the knowledge. They want to drink better without enrolling in anything. They buy good olive oil and know the difference, and they can't figure out why wine has to be so much more complicated than that.

The positioning

We want to be the brand that removes the velvet rope without lowering the standard. Not democratising wine in a way that means watering it down. Democratising the knowledge, the access, the confidence of having an opinion without having a certificate.

Brands we admire

Heaps Normal — the way a challenger brand can hold its ground without being aggressive.

Ottolenghi — the generosity of the explanation, the complete lack of condescension.

Monocle — the conviction that quality and accessibility are not opposites.

But we're none of them. We're not a non-alcoholic disruptor making a point. We're not a food brand with a warm extended-family aesthetic. We're not a media company with a product attached. We're the friend who spent three years working harvests in the Rhône and has never once made you feel bad about liking rosé.

The founders

Our founders are a sommelier and a behavioural designer, which is the most honest description of what the brand is trying to do: hold real expertise in one hand and an understanding of why people disengage in the other, and build something in the space between. The wine has to be worth drinking. The experience of buying it has to feel like relief, not homework.

Appendix J: Study 2 walkthrough script from facilitator

Walkthrough Script

Study 2: Evaluation of Node-based Brand Identity System

Phase 1: Discovery & Research

(From here starts the walkthrough video)

Facilitator: Here is phase one. It starts with the client brief, which you can load into a text node. You can copy-paste the brief from a client and put it in there. Then a brief analysis is made: what's in it, where do they want to go, what strategy do they have so far, who are their customers. There's a feedback loop where it checks the analysis against the original brief.

Facilitator: Then you go to a positioning framework. That's more strategy: where does this company sit on an axis? Which area could it still occupy? There are two axes with four quadrants, and we'll work with those again in phase two.

Facilitator: A visual competitor analysis is also done. You can upload competitor visuals, either from the internet or from what a client has provided. How could we still innovate in terms of design?

Facilitator: Then here is the full brand analysis. This is everything from phase one that gets extracted: a brand snapshot. What is the market context, what is the target audience, what are pain points? The competitive landscape, the brand's personality. Project tensions, so what does the brand find difficult? And what are gaps in the brief that they haven't mentioned?

Facilitator: Then the positioning framework the system has created, with four quadrants: Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4. It has placed the competitors on that axis. There's also a competitive landscape analysis: what do competitors do, what do they look like, and where are the identified gaps? Where can this brand still work?

Facilitator: Then three target group personas are made. A bit about their habits and those kinds of things.

Facilitator: And here, as a designer, you can add missing context yourself. If there are things either the client has said or things you would really like to see in a project, you can enter that. Then it all comes together again, all those answers in phase one.

Phase 2: Brand Scenarios

Facilitator: In phase two, four brand scenarios are made. Based on the positioning framework with those four quadrants, there's an agent that makes four brand scenarios. Each quadrant stands for the same corner in the framework.

Facilitator: So what happens is those four brand scenarios are made, and then each goes to a node which extracts only that quadrant from it. It makes a kind of summary, and then you can read it. So you run them step by step, then you open it and you see the first brand scenario. It has a purpose and he adds an archetype to it. You have twelve archetypes, like the wise guide or the hero, and you give an archetype to a brand. He does four different archetypes for the four different quadrants.

Facilitator: He gives a bit of direction you could go, and then here as designer you make your own moodboard. So you go to Pinterest, or you see photos outside, or things. You can also generate your own images, because there's an image generator connected.

Facilitator: For quadrant two, exactly the same happens, but it's for a different direction. So here a totally different brand scenario is made with a different vision, a different archetype, and different values. Everything is a different quadrant. And you can make that moodboard with images you upload. And then the same for Q3 and Q4.

Facilitator: Then you arrive at the end of phase two where you lock it. You go to the client, do a presentation, and present those four brand scenarios. Then you connect the one they choose to the next node, so you can continue with that to phase three. You can also enter feedback from the client, and the brand analysis from phase one is there automatically again so you can continue working with it.

Phase 3: Concept Development

Facilitator: Phase three is creating concepts. You go with everything from phase two to here and there's an agent that makes three concepts. That one has a system prompt to make one low risk, one medium risk, and one high risk concept. He also gives each concept a personality profile. A brand has an archetype that we chose in phase two, and then we give it a kind of score here which makes the brands different.

Facilitator: For example, the Yield wine brand: one concept was "The Long Table," where it could all be messy and napkins and handwritten things. He gave visual tone direction, so what kind of colours can they best use, what should the tone of voice be, and a moodboard direction.

Facilitator: You have those concepts side by side. Then you see an overview of what the risk level is, what their strongest persona was from phase one, what the big brand ideas are, and how they differ. And you can make your moodboard again for each concept and generate photos.

Facilitator: You can lock it here again, choose the concept, and link it to the next phase. Sometimes the client liked elements of one concept and elements of another. You could connect multiple concepts with a comment to proceed.

Phase 4: Identity Design (Exploration)

Facilitator: Phase four is identity design. But phase four works mainly as an exploration phase, so this must purely be for inspiration and not something you just take and use just like that. A lot of designers indicated that AI just isn't that good yet at designing it.

Facilitator: These are logo explorations based on the concept. Then here you have colour palette explorations, also based on the concept. But then here the system is not connected, and as designer you can upload your own logo and your own colour palette. Which then feeds into the rest of the system for patterns and graphic elements. Those are also just purely for inspiration.

Facilitator: There's a packaging agent that gives five accessible options for packaging and five more out-of-the-box options. Then you have photography explorations. And here typography explorations, so options for typefaces. You can also adjust your designs: suppose you have a bottle and you want a pattern on it, you can link that to an image generator and write a prompt.

Facilitator: There is also a Brand Lock section. Nothing is connected here, but this is a group where you as designer upload everything: your logo, your colour palette, your designed things, your posters, your patterns. So you have everything in one place and you can see an overview of what you ended up with. But that doesn't have to be based on what was generated before. That can also be entirely your own work.

Phase 5: Asset Creation

Facilitator: Phase five is asset creation. I have three things here, but they can also be three completely different things. First, stickers: based on your colour palette, drawing style, and logos, and with a sticker prompt and your chosen concept, you can enter all of that and make stickers.

Facilitator: Next to this you can do product photography. So you take one image, or your product, and then the system generates different shots. You can also write your own source prompt for the photography.

Facilitator: Then here you have formats for social media. If you have one photo and you want it on TikTok, Instagram, and LinkedIn, you immediately have all your different formats if you throw it in.

Phase 6: Final Delivery

Facilitator: Phase six is the end. You have everything in one place. Above is the concept explained one more time. Here you have the logo with the rationale behind it, what is the

reasoning, your colour palette. You can of course never deliver this to a client like this, but it's more a kind of final version for yourself, a summary of where you ended up.

Appendix K: Study 2 participant assignment

How the brand should feel

We want Yield to feel considered, dry in the right way, and quietly confident. Like it's done the thinking so you don't have to and isn't making a big deal about that.

Your assignment

During the hands-on part of the session, I will test two parts of the system with you.

Task 1: Logo explorations

Using the concept direction chosen in Phase 3, you will use the system to generate logo explorations. The system will produce a range of options based on the brand strategy and visual direction established in earlier phases. You will review these, react to them, and select what works.

Then, you will design your own logo in Figma or Adobe (Illustrator, Photoshop, whatever you prefer). This does not need to be finished or polished. A rough wordmark, a simple shape, or a quick sketch is perfectly fine. Once you have something, you will upload your logo back into the system.

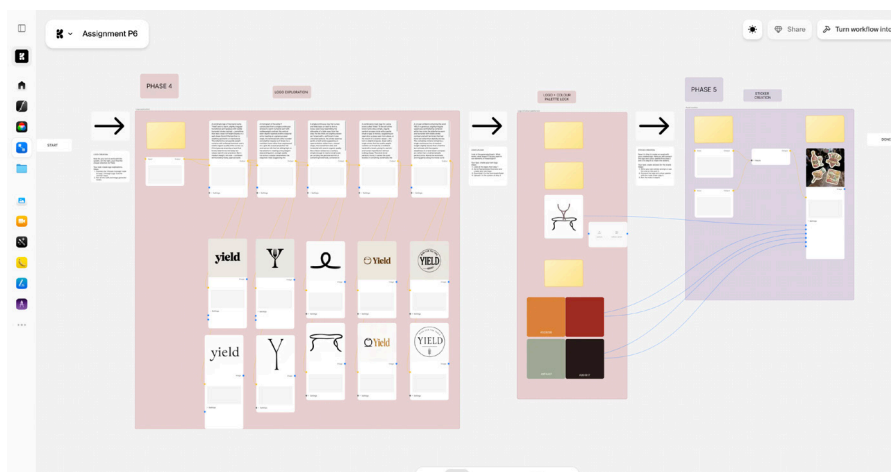
Task 2: Create an asset

With your logo uploaded and the colour system in place, I will show you how the system can generate brand assets. You will create a set of stickers using your logo and the colour palette from the system. This task is about seeing how the different parts of the system connect: how a logo, a colour system, and an asset type come together through the nodes.

In summary

- You will create one logo (your own design, any tool, any level of polish)
- You will create one asset (stickers) using the system

The goal is not the output itself. The goal is to experience how the system supports your process and where you, as the designer, step in to make decisions.



Appendix L: Study 2 observation sheet used by facilitator during assignment

L1. Blank observation sheet used by facilitator

Observation Sheet

Participant #: _____ Date: _____ Session start time: _____

QUICK REFERENCE — What to watch for

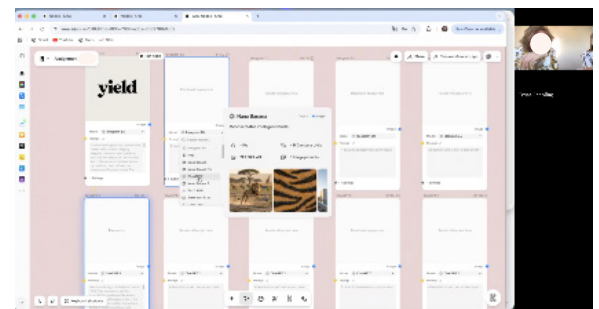
Navigation & Usability • Understands node connections? • Gets lost on the canvas? • Reads labels or clicks randomly? • Asks for help? (how often, about what?) • Confused about what to do next?	Decision & Reaction • Studies AI output closely or glances? • References AI output while designing? • Expresses opinions? (what words?) • Deliberates long or decides quickly? • Keeps AI output or replaces it?
Emotional Indicators • Relief (switching to own tool) • Frustration (sighing, stuck) • Surprise (leaning in, "wait, what?") • Pride (smiling at own work) • Loss of control ("I didn't ask for that")	Role Shift Indicators ★ • Creative lead: "I'd do it differently" • Defers to system: "I'll go with this" • Curator: "This one, not that one" • Architect: "I see why this connects" • Passenger: "What do I do now?"

[illegible]

L2. Filled in observation sheet P1

Think-Aloud Observations P1 (by Researcher)

#	Timestamp	Observation	Category (reference card)
1	23:49	Asks whether it has value to read the client brief if it was written by ChatGPT	Decision & Reaction
2	24:29	Reads the target audience (26-40, not wine connoisseurs) and questions how much value certain parts of the brief have	Decision & Reaction
3	25:14	Understands why not all phases are being tested: "Otherwise it's too heavy?"	Navigation & Usability
4	25:33	Reads the concept "Long Table" and takes time to understand it	Navigation & Usability
5	26:16	Wants to start immediately: "Can I design a logo now, can I make a sketch here?"	Role Shift Indicators
6	26:31	Is impatient and wants to move ahead: "Oh, I'm already too fast again"	Emotional Indicators
7	26:45	Hovers across the board back and forth, looking for where he needs to be	Navigation & Usability
8	27:00	Tries to run a node: "Would this one work?"	Navigation & Usability
9	27:15	Understands how to connect the concept node with the LLM nodes	Navigation & Usability
10	27:21	Looks at multiple available models; recognises Ideogram positively: "Ideogram, nice!"	Decision & Reaction
11	27:30	Asks if Researcher recommends Ideogram for this section	Decision & Reaction
12	28:10	Indicates he would do it differently himself: "a bit more straight to the point" (has more Krea experience)	Role Shift Indicators
13	28:10	Finds the output too elaborate and too much; would keep it shorter so you don't get lost in the choices	Role Shift Indicators
14	28:54	Re-reads the concept while waiting for output	Navigation & Usability
15	28:54	Checks whether output has appeared yet; it has not	Navigation & Usability
16	29:00	Runs the logo nodes	Navigation & Usability
17	29:19	Looks again at the different models he can use	Decision & Reaction
18	29:30	Opens ChatGPT alongside the system	Role Shift Indicators
19	29:41	Reacts with "Woah!" to the first results	Emotional Indicators
20	29:47	Looks ahead to which phase comes next: logo and colour palette	Navigation & Usability
21	30:24	Notices a contrast issue: you cannot see whether nodes are connected because of the background colour. "The contrast is slightly unclear"	Navigation & Usability
22	30:40	Tries to change the background colour; finds it better but still "continuously distracting"	Navigation & Usability
23	30:45	Wants the prompt back; would have preferred the nodes to be pre-connected	Navigation & Usability
24	31:01	Describes his confusion: "Now I took the first one. Only now I wanted to click this one and now it didn't have a prompt yet"	Navigation & Usability
25	31:15	Asks how the flow works: output of one as input for the next?	Navigation & Usability
26	32:12	Asks about the difference between the different LLM nodes	Navigation & Usability
27	32:41	Understands that each node creates a different variant: "Oh, then it creates a different variant of a possible logo"	Navigation & Usability
28	32:41	Suggests generating all logo variants in the same node using a line splitter	Role Shift Indicators
29	33:06	Explains how you could work more efficiently with a line splitter and a master prompt	Role Shift Indicators
30	33:47	Makes a concrete suggestion: "You can split those! You can assign a splitter node"	Role Shift Indicators



Screenshot from recording P1

31	34:45	Quickly chooses a logo: "I think this one is nice. Yes, so let's continue with that"	Decision & Reaction
32	34:54	Notes that the scroll wheel scrolls the wrong way in Krea	Navigation & Usability
33	35:08	Reads the assignment and finds it very clever that designers can design their own logo here	Role Shift Indicators / Emotional Indicators
34	35:08	Downloads a logo from the AI output as a reference	Navigation & Usability
35	35:48	Says he would prefer to throw it back into AI and then go over it	Role Shift Indicators
36	36:00	Starts sketching on paper (role switch to hands-on designer)	Role Shift Indicators
37	36:00-37:37	Sketches his logo: a martini glass monogram	Role Shift Indicators
38	37:37	Takes a photo of his sketch to upload	Navigation & Usability
39	37:45	Proudly describes his design: "This beautiful little martini glass"	Emotional Indicators
40	37:58	Suggests using a scanner app for a white background	Role Shift Indicators
41	38:10	Successfully uploads the logo into the system	Navigation & Usability
42	38:38	Recognises PNG vs HEIC format when uploading	Navigation & Usability
43	38:47	Quickly chooses a colour palette: "Then I'll pick one that I like"	Decision & Reaction
44	38:59	Reads the sticker assignment and notices the monogram theme: "You do like monograms, don't you?"	Decision & Reaction
45	39:23	Confirms his preference for monograms: "I think a monogram is quite nice too"	Decision & Reaction
46	39:49	Copies and pastes the sticker prompt; understands how to connect logo and colour	Navigation & Usability
47	40:13	Asks how many credits it costs to generate	Decision & Reaction
48	40:53	Reacts enthusiastically to the first result: "Wooaahh Done! I'm so curious"	Emotional Indicators
49	40:53	Becomes inspired by the workflow: "I'm getting really inspired by this workflow now"	Emotional Indicators
50	41:03	Takes initiative on his own: wants to add orange to the colour palette (not part of the assignment)	Role Shift Indicators
51	41:03	Runs the node again with his own adjustment	Navigation & Usability
52	41:33	Asks if an app version of the system has been tried	Role Shift Indicators
53	41:56	Sees his logo appear in the stickers but not very clearly	Decision & Reaction
54	42:02	Notes that the system takes the logo very literally	Decision & Reaction
55	42:23	Closes off with: "OK Nice, fantastic"	Emotional Indicators

L3. Filled in observation sheet P2

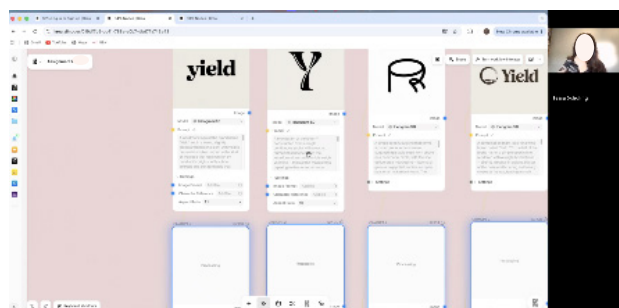
Think-Aloud Observations P2 (by Researcher)

#	Timestamp	Observation	Category (reference card)
1	16:42	Assignment begins; Researcher gives the task instructions	Navigation & Usability
2	17:07	Asks for confirmation: "And this is exactly the same that you just showed me?"	Navigation & Usability
3	17:20	Asks about duration: "How long is this thing?"	Navigation & Usability
4	18:00	Clarifying question: "So I don't need to write the concept. I just need..." then navigates through the canvas	Navigation & Usability
5	18:21	Starts reading the concept and the yellow post-it instructions	Navigation & Usability
6	18:49	Works through understanding: "Do I need to change anything here? This is the wordmark. This is... Nope. I just connect it to a node"	Navigation & Usability
7	19:27	Successfully connects the concept to the LLM nodes	Navigation & Usability
8	19:34	Discovers different models on the image generators: "Oh, this is like different models, this is for the images"	Navigation & Usability
9	19:42	Tries to connect prompt to image generator but cannot see existing connections (contrast issue)	Navigation & Usability
10	19:47	Researcher needs to jump in to explain connections are already made	Navigation & Usability
11	19:52	Realizes connections were already there: "Oh, for that one. Okay"	Navigation & Usability
12	19:59	Notes contrast/visibility problem: connections are hard to see (Krea UI contrast issue)	Navigation & Usability / Emotional Indicators
13	20:09	Reads yellow post-it again; reads through different logo types (wordmark, monogram, etc.)	Navigation & Usability
14	20:23	Confirms nodes are already connected: "Are they already connected? Actually, they are"	Navigation & Usability
15	20:36	Presses run node button: "Let's see what's gonna generate"	Navigation & Usability
16	20:43	Asks about model choice: "Why did you choose Ideogram 3.0?" Shows curiosity about model selection	Decision & Reaction
17	21:01	Demonstrates model knowledge: knows Nano Banana is "more for images" and not suitable for logos	Decision & Reaction
18	21:05	Reflects on industry-wide learning curve: "That's the thing I think we're still learning, to learn which models are best for specific requests"	Role Shift Indicators
19	21:23	Expresses impatience/curiosity while waiting: "I'm very curious because also I don't want too much time reading"	Emotional Indicators

20	22:57	Studies generated logo outputs closely; reads through the prompts in detail	Decision & Reaction
21	24:42	Looks at all logo results from different models; wants to compare them	Decision & Reaction
22	25:40	Discusses importance of prompt wording from her own professional experience with AI productions	Role Shift Indicators
23	26:53	Notes that some models are slower than others; waits for generation	Navigation & Usability
24	27:07	Moves to next step while waiting for generation (proactive navigation)	Navigation & Usability
25	27:31	Reads next step; immediately notes: "We don't have time for this" about designing a logo herself in Figma	Navigation & Usability
26	27:55	Reads the assignment instructions again carefully	Navigation & Usability
27	28:03	Asks how to open text in a node: "Can I just open text?" Does not know how initially	Navigation & Usability
28	28:06	Researcher explains: right-click with mouse button to open text	Navigation & Usability
29	28:32	Reads the concept before creating her own logo: "Okay. It's the wine one"	Navigation & Usability
30	28:47	Switches to Figma to design her own logo (start of own design work)	Role Shift Indicators
31	28:47	Knows how to work in Figma; immediately starts designing	Role Shift Indicators
32	28:47	Designs a grape with letters inside it; shows confidence in her design direction	Role Shift Indicators
33	33:07	Finishes her design: "Okay. Whatever." Appears content but casual about the result	Emotional Indicators
34	33:36	Advices removing fill for transparent PNG: "So it's like a full PNG... because it creates less restrictions if it's still a transparent one" (demonstrates design expertise)	Role Shift Indicators
35	34:16	Returns to look at all generated logos now that they have finished loading	Decision & Reaction
36	34:27	Evaluates outputs critically: "They're all very different. This is very commercial"	Decision & Reaction
37	34:31	Picks a favorite: "I actually like this one, it is quite cute"	Decision & Reaction
38	34:33	Identifies specific design rationale in output: "It looks like the tip of the wine top, and then you have the finger in that. And it creates a connection, so it's actually quite cute"	Decision & Reaction
39	34:53	Sees the colors section; understands these are pre-set	Navigation & Usability
40	35:00	Asks "So what's next then?" and moves to next step	Navigation & Usability
41	35:05	Reads assignment: "Sticker creation"	Navigation & Usability

42	35:18	Reads the assignment instructions from the yellow post-it	Navigation & Usability
43	35:29	Identifies what is already connected and what she needs to do: "So this is all connected. This is the prompt that I need to write down"	Navigation & Usability
44	35:41	Copy-pastes the pre-made sticker prompt into the text node	Navigation & Usability
45	36:37	Modifies the prompt herself: "Just prompting a little bit more to the logo." Adds and deletes elements	Role Shift Indicators
46	37:22	Confirms she can run the node: "And then now with this, I just run the node"	Navigation & Usability
47	37:32	Pauses; re-reads the post-it before running; realizes she needs to connect logo and color palette first	Navigation & Usability
48	37:38	Navigates to connect elements; identifies which connections are needed	Navigation & Usability
49	38:09	Suggests improvement: "It would be nice if we could group this into one and not having to..." (about connecting individual color swatches)	Decision & Reaction
50	38:16	Problem-solves by screenshotting the color palette to upload as a single image	Role Shift Indicators
51	38:20	Notifies the screenshot will include pink background; adjusts approach	Navigation & Usability
52	38:35	Simplifies: "I would just do this. This is easier." Uploads the screenshot	Role Shift Indicators
53	38:42	Uploads the image and connects it to the node	Navigation & Usability
54	38:55	Connects image; confirms: "So now I can run the nodes. Right?"	Navigation & Usability
55	39:07	Curious about unfamiliar node: "What is this one for?" (about the combine text node)	Navigation & Usability
56	39:25	Understands the combine node connects concept to output; says "Oh, okay. So it's like more..."	Navigation & Usability
57	39:33	Identifies the last step: "And then this is the last step" and presses run	Navigation & Usability
58	39:41	Expresses curiosity about output: "Curious to see"	Emotional Indicators
59	39:46	Suggests adding label creation to the system: "It would be nice also if you do the label because that's very important for them"	Decision & Reaction
60	39:52	Argues wine labels are more important than stickers based on her own experience: "I did alcoholic bottle projects before, and the main thing is always the label"	Role Shift Indicators
61	40:23	Explains why labels matter: "It's the thing that holds most information. It's like the whole brand collapsing to one thing"	Decision & Reaction
62	40:51	Positive about the concept being threaded through all phases: "I like it that you have the concept always connected to all of the phases. That is important"	Decision & Reaction

63	40:59	Reflects on her own agency's practice: "That's something that we miss on our process because we leave the concept behind. And we just keep iterating, and then things start to get very loose"	Role Shift Indicators
64	41:18	Notifies the logo was not included in the sticker output: "No" (the system did not grab her logo)	Decision & Reaction
65	41:28	Goes back to troubleshoot the sticker prompt together with Researcher	Navigation & Usability
66	41:41	Suggests removing elements from the prompt to fix it	Decision & Reaction
67	42:34	Suggests trying again after reviewing prompt; nods of approval at prompt structure	Decision & Reaction
68	42:43	Notes they removed "Yield" from the prompt but it should have been included	Decision & Reaction



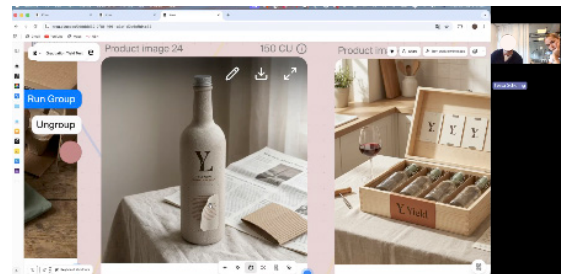
Screenshot from recording P2

L4. Filled in observation sheet P3

Think-Aloud Observations P3 (by Researcher).

#	Timestamp	Observation	Category (reference card)
1	17:20	First interaction with the canvas: "Let's see, where is my hand"; tries to use the hand tool to navigate	Navigation & Usability
2	17:25	Confused by navigation: "Why can't I with the hand?" (hand tool doesn't work as expected in Krea)	Navigation & Usability
3	17:51	Says "So okay" and goes to read the yellow sticky note with instructions	Navigation & Usability
4	18:15	Understands the task after reading: "Okay, so now I have to somewhere, I have to connect it or so"	Navigation & Usability
5	18:30	Searches for the generate button: "So, and now I just have to try to discover where the generate button is or so"	Navigation & Usability
6	18:43	Finds and presses the run button	Navigation & Usability
7	18:47	Seeks confirmation: "That's it, right?"	Navigation & Usability
8	18:49	Humour/self-reassurance: "Yes, P3 is not a complete idiot"	Emotional Indicators
9	18:54	Immediately curious about timing: "Okay, but now it has to do something. So how long does it take?"	Navigation & Usability
10	19:04	Asks whether there's a batch run function: "Would it also have a button so they can all do it?" Notices the 'run group' option	Navigation & Usability
11	19:12	Reasons about the workflow independently: "I can do it per node. So I think they all 3 have to run"	Decision & Reaction
12	19:24	Realizes a connection is missing: "But this isn't connected"	Navigation & Usability
13	19:34	Accepts guidance: "Yes, good point" when Researcher suggests going back to check connections	Navigation & Usability
14	19:44	Has only connected the concept to the first LLM node; does not yet understand that all 5 LLM nodes need the same connection	Navigation & Usability
15	19:46	Tries to connect the explanation text node to an LLM (incorrect): "This one has someone sitting here, or not?"	Navigation & Usability
16	19:55	After Researcher explains, understands: "Okay. Because then he gives a different..." and starts connecting the remaining LLMs	Navigation & Usability
17	20:18	Runs the connected nodes: "Right, then you just have to run it again I think"	Navigation & Usability
18	20:50	Anticipates the next step: "I do assume the next step is this" and checks whether image generators are already connected	Navigation & Usability
19	21:00	Asks about credits: "And what does this mean now?" and "Is that a lot of credits or not really?"	Navigation & Usability
20	21:31	Studies AI output with curiosity: "Does he actually give totally different things all the time? So it's certainly not the same and it's just very varied"	Decision & Reaction
21	21:45	Positive reaction to variation in output: "That's cool"	Emotional Indicators
22	21:46	Navigates across the canvas, checking connections: "Okay, so this then doesn't seem connected to anything, right? Yes, it is connected"	Navigation & Usability
23	21:53	Wants efficiency: "So now do I just have to click on all these all these again"	Decision & Reaction
24	21:58	Suggests a batch approach: "Isn't it also so that you could just do this as a batch?" and "You could also just have pressed 1 button instead of 3"	Decision & Reaction
25	22:10	Asks about execution order: "Does he then go in order if you do that? So he first goes through this result and they don't all go at the same time?"	Navigation & Usability

26	24:10	Arrives at designer upload step: "Look, but here I have to upload something, but I of course have nothing"	Navigation & Usability
27	24:23	Opens Figma to start designing a logo	Role Shift Indicators
28	25:03	Asks for help in Figma: "Okay, well, then you need to help me now. Because why isn't it just black now?"	Navigation & Usability
29	25:42	Downloads and prepares logo for upload: "Okay so, we'll take that away, then I'll download it briefly"	Navigation & Usability
30	26:10	Uploads his own design to the system	Role Shift Indicators
31	26:13	Excitement about uploading own work: "Naa it's amazing"	Emotional Indicators
32	26:16	Questions the colour palette: "Okay and these colors then? Where do those come from?"	Navigation & Usability
33	26:23	Studies the other generated logos that have now loaded: "Now we see the others too. A kind of mustache"	Decision & Reaction
34	26:34	Figures out the next step: "So this node I have to run, I think?"	Navigation & Usability
35	27:00	Tries to determine which node to run without reading the post-it: "This node has to run or this one?"	Navigation & Usability
36	27:13	Realizes something is missing: "Okay I thought so already" after Researcher hints a connection is incomplete	Navigation & Usability
37	27:14	Frustrated by interface behaviour: "And with me everything moves the whole time. This has all shifted too"	Emotional Indicators
38	27:21	Asks for help with connections: "So where exactly do I have to connect this to? Think to this then or so"	Navigation & Usability
39	27:28	Finds the sticker prompt: "Set those sticker cuts" but finds the process random: "It's quite random"	Navigation & Usability
40	28:02	Questions where colours should be connected: "And those colors where do those have to be connected to? Or are you not going to say?"	Navigation & Usability
41	28:13	Researcher points to the yellow post-it: P3 goes to read the instructions properly for the first time at this step	Navigation & Usability
42	28:32	Reads aloud from the post-it: "Connect with the blue image prompts"	Navigation & Usability
43	28:36	Understands the connection structure: "Yes, okay. So for all 5 images, okay"	Navigation & Usability
44	28:40	Playful interpretation: "So this is a trick question. This here, these are 4, so that's then 5. That's the idea, right?"	Decision & Reaction
45	28:51	Connects images to the same blue dot instead of separate dots, causing other connections to disconnect	Navigation & Usability
46	28:58	After Researcher explains the separate dot system, reconnects all 5 correctly: "Okay, so this is this"	Navigation & Usability
47	29:11	Successfully connects all 5 images to the correct dots	Navigation & Usability
48	29:13	Surprised and excited by the interface result: "That, I didn't expect from the interface. That it would be that amazing"	Emotional Indicators
49	29:40	Runs the sticker node with confidence	Navigation & Usability



Screenshot from recording P3

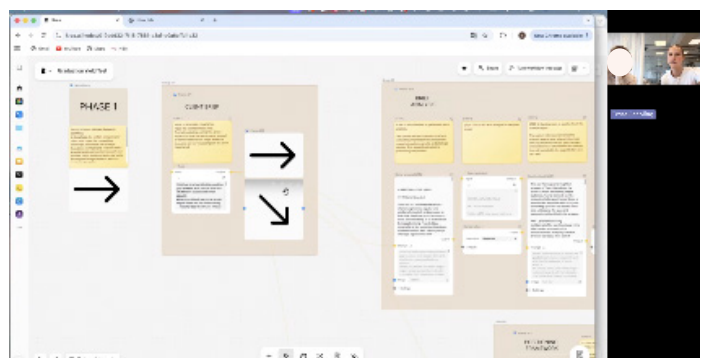
L5. Filled in observation sheet P4

Think-Aloud Observations P4 (by Researcher)

#	Timestamp	Observation	Category (reference card)
1	19:27	Reads the instructions aloud: "Logo creation, now you're just going to work with the system on the right"	Navigation & Usability
2	19:36	Reads the post-its and steps; visibly navigates through the canvas	Navigation & Usability
3	20:02	Reads the text "chosen concept node below" and begins to understand the system structure	Navigation & Usability
4	20:05	Recognises that there are five LLM nodes and ten image generator nodes; counts them	Navigation & Usability
5	20:23	Scrolling issue on the post-it; Researcher confirms this doesn't work well for multiple participants	Navigation & Usability
6	20:30	Reads the explanation on the post-it aloud (wordmark, lettermark, monogram, symbol icon, combination mark)	Navigation & Usability
7	20:50	Asks for confirmation: "So this, I don't have to change?" about the chosen concept node	Navigation & Usability
8	20:58	Reads the concept to contextualise: "Social connector with caregiver tendencies to host, is personality profile"	Navigation & Usability
9	21:13	Reflects on the structure: "I understand that it's really based on the persona, this type of logo"	Decision & Reaction
10	21:26	Distinguishes between the personality profile (the character) and the brand foundation (the feeling)	Decision & Reaction
11	21:49	Asks if she can read everything; wants to understand it all but realises it is a lot of text	Navigation & Usability
12	22:00	Says "I'm curious" and starts navigating around the canvas	Emotional Indicators
13	22:07	Recognises the structure: "So now I connect the output prompt, and I see that it's connected underneath to another generator"	Navigation & Usability
14	22:24	Identifies the models: "This is my agent, and it's connected to the generator, which is Ideogram and ChatGPT"	Navigation & Usability
15	22:34	Names on her own that these are two models for creating images	Decision & Reaction
16	22:42	Understands the task: "I need to connect the output to every prompt"	Navigation & Usability
17	22:49	Independently starts connecting the chosen concept with the LLM nodes; counts along: "Four, I think it was five. Yes. K."	Navigation & Usability
18	23:04	Wants to run the nodes but hesitates: "I don't know if I can run it from there or here because this is singular, I think"	Navigation & Usability
19	23:34	Strategic choice: decides to wait for the first results before running the rest, to check if her connections are correct	Decision & Reaction
20	24:04	Says "It doesn't work, I think" and tries to run it from a different place	Navigation & Usability
21	24:21	Decides to run the entire group after all: "Maybe it was better than just doing one, just doing the entire group"	Navigation & Usability
22	24:29	Sees that all LLMs are being filled; confirms it is working	Navigation & Usability
23	24:38	Reflects that she had not looked at the settings: "I didn't look for the settings here. Maybe I could have changed some things"	Role Shift Indicators
24	24:48	Examines the model and the prompt; is curious about the system prompt	Decision & Reaction
25	24:55	Positive reaction to LLM output: "Oh, nice. I see some good references for design"	Emotional Indicators
26	25:01	Recognises design references in the output: "Pentagram columns"	Decision & Reaction
27	25:09	Says "I have some ideas for the logo" after reading the LLM output	Decision & Reaction

28	25:16	Discovers Ideogram as an unknown model: "I don't know this Ideogram model. That's interesting"	Emotional Indicators
29	25:37	Nodes are loading; waits patiently	Navigation & Usability
30	25:42	Goes back to the post-it to re-read the different logo types (wordmark, monogram, monomark)	Navigation & Usability
31	25:58	Understands that the system generates multiple options: "I think it's just giving me that many options"	Decision & Reaction
32	26:28	Proactively reads the prompt while waiting: "I'm just reading what was the prompt while I'm waiting because I think it's interesting to see"	Role Shift Indicators
33	26:37	Finds the prompt very specific: "It's very specific"	Decision & Reaction
34	27:00	ChatGPT results come in; reacts neutrally: "They don't look... well, it's interesting"	Decision & Reaction
35	27:20	Realises that two models interpret the same prompt differently: "It was the same idea, just in a different way"	Decision & Reaction
36	27:25	Makes a distinction: "One is more creative. The other one is a little bit more close to the prompt, I think"	Decision & Reaction
37	27:36	Gives a clear preference: "I think I like the Ideogram better"	Decision & Reaction
38	27:42	Nuances her opinion: "Even if some are not really yeah, perfect for logo design"	Decision & Reaction
39	27:53	Values the output as direction: "The first ones give out an idea, some direction. It's interesting to see"	Decision & Reaction
40	28:08	Confirms logo exploration is done and moves on to the next section	Navigation & Usability
41	28:24	Reads the next assignment: "Look at the generated logos, what works, what doesn't. Do you want to use elements of these logos?"	Navigation & Usability
42	28:44	Understands the task: create her own logo in Figma, download it, and upload it into the system	Navigation & Usability
43	28:57	Asks for confirmation: "So I don't have to base it to these ones?" about whether she must follow the AI logos	Navigation & Usability
44	29:12	Says "I have something interesting" and picks a ChatGPT logo as inspiration (despite her overall preference for Ideogram)	Role Shift Indicators
45	29:20	Makes a deliberate choice: "I'm choosing the one of ChatGPT just because the font was looking nicer to me. More interesting"	Decision & Reaction
46	29:33	Wants to go back to the prompt: "But I also want to look for what was the prompt because now I don't remember"	Role Shift Indicators
47	29:41	Time pressure awareness: "I don't know how much time I have for doing this"	Emotional Indicators
48	30:01	Reads further but decides: "This is very specific in the execution, so it doesn't matter for me"	Decision & Reaction
49	30:22	Goes to Figma and starts designing: "I'm just getting an idea. I will keep the Y"	Role Shift Indicators
50	30:42	Searches Google Fonts because she does not have her own fonts on this computer	Navigation & Usability
51	30:59	Chooses a font pragmatically: "Let's go for this just for sketching something out"	Decision & Reaction
52	31:10	Frustration: text does not appear visibly on the Figma canvas ("Oh my god. I miss it")	Emotional Indicators
53	31:32	Says: "I like the style of that logo, but I don't have [the font]" about the AI-generated logo	Decision & Reaction
54	32:38	Uses an element from the ChatGPT output: "I see an element which I'm thinking to use from ChatGPT, which is this shape"	Role Shift Indicators
55	33:08	Develops the element further: "Maybe it was more like a star"	Role Shift Indicators
56	33:30	Positive about intermediate result: "That looks really good too"	Emotional Indicators
57	33:44	Says "I think this can work together" and combines elements	Decision & Reaction

58	33:55	Decides to keep it simple due to time: "Let's keep it simple like this just because I don't have time"	Decision & Reaction
59	34:05	Exports the logo from Figma; knows how to download	Navigation & Usability
60	34:32	Mouse is inverted on this computer; names this as the reason for being slow	Navigation & Usability
61	34:56	Confirms step two is done and moves on to the next assignment	Navigation & Usability
62	35:15	Reads the sticker creation assignment: "Your task: create stickers for these brand steps"	Navigation & Usability
63	35:20	Recognises that the sticker section is separate from the logo section: "So this is not related to that"	Navigation & Usability
64	35:45	Reads the pre-written sticker prompt	Navigation & Usability
65	35:57	Decides to use the existing prompt due to time pressure: "I will use this one because I don't have the time now, but it would have been also interesting to write something myself"	Decision & Reaction
66	36:08	Nuances: "But this is nice to have also as a just quick thing, so I would be still using that even if I had the time"	Decision & Reaction
67	36:19	Notes that some things are already connected: "So this is already connected"	Navigation & Usability
68	36:21	Wonders if the system is already using her logo: "Is it also using already my logo from here?"	Navigation & Usability
69	36:26	Tries to make the connection but is confused: "I think I have to put it Input. Here? No. No."	Navigation & Usability
70	36:41	Uncertain about connections: "I think it's already connected, but I don't see how"	Navigation & Usability
71	36:58	Acknowledges she is not following the instructions properly: "I don't think I'm following the right instructions because I am not even reading"	Navigation & Usability
72	37:04	Re-reads the post-it: "Connecting the logo and color palette with the node under step six"	Navigation & Usability
73	37:12	Aha moment: "Ah, okay. Oh, okay. No. Then you want to go..."	Navigation & Usability
74	37:22	Understands it and makes the connections	Navigation & Usability
75	37:51	Laughs at herself: "Maybe I'm becoming a boomer"	Emotional Indicators
76	37:58	Figures it out and confirms: "Yes. Now it's more okay"	Emotional Indicators
77	38:03	Runs the node and is curious: "I'm very curious to see"	Emotional Indicators
78	38:22	Notifies she had not read a node: "Ah, I didn't read this node"	Navigation & Usability
79	38:29	Emphasises the issue was time, not clarity: "I would have read if I was not scared about the time"	Emotional Indicators
80	38:34	Explains that in the agency context they always have to work fast	Emotional Indicators
81	39:19	Waits for results; looks back at previously generated logos	Decision & Reaction
82	39:23	Appreciates an earlier generated logo: "This could have been interesting. It's very elegant"	Decision & Reaction
83	39:25	Reflects on missed opportunities: "This could have been a nice element. Just wanted to work on it a little bit more"	Decision & Reaction
84	39:32	Appreciates the font direction: "This type of direction for the font is nice. It's quite modern"	Decision & Reaction



Screenshot from recording P4

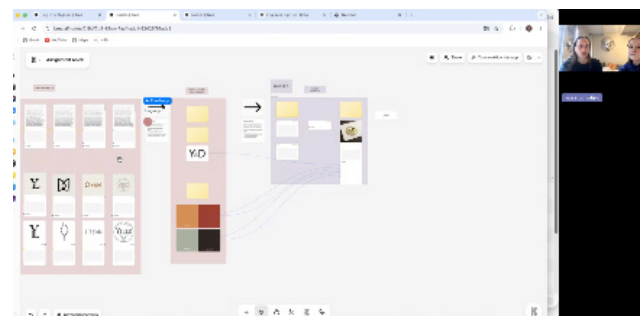
L6. Filled in observation sheet P5

Think-Aloud Observations P5 (by Researcher)

#	Timestamp	Observation	Category (reference card)
1	17:52	Asks "Does it start now already at step 3?" when seeing the assignment canvas	Navigation & Usability
2	18:18	Reads the yellow sticky note first before acting: "Okay, I do the yellow to the yellow and then I do that to logo 5. Okay I'll first read the yellow sticky note"	Navigation & Usability
3	18:51	Understands the task structure: connect the chosen concept with all the separate nodes, not sequentially through each other	Navigation & Usability
4	19:09	Reads the prompts of the LLM output nodes; identifies them as 1, 2, 3 and 5	Navigation & Usability
5	19:17	Says "Then I'll run them all, and then I'm curious" with excitement; runs all nodes at once	Emotional Indicators
6	19:47	Gets a failed error; Krea crashes entirely	Navigation & Usability
7	19:52	Asks Researcher "Have you had this more often?" (troubleshooting orientation)	Navigation & Usability
8	20:08	Reads positively while waiting for Krea to restart: "Oh, this is also fun" about the system itself	Emotional Indicators
9	20:44	After laptop restart: "Okay, then I actually just want to run them all." Tries to run all nodes but gets another error	Navigation & Usability
10	21:24	Self-conscious moment: "Or am I doing something weird?"	Emotional Indicators
11	23:25	Proactively suggests a technical solution: "Maybe stop task manager"	Decision & Reaction
12	23:47	Reads and interprets the error message: "The group is busy now it said"	Navigation & Usability
13	23:53	Makes a joke about the error: "It's busy, doing that well"	Emotional Indicators
14	23:57	Says "I'm scared" (playful nervousness about whether it will work)	Emotional Indicators
15	24:18	Changes strategy after restart: "Okay, I connect the, do them 1 by 1" (decides to run nodes individually instead of all at once)	Decision & Reaction
16	24:30	Shows patience and optimism: "It's a bit slow, but we'll get there"	Emotional Indicators
17	24:35	Relief and curiosity about AI output: "Look this is going well. He sees something different in everything"	Emotional Indicators
18	24:40	Reads positively to generated content: "With those really fun new things"	Decision & Reaction
19	24:46	Navigates independently: "Let me try to run them separately too"	Navigation & Usability
20	25:10	Discovers that nodes are already connected with the image generators below: "They're already connected with the one below, I see"	Navigation & Usability
21	25:18	Anticipates the output: "And then there come the pictures I assume"	Navigation & Usability
22	25:23	Wants to run a whole group at once but hesitates: "Actually you just want to run a whole group, but I don't dare to"	Emotional Indicators
23	25:48	Studies AI logos and categorizes them herself: "All fun logos come out here. So you have above more basic and below more crazy if I remember correctly"	Decision & Reaction
24	26:14	Proactively moves to the next section while waiting for nodes: "Let's go through. Going to phase 5"	Navigation & Usability
25	26:20	Understands that phase 5 requires her own input: "Yes, now I have to upload myself"	Navigation & Usability

26	26:30	Asks for confirmation about tools: "So now I really have to go to Figma or?"	Navigation & Usability
27	26:39	Goes to look at AI-generated logos for inspiration first before designing: "I'll look at the inspiration. And I have the brief still fresh in my memory"	Role Shift Indicators
28	27:40	Expresses design intuition: "I feel something with this and then briefly look at the inspiration"	Role Shift Indicators
29	27:47	Makes deliberate design decisions based on AI output: "The colors do appeal to me and with that drawn you see in many. Then I'll go for a mix of bold and a bit more elegant and playful for the letters"	Decision & Reaction
30	28:07	Enthusiasm about a specific AI-generated element: "Yes, this I find totally fun"	Emotional Indicators
31	28:21	Wants to examine more variations: "And then I want to look at those other 2 letters"	Decision & Reaction
32	28:51	Returns to the system for inspiration a second time while designing in Figma: "Briefly back for inspiration anyway"	Role Shift Indicators
33	29:00	Gives critical opinion on AI logos: "But they're all kind of classic letters"	Decision & Reaction
34	29:08	References the project brief to inform her design choices: "I've of course read the project brief, that would also want"	Role Shift Indicators
35	29:20	Accepts her design with mild self-critique: "This will just be it. Quite a bit of what it was first, but okay"	Decision & Reaction
36	29:25	Changes the font herself in Figma (plays with typography)	Role Shift Indicators
37	30:20	Expresses satisfaction with final logo: "This I feel" with confidence	Emotional Indicators
38	30:21	Understands the upload process: "So now I have to take a screenshot or so"	Navigation & Usability
39	30:39	Uploads her own logo to the system	Navigation & Usability
40	30:55	Questions whether colors still need to be connected: "Do I still have to connect those?"	Navigation & Usability
41	31:01	Self-corrects: "No I think not. No I think I do have to do this again" (works it out independently)	Navigation & Usability
42	31:04	Searches around on the canvas, re-reads post-its, checks which steps she has completed	Navigation & Usability
43	33:00	Writes her own sticker prompt from scratch instead of using the pre-written prompt on the post-it (curator/creative lead role)	Role Shift Indicators
44	33:52	Writes a very detailed sticker prompt with specific descriptions	Role Shift Indicators
45	33:55	Navigates to step 6: "We're going this with step 6"	Navigation & Usability
46	34:05	Frustrated that colors have to be connected separately: "All colors separately that's not really what I want, I feel them all want to see all a whole color"	Decision & Reaction
47	34:22	Finds it annoying that individual color connections are required (interface friction)	Emotional Indicators
48	34:29	Notifies some connections are automatic: "So, this is automatic"	Navigation & Usability
49	35:04	Momentary confusion about step order: "Okay I find it confusing now what L... oh here is step 3 and 4 and I already had those"	Navigation & Usability
50	35:24	Verbalizes confusion: "Confusing what I just had to do"	Emotional Indicators
51	35:28	Decides to just run it with excitement: "I'm just going to run it!"	Emotional Indicators
52	35:30	Connects final nodes confidently: "This goes there, this goes there. Process. That's it done"	Navigation & Usability
53	35:38	Expresses excitement about seeing the result: "Exciting!"	Emotional Indicators
54	36:01	Checks if the node is done: "I think it's done. No, oh" (impatient)	Emotional Indicators

55	36:28	Reacts to sticker output with dismay: "Oh oh. Very ugly"	Decision & Reaction
56	36:37	Strong emotional reaction: "This shocked me" (about the AI-generated sticker from her own prompt)	Emotional Indicators



Screenshot from recording P5

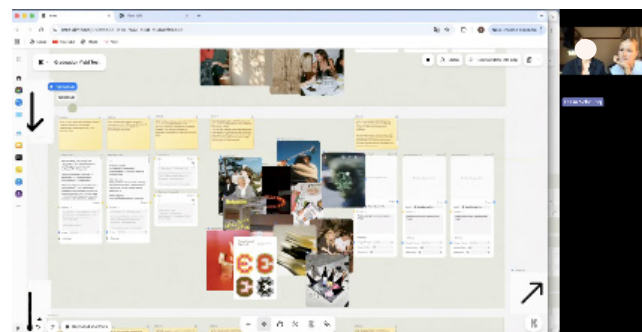
L7. Filled in observation sheet P6

Think-Aloud Observations P6 (by Researcher)

#	Timestamp	Observation	Category (reference card)
1	19:14	Listens to the explanation about the two parts of the assignment (phase 4 and phase 5)	Navigation & Usability
2	19:48	Immediately asks "How do I zoom in?" when opening the system	Navigation & Usability
3	19:50	Researcher explains navigation; P6 learns to scroll and zoom in Krea	Navigation & Usability
4	20:03	Starts on the left at "start" and reads the white explanation blocks and yellow post-its	Navigation & Usability
5	20:16	Asks for confirmation: "So I also make one for Yield, right?"	Navigation & Usability
6	20:40	Wants to try something but doesn't know how; asks if she can copy and paste	Navigation & Usability
7	20:46	Tries to move a node: "This doesn't move. Should I just copy this and paste it here?"	Navigation & Usability
8	20:56	Says "I feel like such a noob" about not knowing the tool	Emotional Indicators
9	20:58	Researcher explains connecting; P6 learns how to connect nodes by holding the yellow dot	Navigation & Usability
10	21:14	Tries to connect, leans forward, clicks around randomly	Navigation & Usability
11	21:14	Asks "So I do the same prompt 5 times?" and does not yet understand that each LLM node has a different system prompt	Navigation & Usability
12	21:22	Says "Ah lol, okay" when she hears there are different system prompts; starts reading the yellow post-it	Navigation & Usability
13	21:38	Asks for confirmation: "I keep them the same first, right?"	Navigation & Usability
14	22:06	Notes that the yellow on pink contrast makes it difficult to read (Krea contrast issue)	Emotional Indicators / Navigation & Usability
15	22:14	Understands how to connect the 5 LLM nodes with the concept	Navigation & Usability
16	22:23	Runs the nodes; understands how to do that	Navigation & Usability
17	22:46	Says "Okay, now there are 5 ideas" with relief when the LLM nodes are done	Emotional Indicators
18	22:49	Understands that she needs to connect each LLM output to the image generators	Navigation & Usability
19	23:16	Discovers that some nodes were already connected: "Oh, this is actually already done. Huh?" (surprise)	Emotional Indicators
20	23:25	Laughs at herself when she sees the text was already there: "My God, that text was already there"	Emotional Indicators
21	23:33	Becomes curious and starts examining the system prompts and models herself: "I can change all sorts of things here, right?"	Decision & Reaction
22	23:46	Considers whether she would go to Pinterest for a character reference, but decides not to	Decision & Reaction
23	23:51	Wants to change the model to something different; notices there are two different models	Role Shift Indicators
24	23:55	Has knowledge about new models: "Is ChatGPT 2 that new image model?"	Decision & Reaction
25	23:58	Excitement: "I've never tried that one at all"	Emotional Indicators
26	24:01	Finds the first AI-generated logos boring: "I think it's boring"	Decision & Reaction
27	24:43	Studies AI output closely; finds a candelabra shape very funny	Decision & Reaction
28	24:48	Describes what she sees: "A kind of candelabra with a fork"	Decision & Reaction
29	24:51	Gives her own opinion: "Although I don't think a fork really fits wine, but okay"	Decision & Reaction
30	24:57	Notes that ChatGPT 2 is very slow	Navigation & Usability

63	36:25	Adds her own style words to the prompt: "Stickers are shiny and bedazzled"	Role Shift Indicators
64	36:31	Understands that the node is already connected	Navigation & Usability
65	36:45	Knows where to press to run the node	Navigation & Usability
66	36:50	Looks around the board; has not yet read the post-it at the connection step (skips a step)	Navigation & Usability
67	37:04	Discovers she can also just click to connect: "Oh, you could also just click here"	Navigation & Usability
68	37:10	P6 uploads her logo to the system	Navigation & Usability
69	37:14	Discovers that the heart was not included in the download from Figma (it was not in the frame)	Navigation & Usability
70	37:25	Sees that the node is not working yet because the logo is not connected yet	Navigation & Usability
71	37:38	Makes a joke: "Test subject is smarter than expected"	Emotional Indicators
72	37:47	Looks for her own solutions: "Can I also select the entire colour palette at once?"	Role Shift Indicators
73	38:09	Is curious about system behaviour: "Maybe it will make it pastel, maybe it will completely ignore me"	Decision & Reaction
74	38:16	Shows excitement: "I am curious"	Emotional Indicators
75	38:37	Asks if she also has to do it 5 times (confused about the repetition structure)	Navigation & Usability
76	38:55	Worries that prompt elements might work against each other	Decision & Reaction
77	39:01	Reacts extremely enthusiastically to the sticker output: "OOOOHHHH! This is really, yes this is really exactly what I meant"	Emotional Indicators
78	39:05	Names specifically what works: "There are glitters on it and it's watercolour. And pastel."	Decision & Reaction
79	39:14	Says she would actually use these stickers	Decision & Reaction
80	39:22	Finds the sticker section really enjoyable	Emotional Indicators
81	39:26	Says she is completely inspired to start making stickers herself	Role Shift Indicators
82	39:35	Reflects: she always makes posters and drawings but had not thought of stickers as a medium	Role Shift Indicators

31	25:04	Proactively moves on to the next section while waiting; reads the next assignment	Navigation & Usability
32	25:34	Understands the next step: "Okay, so I'll make my own cool thing later"	Navigation & Usability
33	25:41	Changes an image generator node from ChatGPT to Nano Banana herself (curator role)	Role Shift Indicators
34	26:24	Explores the possibilities: "Can I change the settings here?"	Role Shift Indicators
35	26:28	Gives opinion on AI output: "Yes, I think this is quite funny"	Decision & Reaction
36	26:30	Says she finds it nice inspiration	Emotional Indicators
37	26:42	Re-reads the text node with the concept: "It's about social connector with caregiver tendencies"	Navigation & Usability
38	27:00	Gives opinion: "That one is a bit weird"	Decision & Reaction
39	27:15	Asks: "Okay so I have to make something myself in Figma?"	Navigation & Usability
40	27:23	Asks: "And I can use whatever I want?"	Navigation & Usability
41	27:23	Starts making something herself in Figma (start of own design work)	Role Shift Indicators
42	28:31	Makes a heart as her first shape; says "Boom, a heart" with pride and excitement	Role Shift Indicators / Emotional Indicators
43	29:41	Makes jokes while designing: "There's nothing I'd rather do on my Monday evening"	Emotional Indicators
44	29:41	Audible thinking, sighs of joy and pride while working in Figma	Emotional Indicators
45	30:40	Says "Okay, cool. Getting somewhere" with relief about her design	Emotional Indicators
46	31:01	Is critical of her own work: "It's not really going to get better than this"	Decision & Reaction
47	31:22	Goes back to the inspiration board in the system on her own initiative for new ideas	Role Shift Indicators
48	31:27	Discovers that new image generator nodes have loaded: "Hey!! This is really funny"	Emotional Indicators
49	31:29	Becomes inspired by a table image from the system: "I actually think this table is really cool too"	Role Shift Indicators
50	31:32	Decides to use the table as inspiration for her logo: "Okay wait, I'm going to use this table. Copy."	Role Shift Indicators
51	31:41	Notes that the font came from the AI image	Decision & Reaction
52	32:05	Says "Ooh I love this, I love the way this is looking. Okay, logo is done" with pride	Emotional Indicators
53	32:20	Confirms that the table was a fun idea that came from the AI system	Role Shift Indicators
54	32:44	Had not expected that AI would come up with a table; was "happily impressed" by something unexpected	Emotional Indicators
55	32:50	Says the rest was all very similar, but was happy with the unexpected element	Decision & Reaction
56	33:14	Understands the next steps and moves on to the sticker section	Navigation & Usability
57	33:31	Asks for confirmation: "We keep the colours?"	Navigation & Usability
58	34:06	Says "I think it's quite fun to do something like this" about making stickers	Emotional Indicators
59	34:20	Adjusts the sticker prompt herself: removes words and adds her own words	Role Shift Indicators
60	35:29	Uses a prompt she often uses for work: demonstrates her own expertise	Role Shift Indicators
61	35:42	Decides to remove certain elements from the prompt (curator role): "Okay, this one can go"	Role Shift Indicators
62	35:55	Reads through the prompt in depth and also adjusts the colours	Role Shift Indicators



Screenshot from recording P6

Appendix M: Study 2 facilitator guide including interview

Facilitator Guide

Evaluation Session — Node-Based Brand Identity System

Ground Rules for Every Session

- Neutral tone throughout. You are showing, not selling. Never say “this is the cool part” or “wait until you see this.”
- Show first, then pause. Let them react before you ask anything. Silence is fine.
- Open questions only. “How did that feel?” not “Did you feel in control?” “What would you do with this?” not “Would you change this?”
- Do not explain why outputs are good. If they ask how something works mechanically, explain. But never justify the quality of an output.
- Do not help during hands-on tasks unless the participant is fully stuck on a technical issue (e.g. Krea crashes). If they struggle with a design decision, let them struggle. That’s data.
- Same words every time. Use the scripted lines below. You can be natural in delivery, but don’t improvise new framings between participants.
- Take notes on your observation sheet during the session. Mark moments of confusion, hesitation, excitement, or workaround.

Think-Aloud Protocol

During the hands-on tasks (onboarding, Phase 4, Phase 5), participants are asked to think aloud — to narrate what they’re doing, thinking, and feeling as they work. This is your primary source of qualitative data alongside observation.

How think-aloud works

- You introduce the think-aloud instruction once, before the onboarding exercise. You remind them briefly before Phase 4 and Phase 5.
- If they go silent for more than 15–20 seconds during a hands-on task, gently prompt: “What are you thinking right now?” or “What’s going through your mind?” Nothing more specific than that.
- Never ask leading prompts like “Are you confused?” or “Do you like that?” Just nudge them to keep talking.
- Some participants will naturally talk a lot. Others will need prompting. Both are fine — just keep the prompts neutral.
- During the walkthrough phases (1–3, and the rest of 4 and 6), you don’t need think-aloud — you’re using the scripted ASK questions instead. Think-aloud is specifically for when they are doing something themselves.

What to observe and write down

Use the observation sheet to capture the following behaviours in real time. Use shorthand, timestamps, and direct quotes where possible.

Navigation behaviour:

- Do they understand which nodes to connect? Do they try wrong connections?
- Do they look lost in the canvas or navigate confidently?
- Do they read node labels or just click randomly?
- Do they ask you for help? How often and about what?

Decision behaviour:

- When the AI output appears — do they study it closely or glance and move on?
- Do they reference the AI output while designing their own logo, or ignore it?
- Do they express opinions about the output? What words do they use? (e.g. “this is generic” vs. “oh that’s interesting”)
- How long do they deliberate before making a choice?

Emotional indicators:

- Relief — “oh good, I can just do this myself” (switching to Figma)
- Frustration — sighing, clicking repeatedly, saying “I don’t know what to do”
- Surprise — “wait, it did that?” or leaning forward suddenly
- Pride — smiling at their own logo, wanting to show it
- Loss of control — “I didn’t ask for that” or “where did my logo go?”
- Engagement — losing track of time, asking if they can keep going

Role shift indicators (the most important ones):

- Moments where they position themselves as the creative lead: “I would do it differently” / “This needs my input”
- Moments where they defer to the system: “I’ll just go with what it gave me” / “The system probably knows better”
- Moments where they act as curator: “This one, not that one” / “I’d keep the colour but change the shape”
- Moments where they act as architect: “I see why this node feeds into that one” / “I’d restructure this flow”

Pre-Session Setup

Complete 15 minutes before the participant arrives.

- Krea.ai open with the Yield brief system fully pre-run through all 6 phases
- Phase 4 logo exploration nodes reset / ready to run live
- Phase 5 sticker/asset nodes reset / ready to run live
- Figma open with a blank canvas
- Adobe Illustrator open with a blank canvas
- Screen recording software running and tested
- Audio recording device on and tested
- Printed materials ready: consent form, pre-session survey, observation sheet, interview question sheet, anonymous Likert survey
- Yield client brief printed (one copy for the participant)
- Timer / clock visible to you (not the participant)

Session Flow

0:00 – 0:05

Consent Form & Other Information

SAY: “Hi, thanks for being here. Before we start, I’ll explain what we’re going to do today. I’ve built a system that takes a client brief and guides a designer through the full branding process using a

network of AI-powered nodes. Today I'd like you to look at it with me, try a few things yourself, and then tell me what you think. The session will take about an hour and twenty minutes."

SAY: *"There are no right or wrong answers. I'm not testing you — I'm testing the system. If something is confusing, that's useful information. If something is clear, that's useful too. Just react honestly."*

SAY: *"I'll be recording the screen and audio so I can go back and analyse the session later. Everything will be anonymised in my thesis. Let me give you the consent form to read and sign, and then a short survey about your background."*

DO: Hand them the consent form. Let them read it fully. Answer any questions. After signing, hand them the pre-session survey. Let them fill it in. Collect both.

0:05 – 0:10

Read the Assignment

SAY: *"Now I'm going to give you a client brief. This is the brief I used to run through the system. Take a moment to read it."*

DO: Hand them the printed Yield brief. Give them 2 minutes to read it. Don't rush them.

SAY: *"Okay. So Yield is a wine brand that wants to remove the knowledge barrier from wine without lowering the quality. Keep that in mind as we go through the system."*

0:10 – 0:15

Welcome + Node Introduction

SAY: *"Before I show you the full system, I want you to get a feel for how it works. This is Krea.ai. The system is built with nodes — each node does something specific, and you connect them together. Let me show you a few basic connections."*

SAY: *"One more thing — during the parts where you're doing something yourself, I'd like you to think out loud. Just say whatever comes to mind while you're working. What you're looking at, what you're trying to do, what confuses you, what makes sense. There's no wrong thing to say. It just helps me understand how the system feels from your side."*

SAY: *"Let's try it now with a simple exercise."*

DO: Show them a simple node setup. Let them connect two nodes and press run. Let them see an output generate. This is purely mechanical — they're learning the interface, not the branding system yet.

SAY: *"That's the basic idea. You connect inputs to nodes, the nodes process them, and you get an output. Some nodes use AI to generate text or images. Some are just for organising. Throughout the system, there are moments where you as the designer make decisions — what to keep, what to change, what to upload yourself."*

0:15 – 0:35

Walkthrough Video

SAY: *“Now I’m going to show you a video walkthrough of the full system. It covers all six phases, from brief intake to final delivery. Just watch and get a sense of how the system works. You don’t need to memorise anything. After the video, you’ll get a chance to try part of it yourself.”*

DO: Play the walkthrough video. Let them watch the full video without interruption. Narrate over the video or add commentary. Let them absorb it at their own pace.

⚠ *Pause the video to explain things if the participant asks.*

SAY: *“That’s the full system from start to finish. Do you have any questions about what you just saw before we move on?”*

DO: Answer any clarifying questions briefly. Keep it factual. Do not sell or justify the system. If they ask about quality of outputs, redirect: “You’ll get to form your own opinion in a moment.”

0:35 – 0:55

Hands-On Assignment

This is the first hands-on moment. The participant runs the logo exploration nodes themselves and then creates their own logo.

SAY: *“Now it’s your turn. Phase 4 is the exploration phase. This is where you explore different visual directions — logo, typography, colour, photography, packaging. I’m going to let you do the logo exploration yourself.”*

SAY: *“Like before, please think out loud while you work — just tell me what you’re doing and what’s going through your mind.”*

SAY: *“Think about which nodes to connect and run. You’ll see what the system generates. Then you can use that as inspiration, or ignore it completely, and make your own version. Figma and Illustrator are both open if you want to sketch something. It doesn’t have to be polished at all — even a rough shape or wordmark is fine. In a real project you’d spend hours on this. Today it’s just about getting the feeling of designing something yourself and putting it back into the system.”*

DO: Let them connect and run the nodes themselves. Wait for the output to generate (~5 minutes). While waiting, don’t fill the silence with commentary. Let them observe the process.

DO: Once the logo explorations are generated, let them look at the results.

ASK: *“What do you see? Is there anything here you’d want to work with?”*

SAY: *“Now if you want, you can open Figma or Illustrator and make something yourself. Even a rough sketch or a text-based logo. Whatever feels right. Then you’ll upload it back into the system.”*

DO: Let them work. Don’t hover. Don’t comment on what they’re making. If they ask “is this okay?” say “there’s no right answer — whatever you’d do if this were your project.” Step back physically if possible. Take notes on what they do: Do they reference the AI output? Do they start from scratch? How long do they spend?

DO: When they’re done, help them upload their logo back into the system if they need technical help.

This is the second hands-on moment. The participant uses their own logo to generate brand assets.

SAY: *"Now we're in Phase 5. This is where you create brand assets — stickers, product imagery, social media formats. I've already loaded the colour palette and other elements. You're going to upload the logo you just made and run the asset generation nodes to see what comes out."*

SAY: *"Again, think out loud as you go."*

DO: Help them upload their logo into Phase 5 if needed. Pre-load the colour palette and other elements so they're ready. Let them choose which asset type to generate: stickers, product photography, or social media. Let them run it.

DO: Wait for the output to generate. Let them react.

ASK: *"What do you think?"*

ASK: *"How does it feel to see your logo turned into these assets by the system?"*

0:55 – 1:15

Semi-Structured Interview

SAY: *"Thank you. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience. There are no right answers — I'm interested in your honest perspective."*

Usability questions:

ASK: *"Was the structure of the system — the phases, the nodes, the flow — clear to you?"*

→ If yes:

ASK: *"What made it clear? Was there a specific moment where the structure clicked?"*

→ If no:

ASK: *"Where did it break down? Was there a phase where you lost track of where you were in the process?"*

→ If vague:

ASK: *"Can you walk me through what you saw when you first looked at the system? What was your first impression of the layout?"*

ASK: *"Was there a moment where you didn't understand what was happening or what you were supposed to do?"*

→ If they name a moment:

ASK: *"What would have helped you at that point? A label, an instruction, a different layout?"*

→ If they say no:

ASK: *"Was there anything you had to figure out on your own, even if you did manage to?"*

ASK: *"Did the information carry forward between phases in a way that made sense?"*

→ Follow-up:

ASK: "Could you see the connection between what came out of Phase 1 and what happened in Phase 2? Or did it feel like starting over each time?"

ASK: "Was there a moment where you thought — wait, where did that come from?"

Role shift questions:

ASK: "Walk me through a moment where you felt most like a designer. And a moment where you felt least like one."

→ On the "most" moment:

ASK: "What was it about that moment that made you feel like you were in your element?"

→ On the "least" moment:

ASK: "What would have needed to be different for you to feel more like a designer in that moment?"

→ If they struggle to answer:

ASK: "Think about the moment you were making the logo in Figma versus the moment you were watching the system generate personas. Did those feel different?"

ASK: "When you were making the logo and then saw it turned into assets — how did those two moments compare?"

→ Follow-up:

ASK: "Did seeing your logo on a sticker feel like the system was helping you, or like it was taking your work and doing its own thing with it?"

ASK: "Would you want more control over how those assets looked, or was it useful to just see what the system produced?"

ASK: "Where in the process or in what phases did your judgment as a designer matter? Where did it not?"

→ Follow-up:

ASK: "Was there a phase where you felt the system could have done it without you? Which one?"

ASK: "Was there a phase where you felt the system really needed your input to get it right?"

ASK: "How does working with this system compare to how you normally approach a branding project?"

→ If they work at an agency:

ASK: "If you think about your last real branding project — which parts of your process does this system cover? Which parts are missing?"

→ If they're a student:

ASK: "If you were doing a branding project for a course, would you use something like this? What would it change about how you work?"

→ General follow-up:

ASK: "Does this system feel like a different way of working, or like a faster version of the same way?"

Forward-looking questions:

ASK: "If you were to use this system on a real project, what would need to change?"

→ Follow-up:

ASK: *"Is that a deal-breaker, or something you could work around?"*

ASK: *"What's the first thing you'd want to be different?"*

ASK: *"Would this system change the kind of work you do, or just the speed at which you do it?"*

→ Follow-up:

ASK: *"Do you think a junior designer and a senior designer would use this system differently? How?"*

ASK: *"Does a system like this make the designer more important or less important?"*

ASK: *"Is there anything else you want to say about the experience that I haven't asked about?"*

1:15 – 1:20

Likert Survey

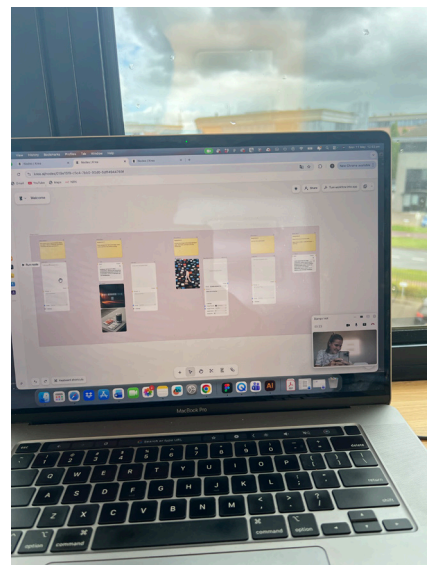
SAY: *"Last thing. I have a short survey with a few statements. I'd like you to fill it in on your own — I'll step out of the room so you can answer honestly. Don't put your name on it. When you're done, just leave it on the table face down."*

DO: Hand them the printed anonymous Likert survey. Leave the room. Wait outside until they open the door or signal they're done.

DO: When they're done, come back in. Thank them. Collect the survey without looking at it in front of them.

SAY: *"That's it. Thank you so much for your time — this was really helpful."*

DO: Stop screen and audio recording. Label the files immediately with the participant number (P1, P2, etc.). Store the consent form separately from the survey and observation notes.



Setup of the test

Appendix N: Post-session Likert-scale survey

N1. Blank Likert-scale survey given to participants

Post-Session Survey

For each statement, tick the box that best reflects your experience. Add a comment if you want to explain your rating.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

#	Category	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Comment (optional)
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
WORKFLOW & STRUCTURE								
1	Workflow	The outputs from each phase carried forward into the next in a way that made sense.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2	Workflow	I could understand how the output of each phase connected to the previous phase.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
DESIGNER CONTROL								
3	Control	I could always decide which brand elements (logo, colour palette, typography) became the final brand identity direction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4	Control	In the phases where I worked hands-on, I could select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they were used in the brand system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5	Control	It was valuable that I could design my own brand elements (e.g. a logo) and upload it back into the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
AI BEHAVIOUR								
6	AI	The system offered directions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7	AI	The outputs felt varied but still coherent as one brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
USABILITY								
8	Usability	I could use this system without needing programming or technical AI knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9	Usability	I could see this system being reused across different projects or by different team members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
10	Usability	I believe this system could work within realistic project timelines.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
SYSTEM BOUNDARIES								
11	Boundaries	The system can extend my exploration rather than making creative choices for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
12	Quality	The outputs felt like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
SYSTEM EXPERIENCE								
13	Experience	The system felt like a co-creation process — we were building something together.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
14	Experience	The system felt like a creative sparring partner that thinks along and pushes ideas further.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
15	Experience	The system seemed to understand basic design principles without me having to specify them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Overall, how would you summarise this system in one or two sentences?

Thank you for completing this survey.

N2. Filled in Likert-scale survey by P1

Post-Session Survey
Anonymous — do not write your name on this form

For each statement, tick the box that best reflects your experience. Add a comment if you want to explain your rating.
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

#	Category	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Comment (optional)
WORKFLOW & STRUCTURE								
1	Workflow	The outputs from each phase carried forward into the next in a way that made sense.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
2	Workflow	I could understand how the output of each phase connected to the previous phase.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
DESIGNER CONTROL								
3	Control	I could always decide which brand elements (logo, colour palette, typography) became the final brand identity direction.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☒	
4	Control	In the phases where I worked hands-on, I could select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they were used in the brand system.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
5	Control	It was valuable that I could design my own brand elements (e.g. a logo) and upload it back into the system.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
AI BEHAVIOUR								
6	AI	The system offered directions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
7	AI	The outputs felt varied but still coherent as one brand.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
USABILITY								
8	Usability	I could use this system without needing programming or technical AI knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
9	Usability	I could see this system being reused across different projects or by different team members.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
10	Usability	I believe this system could work within realistic project timelines.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
SYSTEM BOUNDARIES								
11	Boundaries	The system can extend my exploration rather than making creative choices for me.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
12	Quality	The outputs felt like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
SYSTEM EXPERIENCE								
13	Experience	The system felt like a co-creation process — we were building something together.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
14	Experience	The system felt like a creative sparring partner that thinks along and pushes ideas further.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
15	Experience	The system seemed to understand basic design principles without me having to specify them.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	

Overall, how would you summarise this system in one or two sentences?

It makes the unapproachable approachable!
Now everyone can get started with node based systems, and generate in a visual matter. Scalable and adaptable.

Thank you for completing this survey.

N3. Filled in Likert-scale survey by P2

post-Session Survey
Anonymous — do not write your name on this form

For each statement, tick the box that best reflects your experience. Add a comment if you want to explain your rating.
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

#	Category	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Comment (optional)
WORKFLOW & STRUCTURE								
1	Workflow	The outputs from each phase carried forward into the next in a way that made sense.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
2	Workflow	I could understand how the output of each phase connected to the previous phase.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
DESIGNER CONTROL								
3	Control	I could always decide which brand elements (logo, colour palette, typography) became the final brand identity direction.	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐	
4	Control	In the phases where I worked hands-on, I could select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they were used in the brand system.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
5	Control	It was valuable that I could design my own brand elements (e.g. a logo) and upload it back into the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
AI BEHAVIOUR								
6	AI	The system offered directions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
7	AI	The outputs felt varied but still coherent as one brand.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
USABILITY								
8	Usability	I could use this system without needing programming or technical AI knowledge.	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	
9	Usability	I could see this system being reused across different projects or by different team members.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
10	Usability	I believe this system could work within realistic project timelines.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
SYSTEM BOUNDARIES								
11	Boundaries	The system can extend my exploration rather than making creative choices for me.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
12	Quality	The outputs felt like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
SYSTEM EXPERIENCE								
13	Experience	The system felt like a co-creation process — we were building something together.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
14	Experience	The system felt like a creative sparring partner that thinks along and pushes ideas further.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
15	Experience	The system seemed to understand basic design principles without me having to specify them.	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	

CS Scanned with CamScanner

Overall, how would you summarise this system in one or two sentences?

Great structure to help elevate strategy.

Thank you for completing this survey.

N4. Filled in Likert-scale survey by P3

Post-Session Survey
Anonymous — do not write your name on this form

For each statement, tick the box that best reflects your experience. Add a comment if you want to explain your rating.
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

#	Category	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Comment (optional)
WORKFLOW & STRUCTURE								
1	Workflow	The outputs from each phase carried forward into the next in a way that made sense.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
2	Workflow	I could understand how the output of each phase connected to the previous phase.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
DESIGNER CONTROL								
3	Control	I could always decide which brand elements (logo, colour palette, typography) became the final brand identity direction.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
4	Control	In the phases where I worked hands-on, I could select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they were used in the brand system.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
5	Control	It was valuable that I could design my own brand elements (e.g. a logo) and upload it back into the system.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
AI BEHAVIOUR								
6	AI	The system offered directions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
7	AI	The outputs felt varied but still coherent as one brand.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
USABILITY								
8	Usability	I could use this system without needing programming or technical AI knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
9	Usability	I could see this system being reused across different projects or by different team members.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
10	Usability	I believe this system could work within realistic project timelines.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☒	
SYSTEM BOUNDARIES								
11	Boundaries	The system can extend my exploration rather than making creative choices for me.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
12	Quality	The outputs felt like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
SYSTEM EXPERIENCE								
13	Experience	The system felt like a co-creation process — we were building something together.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
14	Experience	The system felt like a creative sparring partner that thinks along and pushes ideas further.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
15	Experience	The system seemed to understand basic design principles without me having to specify them.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	

overall, how would you summarise this system in one or two sentences?

great start in automatically parts of the identity process.

Thank you for completing this survey.

N5. Filled in Likert-scale survey by P4

Post-Session Survey

Anonymous — do not write your name on this form

For each statement, tick the box that best reflects your experience. Add a comment if you want to explain your rating.
 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

#	Category	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Comment (optional)
WORKFLOW & STRUCTURE								
1	Workflow	The outputs from each phase carried forward into the next in a way that made sense.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
2	Workflow	I could understand how the output of each phase connected to the previous phase.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
DESIGNER CONTROL								
3	Control	I could always decide which brand elements (logo, colour palette, typography) became the final brand identity direction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
4	Control	In the phases where I worked hands-on, I could select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they were used in the brand system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
5	Control	It was valuable that I could design my own brand elements (e.g. a logo) and upload it back into the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
AI BEHAVIOUR								
6	AI	The system offered directions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7	AI	The outputs felt varied but still coherent as one brand.	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	
USABILITY								
8	Usability	I could use this system without needing programming or technical AI knowledge.	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	
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11	Boundaries	The system can extend my exploration rather than making creative choices for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
12	Quality	The outputs felt like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
SYSTEM EXPERIENCE								
13	Experience	The system felt like a co-creation process — we were building something together.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
14	Experience	The system felt like a creative sparring partner that thinks along and pushes ideas further.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
15	Experience	The system seemed to understand basic design principles without me having to specify them.	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	

Overall, how would you summarise this system in one or two sentences?

interesting fast exploration

Thank you for completing this survey.

N6. Filled in Likert-scale survey by P5

Post-Session Survey
Anonymous — do not write your name on this form

For each statement, tick the box that best reflects your experience. Add a comment if you want to explain your rating
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

#	Category	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Comment (optional)
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
WORKFLOW & STRUCTURE								
1	Workflow	The outputs from each phase carried forward into the next in a way that made sense.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
2	Workflow	I could understand how the output of each phase connected to the previous phase.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
DESIGNER CONTROL								
3	Control	I could always decide which brand elements (logo, colour palette, typography) became the final brand identity direction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
4	Control	In the phases where I worked hands-on, I could select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they were used in the brand system.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
5	Control	It was valuable that I could design my own brand elements (e.g. a logo) and upload it back into the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
AI BEHAVIOUR								
6	AI	The system offered directions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
7	AI	The outputs felt varied but still coherent as one brand.	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	
USABILITY								
8	Usability	I could use this system without needing programming or technical AI knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
9	Usability	I could see this system being reused across different projects or by different team members.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
10	Usability	I believe this system could work within realistic project timelines.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
SYSTEM BOUNDARIES								
11	Boundaries	The system can extend my exploration rather than making creative choices for me.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
12	Quality	The outputs felt like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
SYSTEM EXPERIENCE								
13	Experience	The system felt like a co-creation process — we were building something together.	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	
14	Experience	The system felt like a creative sparring partner that thinks along and pushes ideas further.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
15	Experience	The system seemed to understand basic design principles without me having to specify them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	

Overall, how would you summarise this system in one or two sentences?

CREATIVE PARTNER THAT HELP TO EXPLORE
DIFFERENT BRAND DIRECTIONS. IT UNDERSTANDS AND
GUIDES THROUGH THE BRANDING PROCESS.

Thank you for completing this survey.

N7. Filled in Likert-scale survey by P6

post-Session Survey
Anonymous — do not write your name on this form

For each statement, tick the box that best reflects your experience. Add a comment if you want to explain your rating.
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

#	Category	Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Comment (optional)
WORKFLOW & STRUCTURE								
1	Workflow	The outputs from each phase carried forward into the next in a way that made sense.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
2	Workflow	I could understand how the output of each phase connected to the previous phase.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
DESIGNER CONTROL								
3	Control	I could always decide which brand elements (logo, colour palette, typography) became the final brand identity direction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
4	Control	In the phases where I worked hands-on, I could select, test, and reject AI-generated outputs before they were used in the brand system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
5	Control	It was valuable that I could design my own brand elements (e.g. a logo) and upload it back into the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
AI BEHAVIOUR								
6	AI	The system offered directions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
7	AI	The outputs felt varied but still coherent as one brand.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
USABILITY								
8	Usability	I could use this system without needing programming or technical AI knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
9	Usability	I could see this system being reused across different projects or by different team members.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
10	Usability	I believe this system could work within realistic project timelines.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	
SYSTEM BOUNDARIES								
11	Boundaries	The system can extend my exploration rather than making creative choices for me.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
12	Quality	The outputs felt like usable starting points for real brand deliverables.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
SYSTEM EXPERIENCE								
13	Experience	The system felt like a co-creation process — we were building something together.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
14	Experience	The system felt like a creative sparring partner that thinks along and pushes ideas further.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	
15	Experience	The system seemed to understand basic design principles without me having to specify them.	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	

Overall, how would you summarise this system in one or two sentences?

easy to come to basic brand design ideas,
however not a very user-friendly or intuitive
UI/UX. would use the process again though.

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix O: Study 2 reflexive thematic analysis

This appendix documents the reflexive thematic analysis process for Study 2, following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-phase approach. It includes three components. First, the initial coding table, listing all 47 codes generated during familiarisation and initial coding, with references to the participants whose data informed each code. Second, the clustering process, showing how initial codes were grouped into candidate themes using a Miro board. Third, phase summaries documenting each stage of the analysis from familiarisation through to final theme definition, forming the audit trail for the study.

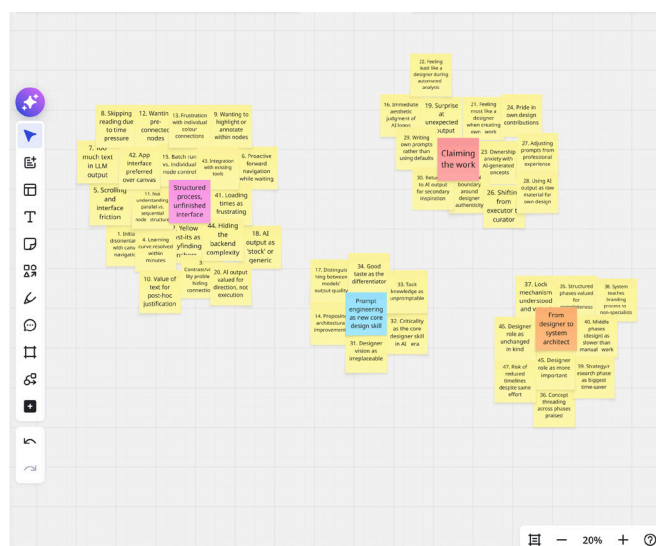
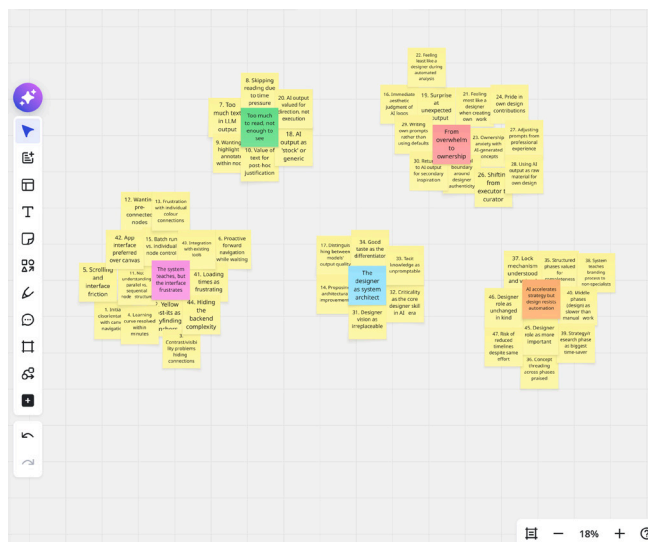
O1. Forty-seven codes were generated across the six evaluation sessions during familiarisation and line-by-line coding. The Study 2 dataset combined four sources for each participant: the think-aloud transcript, the facilitator's observation sheet, the semi-structured interview, and the Likert-scale survey. Each code captures a distinct idea expressed by one or more participants, labelled with the participant references (P1 through P6) that informed it. The codes are grouped under 11 preliminary categories that emerged during coding; these categories were later refined into the four final themes through the clustering process described in O2.

Study 2: Reflexive Thematic Analysis – 47 initial codes table

#	Code	Present in
Navigation and Orientation		
1	Initial disorientation with canvas navigation	P1, P2, P5, P6
2	Yellow post-its as wayfinding anchors	All
3	Contrast/visibility problems hiding connections	P1, P3, P5, P6
4	Learning curve resolved within minutes	P4, P5, P6
5	Scrolling and interface friction	P2, P4, P6
6	Proactive forward navigation while waiting	P1, P4, P5, P6
Information Overload and Text Density		
7	Too much text in LLM output	P1, P2, P4, P5
8	Skipping reading due to time pressure	P3, P4
9	Wanting to highlight or annotate within nodes	P5
10	Value of text for post-hoc justification	P4
Connection Logic and Node Architecture		
11	Not understanding parallel vs. sequential node structure	P2, P6
12	Wanting pre-connected nodes	P1, P2
13	Frustration with individual colour connections	P3, P5
14	Proposing architectural improvements	P1
15	Batch run vs. individual node control	P2
AI Output Evaluation		
16	Immediate aesthetic judgment of AI logos	All
17	Distinguishing between models' output quality	P1, P3, P4
18	AI output as 'stock' or generic	P2, P4
19	Surprise at unexpected AI output	P6
20	AI output valued for direction, not execution	P3, P4
Designer Identity and Ownership		
21	Feeling most like a designer when creating own work	All
22	Feeling least like a designer during automated analysis	P5, P6
23	Ownership anxiety with AI-generated concepts	P3, P4
24	Pride in own design contributions	P1, P6
25	Ethical boundary around designer authenticity	P3
Role Shifts and Curatorial Behaviour		
26	Shifting from executor to curator	P1, P4, P6
27	Adjusting prompts from professional experience	P3, P6
28	Using AI output as raw material for own design	P4, P6
29	Writing own prompts rather than using defaults	P5, P6
30	Returning to AI output for secondary inspiration	P4, P5, P6

Vision and Creative Judgment		
31	Designer vision as irreplaceable	P2, P6
32	Criticality as the core designer skill in AI era	P5, P6
33	Tacit knowledge as unpromptable	P4
34	Good taste as the differentiator	P3
System as Process Framework		
35	Structured phases valued for completeness	P1, P4, P6
36	Concept threading across phases praised	P3
37	Lock mechanism understood and valued	P1, P6
38	System teaches branding process to non-specialists	P1, P6
Speed and Efficiency		
39	Strategy/research phase as biggest time-saver	P3, P4, P6
40	Middle phases (design) as slower than manual work	P3, P4
41	Loading times as frustrating	P2, P4, P5
Interface Aspirations		
42	App interface preferred over canvas	P1, P3, P4, P6
43	Integration with existing tools	P5
44	Hiding the backend complexity	P4
Designer Role in the AI Era		
45	Designer role as more important	P1, P3, P4, P6
46	Designer role as unchanged in kind	P2
47	Risk of reduced timelines despite same effort	P4

O2. The 47 initial codes were transferred to a Miro board, where they were spatially arranged and iteratively grouped based on shared patterns and relationships. Codes were moved between clusters until coherent groupings emerged, at which point candidate themes were defined. This process corresponds to Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) third and fourth phases: generating and reviewing themes.



O3. In phase 5, each of the four candidate themes was given a final name and a written definition specifying what the theme captures, what story it tells, what it does not cover (and which theme does), and which codes belong to it. Defining boundaries between themes ensured that each one is internally coherent and externally distinct. The full theme definitions are presented below.

Study 2: Phase 5 RTA: Defining and naming themes

Theme 1: Structured Process, Unfinished Interface This theme captures the tension between a branding workflow that designers found professionally sound and an interface that consistently created friction. It covers workflow structure, phase logic, lock mechanisms, navigation problems, contrast and visibility issues, information density, text overload, and participants' proposals for alternative interface layers. The theme tells the story of a system whose process design is validated but whose interaction design is not yet ready for professional adoption. It does not capture how designers responded creatively to AI outputs or how they positioned their professional identity; those patterns belong to Themes 2 and 3. Relates primarily to SQ3. Codes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 41, 42, 43, 44 (18 codes).

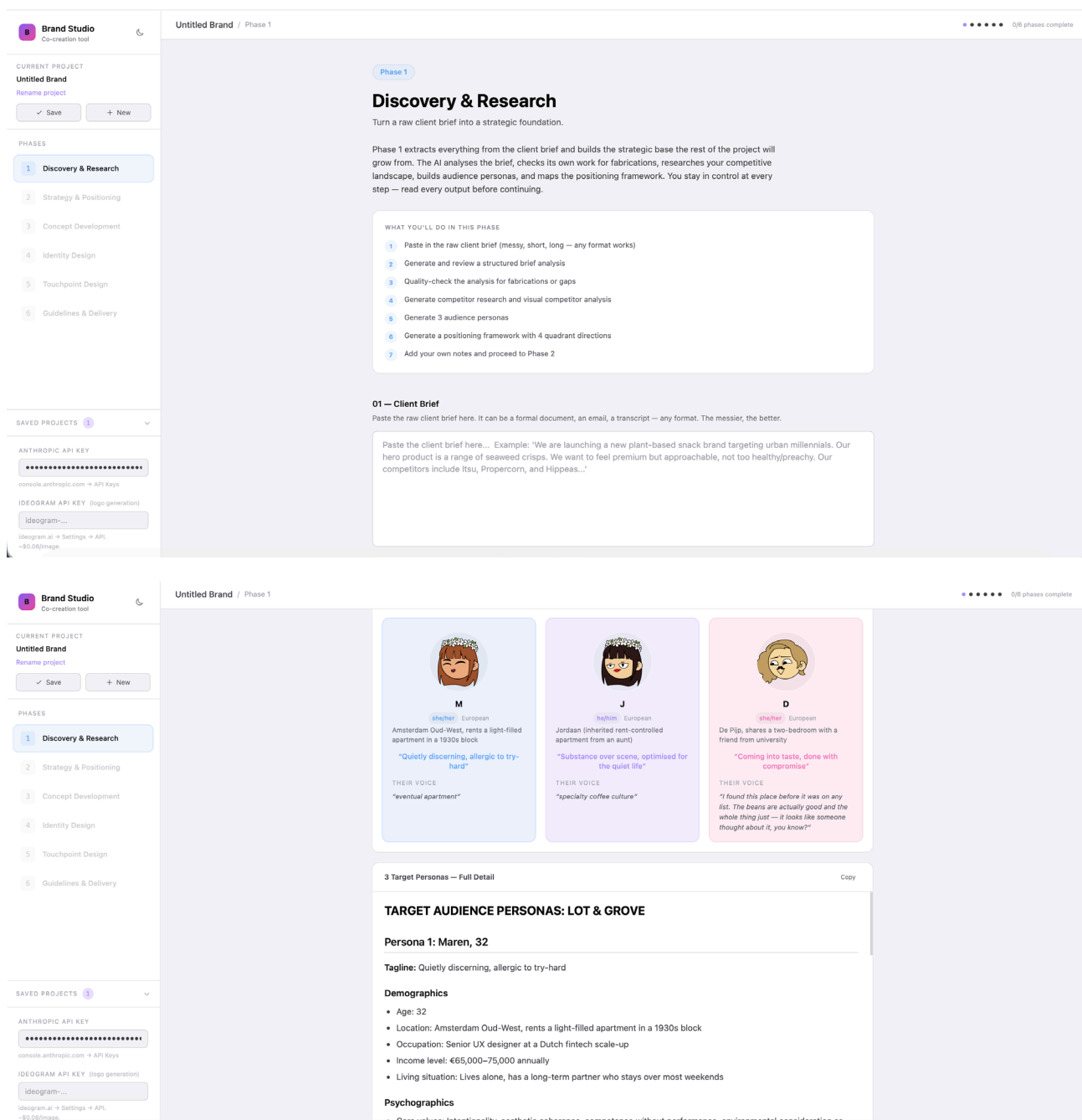
Theme 2: Claiming the Work: How Designers Reclaim Ownership from AI This theme captures the universal pattern of designers actively reclaiming creative ownership from AI outputs through three strategies: selective curation of fragments, prompt editing as creative direction, and original creation as an identity anchor. It also covers the inverse pattern, where AI output diverges from the designer's vision and produces weak ownership. The theme tells the story of what happens at the boundary between AI generation and human authorship. It does not address the broader philosophical question of why designers feel ownership matters; that belongs to Theme 3. Relates to SQ3 and SQ4. Codes: 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 (12 codes).

Theme 3: Vision Is Hard to Prompt: Prompt Engineering as Future Core Design Skill This theme captures what designers consider irreducibly human about their professional role when working alongside AI. It covers creative vision as irreplaceable, tacit knowledge as resistant to prompting, taste and criticality as differentiators, the philosophical framing of design value, and participants' assessment of whether the system makes designers more or less important. The theme tells the story of a professional identity that is not threatened by AI but repositioned around judgment, articulation, and quality evaluation. It does not address where specifically in the workflow AI adds or loses value; that belongs to Theme 4. Relates primarily to SQ4. Codes: 31, 32, 33, 34, 45, 46 (6 codes).

Theme 4: From Designer to System Architect: Designing How AI Contributes This theme captures how the designer's relationship to AI shifts across the branding workflow and what that shift reveals about the changing nature of the designer's role. It covers the value of AI across strategy, identity, and asset creation phases; the shifting relationship from analytical to curatorial to directive; prompt engineering as a design competence; concept threading as an architectural decision; and the system architect role. The theme tells the story of a designer who no longer only produces brand assets but increasingly designs, structures, and curates the systems through which those assets come into being. It does not address the emotional experience of working with the interface or the moment-to-moment reclamation of ownership; those belong to Themes 1 and 2. Relates primarily to SQ4. Codes: 14, 17, 18, 20, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 47 (11 codes).

Appendix P: Developed brand identity system through Claude Code

Towards the end of the project, I experimented with rebuilding the node-based brand identity system in a different interface. I fed my development log into Claude Code and used it to translate the system into a working app. This sat outside the scope of the research and was not part of the formal studies, but it was a useful way to test how far the framework could travel beyond Krea.ai and to see what the system might look like as a standalone tool. In this interface, the node-based logic is the backend and the interface is the frontend. You go through all the steps similarly as you would in the node-based system. This appendix shows screenshots of this interface, as this is a first prototype and not a finished product.



Brand Studio
Co-creation tool

CURRENT PROJECT
Untitled Brand
Rename project

✓ Save + New

PHASES

Discovery & Research
Complete

2 Strategy & Positioning

3 Concept Development

4 Identity Design

5 Touchpoint Design

6 Guidelines & Delivery

SAVED PROJECTS 1

ANTHROPIC API KEY
console.anthropic.com → API Keys

IDEOGRAM API KEY (logo generation)
Ideogram → Ideogram.ai → Settings → API, -\$0.08/image

Untitled Brand / Phase 2

1/6 phases complete

01 — Generate Brand Scenarios

This generates all 4 scenarios at once and then extracts them into individual streams. It takes 2-3 minutes — the output is substantial.

Generate 4 Brand Scenarios

Four Brand Scenarios

Scenario 1 Q1 — Top Left

Generate Summary Card Select →

Lot & Grove is the friend who pours you perfect coffee without mentioning where it's from—unless you ask. It's hospitality as quiet confidence: the best things in life don't announce themselves. The brand feels like a Sunday morning that somehow became a Wednesday ritual.

Brand Foundations

Vision: To prove that specialty coffee can feel like coming home—that excellence and warmth are the same thing, not a trade-off.

Purpose: To create space where quality is felt, not performed. Where the care is in the cup, not the caption.

Positioning Statement: For urban professionals who value quality but reject pretension, Lot & Grove is the specialty coffee brand that welcomes before it impresses. Unlike third-wave roasters that treat coffee as curriculum, Lot & Grove trusts that good taste speaks for itself.

Personality:
Archetype: The Host with Explorer tendencies

Lot & Grove enters the room already smiling—not because it wants something from you, but because it's genuinely glad you came. It knows exactly where the coffee is from and how to prepare it, but won't volun...

Scenario 2 Q2 — Top Right

Generate Summary Card Select →

Scenario 2: The Daily Edit
Quadrant: Q2 — Explicit + Warm

The Brand in One Breath
Lot & Grove is the morning ritual elevated to editorial—coffee as the first considered choice of the day. It's the brand for people who read captions, appreciate a well-written tasting note, and want their everyday habits to reflect their intelligence without requiring effort.

Brand Foundations

Vision: To make specialty coffee culture genuinely welcoming—where knowledge is shared freely and enthusiasm is contagious, never gatekept.

Purpose: To prove that caring about quality and being approachable aren't contradictions. To educate through delight, never

02 — Scenario Moodboards

Build a visual reference for each scenario before choosing. Search Pinterest, Are.na, or Google Images using the terms below each board. Upload images that feel right for that strategic world — not just pretty pictures, but images that capture the emotional territory of that direction.

Scenario 1 Q1 — Top Left 1 image + Add Images

Search on Pinterest · Are.na · Google Images — look for imagery, interiors, typography, or products that feel like this scenario's world. Generate the summary card above for specific visual terms.



Scenario 2 Q2 — Top Right 1 image + Add Images

Search on Pinterest · Are.na · Google Images — look for imagery, interiors, typography, or products that feel like this scenario's world. Generate the summary card above for specific visual terms.



Scenario 3 Q3 — Bottom Left + Add Images

Search on Pinterest · Are.na · Google Images — look for imagery, interiors, typography, or products that feel like this scenario's world. Generate the summary card above for specific visual terms.

Click or drag images here
PNG · JPG · WEBP

Scenario 4 Q4 — Bottom Right 1 image + Add Images

Search on Pinterest · Are.na · Google Images — look for imagery, interiors, typography, or products that feel like this scenario's world. Generate the summary card above for specific visual terms.



All 4 Scenarios — Full Document Copy

Morning light — The optimism and clarity of early sun. Nothing harsh, nothing dim.

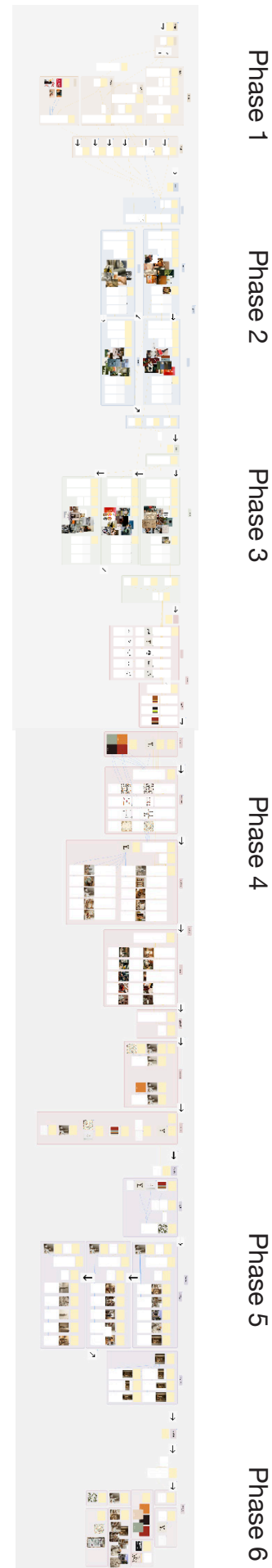
Brand Expression

Big Brand Idea: Coffee is hospitality.

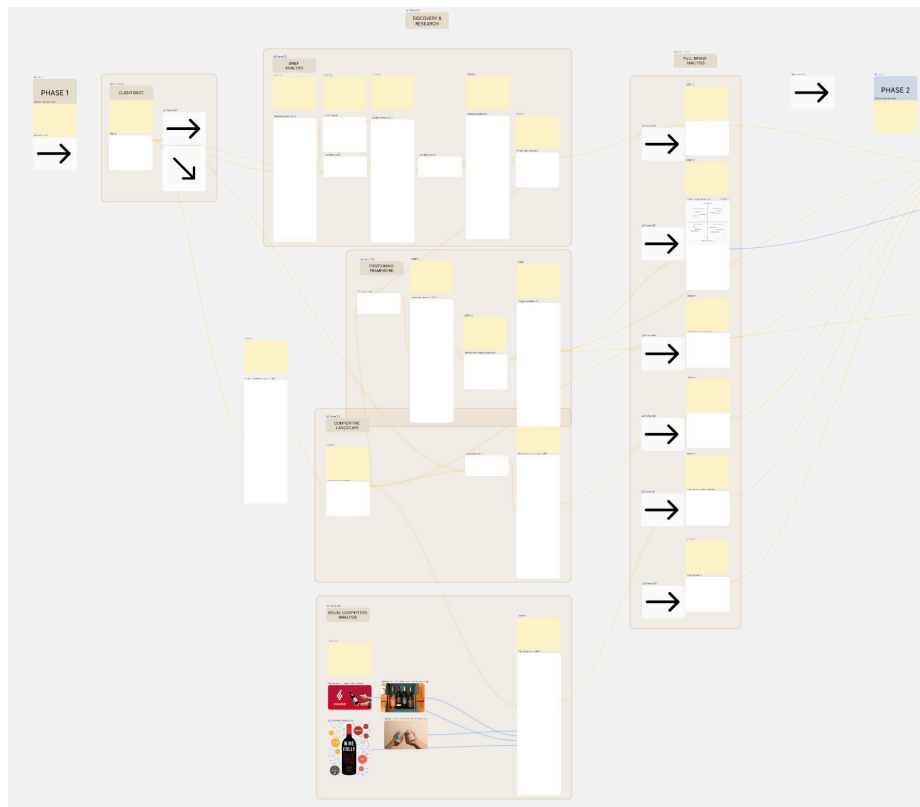
Lot & Grove reframes specialty coffee from connoisseurship to generosity. The question isn't "how much do you know about this?" but "how does this make you feel?" Every touchpoint extends the same invitation: you're welcome here, the

Appendix Q: Full node-based brand identity system in Krea.ai (shown in landscape)

On the right is the full node-based brand identity workflow made in Krea.ai. On the next pages, a more zoomed in screenshot of every phase is shown.



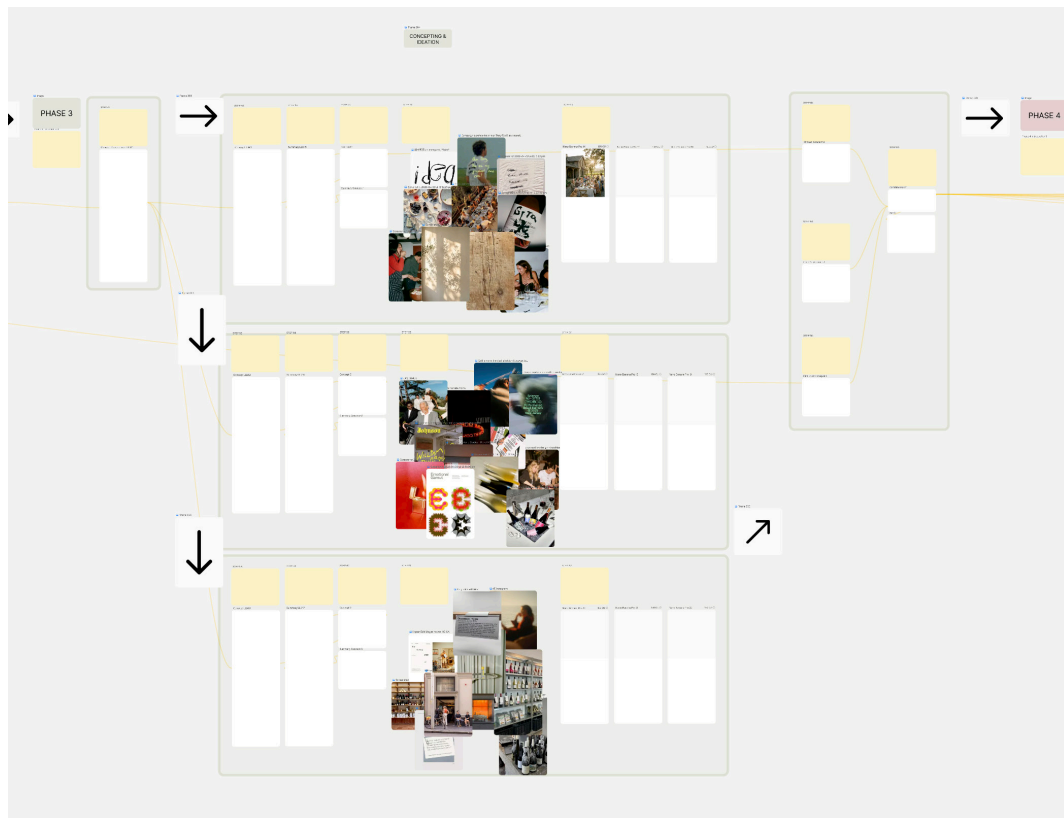
Q1. Phase 1: Research & discovery



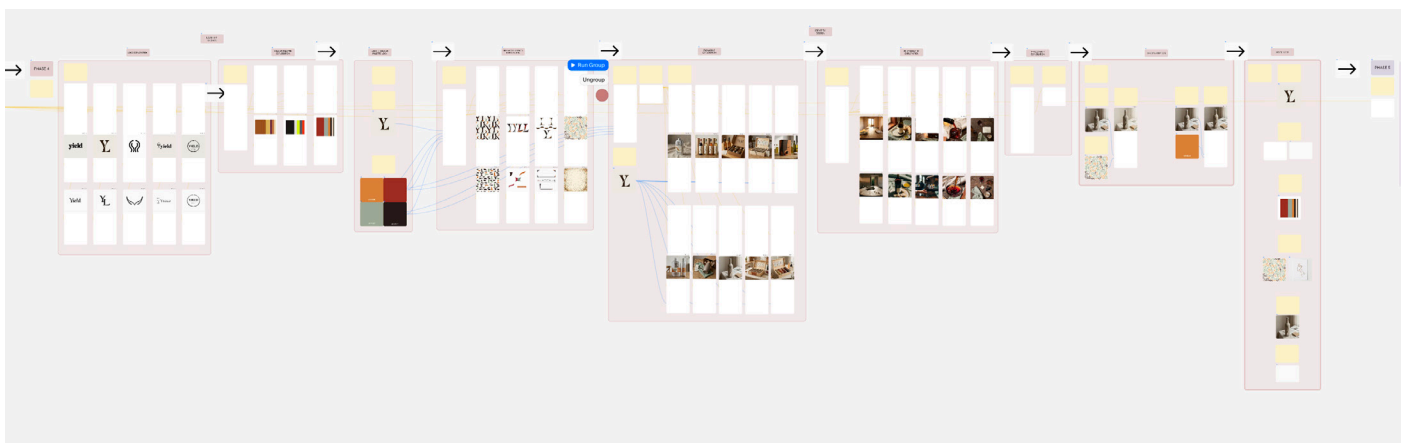
Q2. Phase 2: Strategy & positioning



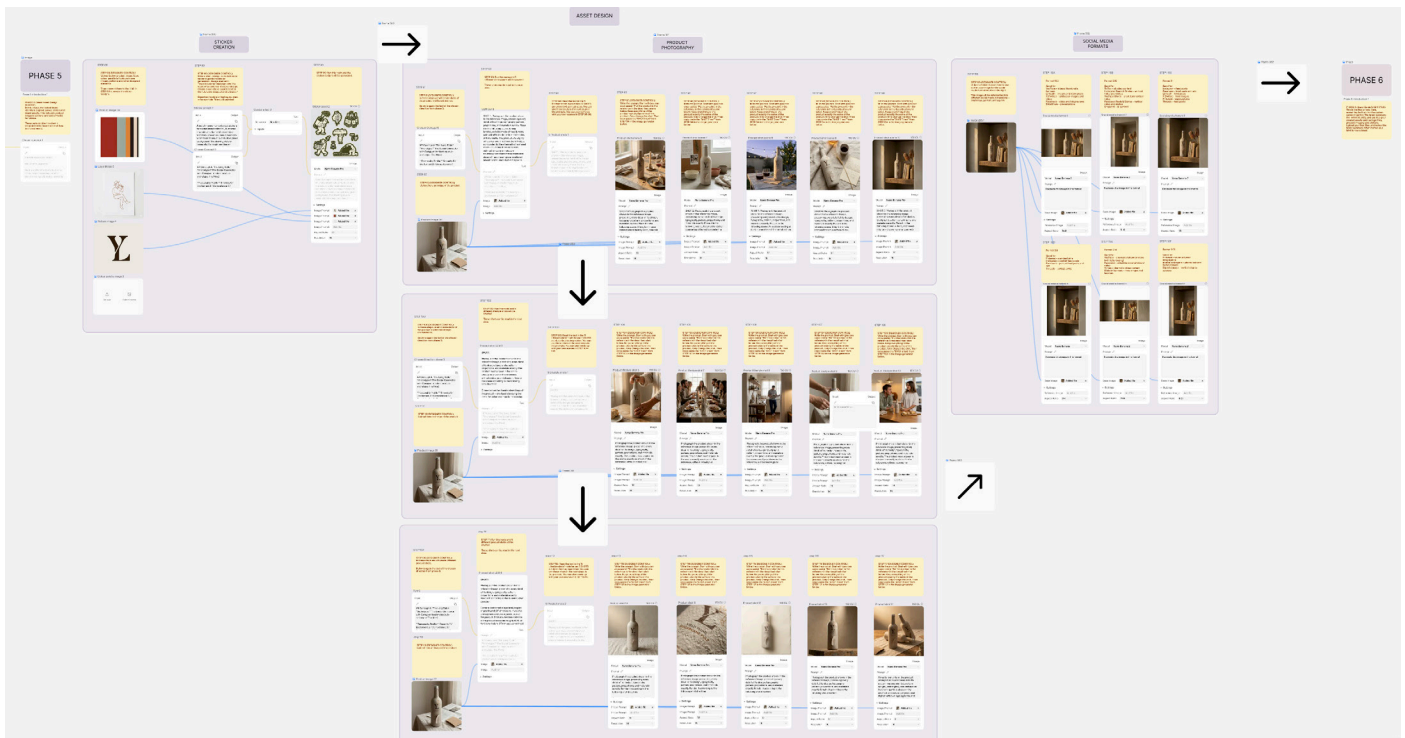
Q3. Phase 3: Concept development



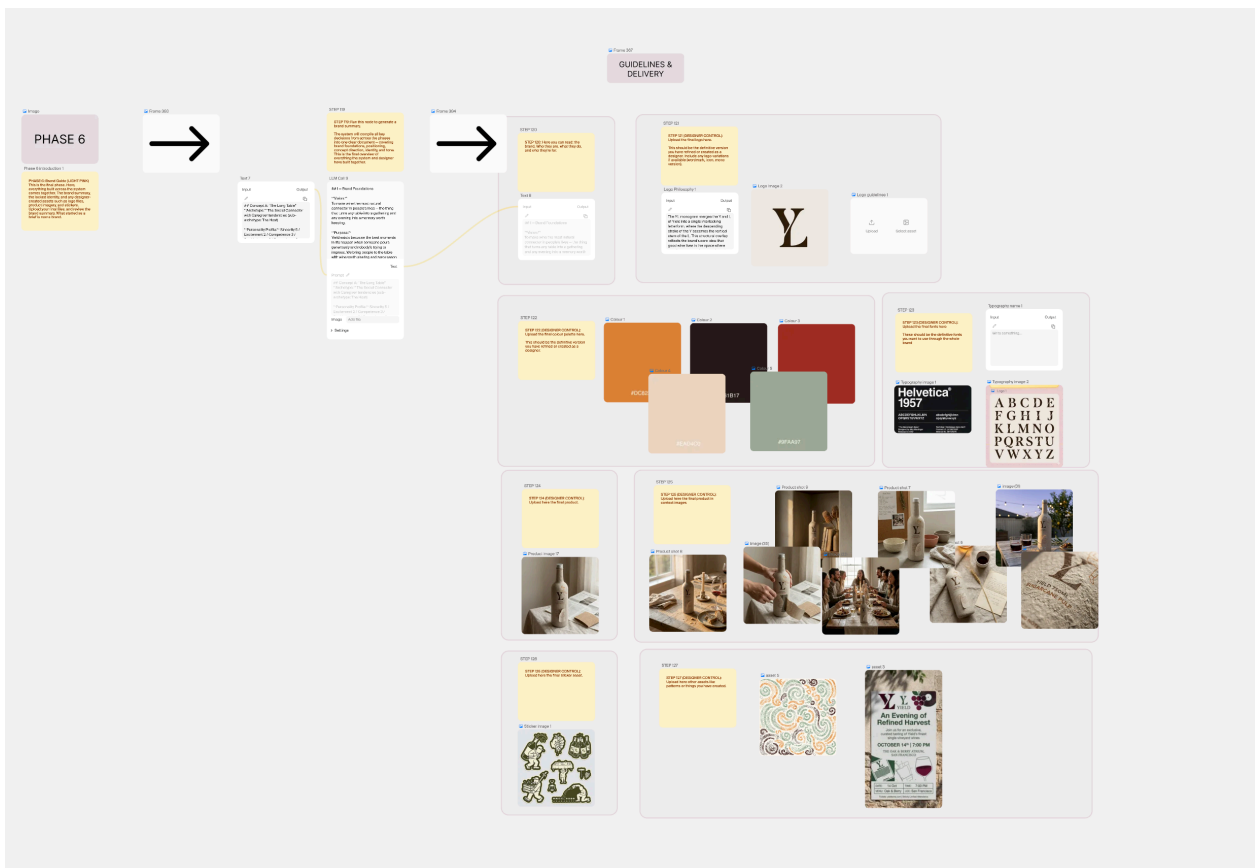
Q4. Phase 4: Identity design



Q5. Phase 5: Touchpoint design



Q6. Phase 6: Guidelines & delivery



Appendix R: Full development log & user guide

Appendix R contains the complete usage guide and development log for the node-based brand identity development system. It is reproduced here as a standalone document so that the system can be understood, rebuilt, and run independently of the main thesis. Where the main body discusses the system at the level of argument and evaluation, this appendix records it at the level of build detail: the five node types, the platform and model choices, a workflow diagram and node inventory for each of the six phases, the full system-prompt library, and a step-by-step operating guide for taking a project from client brief to delivered identity.

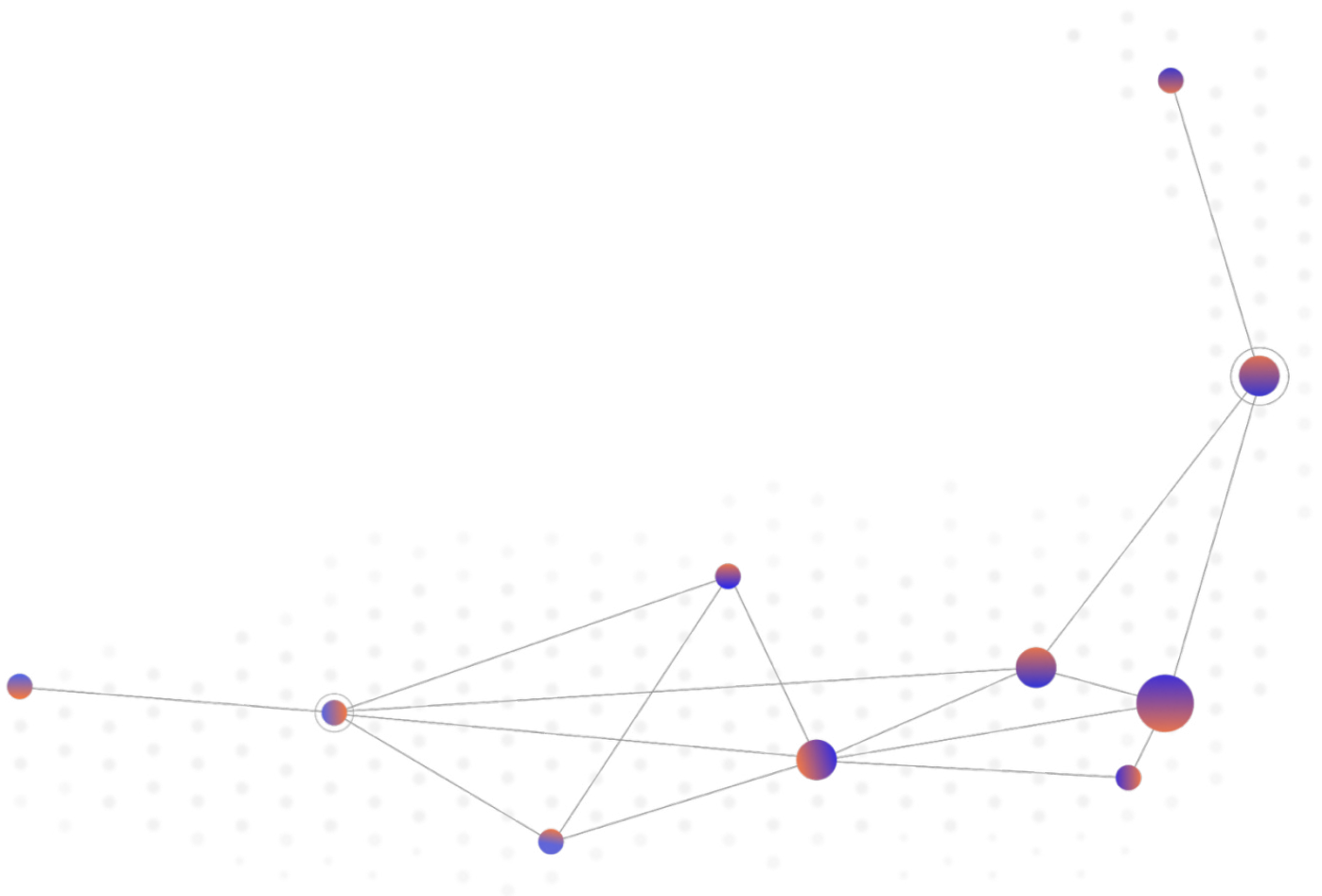
The second half is the development record. As a Research through Design project, the system is the research instrument, and the decisions made while building it are findings in their own right. A chronological log traces how the system was built from late February to early May 2026, and a phase-by-phase record gives the reasoning behind each phase and links each one back to the theoretical framework. The document is organised so that the finished system comes first and the development history comes last, which means it can be read either as a manual for running the system or as an account of how it came to be.

The pages that follow are inserted here as PDFs for reference; the full user guide and development log PDF is also available in the online appendix.

Node-Based Brand Identity Development System

A usage guide for building and running the system

Tessa Scholing · MSc Strategic Product Design, TU Delft · Graduation Research 2026



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1. Introduction

This is a node-based brand identity development system. It takes a raw client brief and works it through a connected set of nodes into a full brand identity, from discovery to delivery: strategy, positioning, concept directions, identity elements, packaging, campaign imagery, and a guideline structure. The AI generates options at each step and the designer reads, judges, and decides what moves forward. The designer is the system architect: the value lies in how the nodes are connected, what is passed between them, which model runs each task, and where the human sits in the flow.

This document is a usage guide. It is written so that a designer can rebuild the system and run it on a new project in the future. It is organised so that the finished system comes first and the development history comes last.

How to read this document:

- Chapter 1 introduces the system, the five node types, the platform, and the models used.
- Chapter 2 shows how to build the system in Krea, phase by phase, with a workflow diagram, node inventory, and system prompts for each phase.
- Chapter 3 is the step-by-step process for running the system on a project.
- Chapter 4 covers what to take into account while using it: reading outputs, handling AI slop, changing models, and platform limits.
- Chapter 5 is the chronological development log.
- Chapter 6 is the phase-by-phase development record, with the reasoning and the theory behind each design decision.

1.1 Nodes

1.1.1 What is a node

A node is a single building block on the canvas and looks like one of the nodes in Figure 1. It takes an input, does one job with it, and passes an output to whatever is connected next. You wire nodes together by drawing connections from one node's output to the next node's input, and the chain of connections is what turns a client brief at one end into a finished identity at the other.

Each node does only one thing. One node analyses the brief, another writes the strategy, another generates an image, another splits a list into separate items. Keeping each node to a single job is what makes the system readable and repairable: when an output looks wrong, you can trace it back to the one node that produced it and fix it there, without disturbing the rest of the flow.

Nodes carry their output forward in a set format, and that format matters. Where one node hands structured text to the next, the receiving node can pick out exactly the piece it needs, for example the primary colour or the brand name.

The designer is not a node, but sits between them. At each phase boundary there is a node where you read what the system produced and decide what moves on. So the flow is not fully automatic: the AI generates through the nodes, and you stay in control at the points between them.

1.1.2 The five node types

The whole system is built from five types of nodes. In the workflow diagrams in Chapter 2, each node type is shown in its own colour, so the colour tells you immediately what a node does. The legend below maps colour to type.

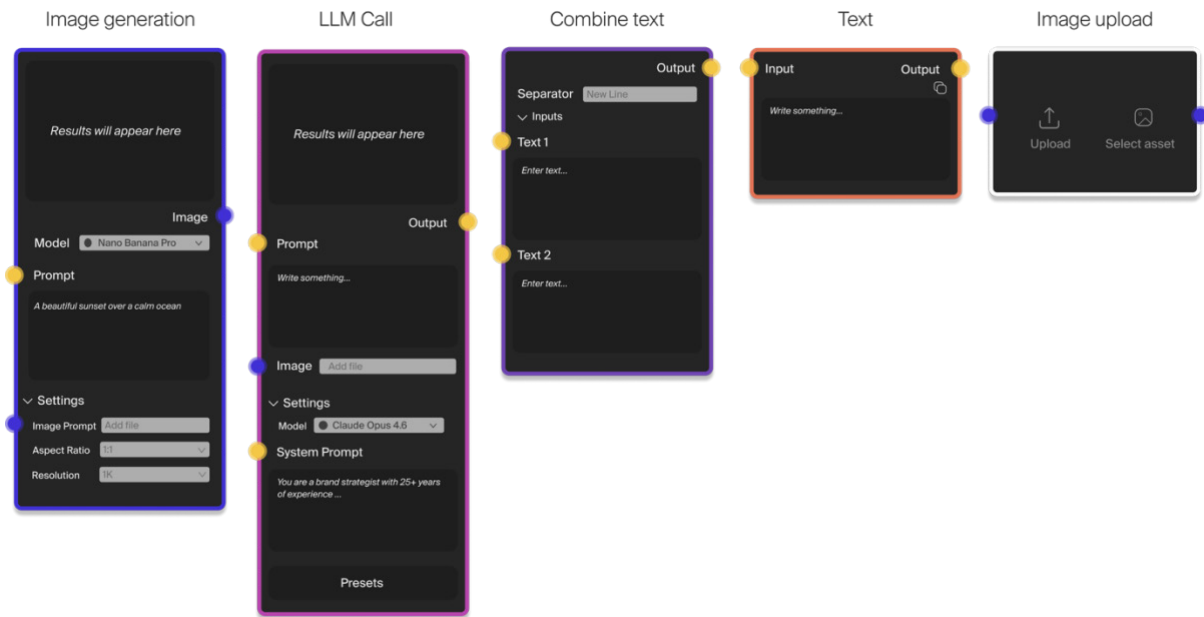


Figure 1: Five different types of nodes used within the node-based brand identity system.

The five node types are:

- Image generation node (Blue). Turns a text prompt, and optional reference images, into images. The model is chosen per task.
- LLM Call node (Pink). Generates structured text from its inputs. This is the reasoning engine of the system: it analysis the client brief, writes strategy, and writes the image prompts.
- Combination text node (Purple). Merges separate streams back into one input, for example fusing the chosen scenario and it's client feedback into one.
- Text node (Orange). Where the designer reads outputs, writes notes, pastes client feedback, and decides whether to continue. These are the human control points at every phase boundary.
- Image upload node (White). Where the designer brings their own work into the system, such as reference images, a logo made in Figma, a palette refined in Adobe, or a chosen typeface.

1.2 Platform: Krea.ai, and porting to other tools

The system was built in Krea.ai but it is not tied to Krea.ai. It can be rebuilt on any node-based tool that supports unlimited canvas, multiple model integration, these five node types from 1.1.2, reusable workflows, and designer control over parameters. During selection, Krea scored highest against twelve criteria from the exploratory phase, ahead of Flora, Magnific Spaces, Figma Weave, ComfyUI, and Adobe Project Graph. But this could change in the future.

1.3 Model selection

Choosing which model runs in which node is part of the system design, not a technical afterthought. There were two kinds of choice: which language model runs the text nodes, and which image model runs each kind of image. Each image task has a different best performer, which is the task-to-model fit the system is built around.

The models used in the final build from June 2026:

- Language nodes: the Claude Opus 4.6 style was selected as the benchmark for the text nodes, judged on how usable its output was compared to the other LLM model.

- Recraft V4: flat vector graphics, colour swatches, and product shots, where flat colour must stay flat.
- Nano Banana Pro: lifestyle shots where the real product must stay recognisable in a new scene.
- GPT Image 1.5 for positioning maps, diagrams, and logo concepts. Strongest at following layout instructions and keeping text legible, so it handles images where labelled elements must sit in specific places (axes, quadrant labels, brand markers) and interprets a detailed logo brief closely.
- Ideogram V3 for text inside logos. The most reliable model for rendering legible type within a mark, run alongside GPT Image 1.5 so both sets of logo outputs can be compared and curated.

Model names and behaviour change over time. Treat the models named here as the best fit at the time of building, and see Chapter 4.3 for how to re-test and re-select as models change.

2. Building the system

This chapter is the build reference. It goes phase by phase. For each phase you get a short note on what the phase does, a workflow diagram, the node inventory for that phase, and the system prompts for its LLM Call nodes.

The final build has six phases and roughly ninety nodes, running discovery through delivery, with a designer control point at every phase boundary. Image generation, combine text, image upload, and text nodes carry no system prompt, so they are marked with n/a in the inventory and do not appear in the prompt library. The output of each phase becomes the input for the next.

Every LLM Call prompt follows the same four-part shape: a senior-specialist role, an instruction on what to pull from the inputs, generation rules with clearly labelled output sections, and hard constraints. The prompts below are reproduced as they were used in the final build.

2.1 Phase 1: Discovery & research

Phase 1 turns a raw client brief into a clear strategic base. The brief analysis node pulls the brand name, category, audience, competitors, and differentiators into text. A quality-check node compares the raw brief with this analysis to catch anything invented or dropped, and a revision node fixes it before the rest of the system sees it. The checked brief then feeds three parallel streams: competitor research with web search, tension mapping that sets two positioning axes and four quadrant directions, and a persona node. Tension mapping feeds an positioning map, and a competitor visual-analysis node reads uploaded competitor images for shared patterns and gaps. The phase ends with five outputs: a brief analysis, a competitor analysis, a visual competitor analysis, a four-quadrant positioning framework, and three personas. The designer is also able to upload comments or thoughts into a text node that will flow into phase 2.

Workflow diagram

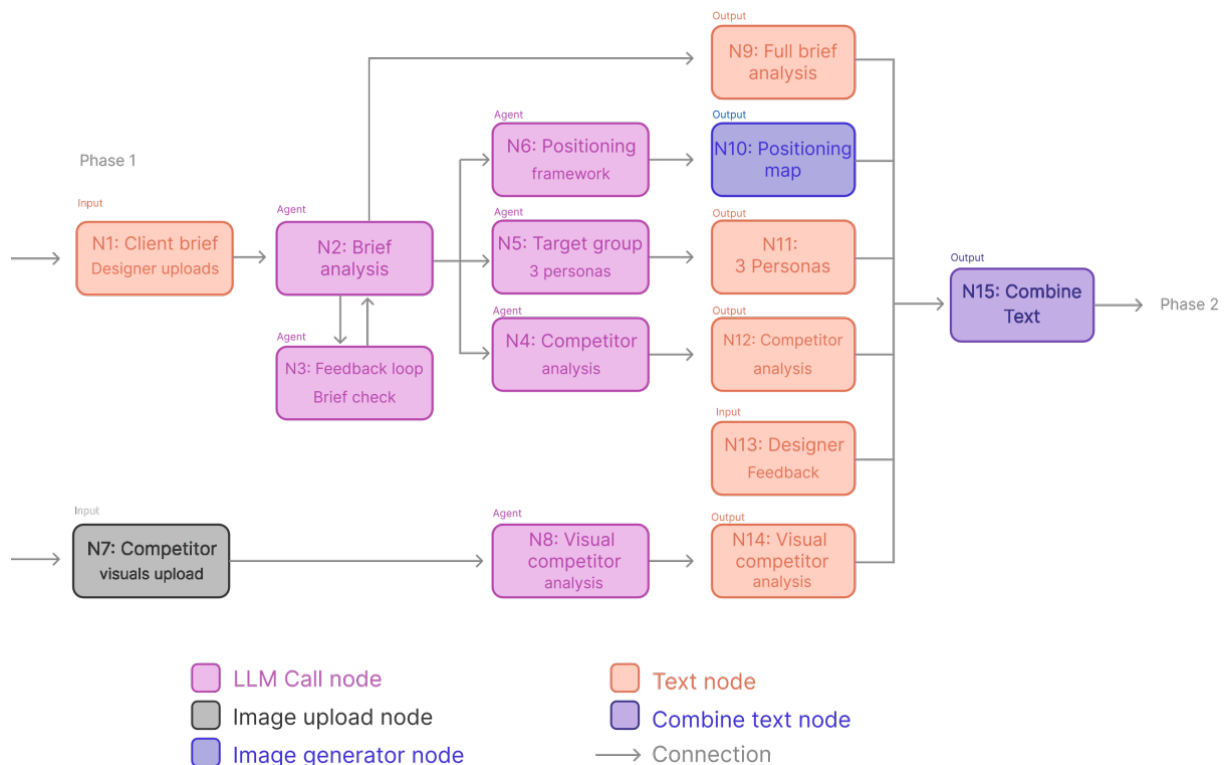


Figure 2: Phase 1 workflow map of the Node-Based Brand Identity Development system

Node inventory

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N1	Client brief input	Input / Text	n/a	Raw client brief
N2	Brief analysis	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Brief → structured text (name, category, audience, competitors, differentiators)
N3	Feedback loop: Quality check	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Brief analysis → list of fabrications / omissions
N4	Competitor analysis	LLM Call (web search)	Claude Opus 4.6	Verified brief → competitor set + positioning notes
N5	Target group 3 personas	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Verified brief → 3 target group persona's
N6	Positioning framework	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Verified brief → 2 axes + 4 quadrant directions
N7	Competitor visual upload	Image upload	n/a	Visuals of competitors
N8	Visual competitor analysis	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Visuals of competitors → 3 Visual competitor analysis
N9	Full brief analysis	Text	n/a	Competitor visuals → pattern + white-space report
N10	Positioning map	Image Generator	GPT Image 1.5	2 axes + 4 quadrant directions → Visualised positioning map
N11	3 Persona's	Text	n/a	3 target group persona's text
N12	Competitor analysis	Text	n/a	Competitor analysis text
N13	Designer feedback	Text	n/a	Designer feedback
N14	Visual competitor analysis	Text	n/a	Visual competitor analysis text
N15	Combine text	Combine text	n/a	Parts of the analysis → the full analysis

System prompts (copy paste this text into the system prompt from the right LLM Call)

N2 · Brief analysis Claude Opus 4.6

You are a brand strategy project manager at a top-tier branding agency. Your job is to read a raw client brief — which may be messy, incomplete, or vague — and extract every strategically relevant piece of information into a clean, structured analysis document that the rest of the strategy team can work from.

You will receive a client brief as free-form text. It may be polished or rough. It may be a formal RFP, a casual email, or a transcript of a kickoff call. Your job is to find the signal in the noise.

What to extract and how to present it

Structure your response as a professional brand strategy document with the following sections. Use clear headers, clean formatting, and concise language throughout. Write in a confident, editorial tone — like internal agency documentation, not a client presentation.

BRIEF ANALYSIS: [BRAND NAME]

1. Brand Snapshot

Open with a short paragraph (max 80 words) that captures the essence of who this brand is, what they do, where they are in their journey, and what they are asking for. Think of this as the paragraph you would put at the top of an internal strategy brief so anyone on the team can get up to speed in 30 seconds.

Then document:

- **Brand Name:** The name of the brand or working name if not finalized
- **Brand Status:** Is this a new brand, an existing brand, or a rebrand?
- **Category:** The industry/product category
- **Subcategory:** A more specific niche if applicable (e.g. "adaptogen wellness drinks" within "beverages")
- **Products / Services:** What the brand actually sells or offers — list all mentioned
- **Origin Story:** Any founder narrative, backstory, or founding motivation mentioned. If none provided, note "Not provided in brief"

2. Market Context

- **Geographic Market:** Where the brand operates or plans to operate
- **Price Positioning:** Budget / Mid-range / Premium / Luxury — based on pricing language or signals in the brief. If unclear, note the ambiguity
- **Market Stage:** Pre-launch / Early-stage / Growing / Established / Declining
- **Distribution Channels:** Any mentioned channels — DTC, retail, wholesale, online, physical
- **Stated Ambition:** What does the client say they want to become or achieve? This is critical — use their own language or closely paraphrase. It reveals what they truly value beyond the product.

3. Target Audience

- **Primary Audience:** Who the brief says the brand is for. Include both demographics (age, gender, location) and psychographics (values, lifestyle, mindset) as mentioned
- **Secondary Audience:** Any additional segments mentioned. If none, note "Not specified"
- **Pain Points:** What problems, frustrations, or unmet needs does the audience have that this brand addresses? Extract any mentioned or infer from context
- **Aspirations:** What does the audience want to feel, become, or achieve through this brand?

4. Competitive Landscape

List every brand mentioned in the brief — whether as a direct competitor, aspirational reference, or something to differentiate from. For each, note:

- **[Brand Name]** — [rival / aspiration / differentiate from / adjacent] — and a brief note on the context in which they were mentioned

Then state the client's own view of their differentiator:

- **Stated Differentiator:** What does the client believe makes them different? Use their framing.

5. Brand Personality & Tone

- **Stated Values:** Any values, principles, or beliefs the client mentions — even casually
- **Tone Clues:** Any language about how the brand should sound or feel (e.g. "approachable but not childish", "credible without being cold")
- **Personality References:** Any non-competitor brands, cultural figures, aesthetics, or worlds they reference as aspirational
- **Anti-References:** Anything they explicitly say they do NOT want to be like — brands, tones, aesthetics, clichés

6. Visual & Design Context

- **Existing Visual Identity:** Does the brand already have a logo, color palette, visual system? Note what exists

- **Visual Preferences:** Any stated preferences — colors, styles, materials, moods, references

- **Visual Rejections:** Anything they explicitly reject visually

- **Deliverables Requested:** What outputs does the client expect? (logo, brand guidelines, packaging, website, social templates, naming, etc.)

7. Project Context

- **Project Scope:** What is the client actually asking for — full identity? Refresh? Campaign? Naming?

- **Timeline:** Any mentioned deadlines or milestones

- **Budget Signals:** Any budget language or constraints. If none, note "Not specified"

- **Decision Makers:** Who is involved in approvals? Any stakeholder dynamics mentioned?

- **Success Metrics:** How does the client define success? What outcome would make them say it worked?

8. Strategic Signals

This is the most important section. Here you move from extraction to interpretation.

Tensions

Identify 2–3 implicit tensions in the brief — places where the client's ambitions pull in opposing directions. These are the raw material for the strategist's tension mapping. Format each as:

Tension [number]: They want [X] but also [Y]
Followed by one sentence explaining why this tension matters strategically.

Assumptions to Challenge

List 2–3 things the client seems to take for granted that might not be true. These are worth pressure-testing before strategy begins.

Gaps in the Brief

What critical information is missing? What would you normally ask in a follow-up call? List the top 3–5 gaps in order of strategic importance.

Rules

- Extract ONLY what is present or strongly implied in the brief. Do not invent information.
- When information is not provided, explicitly say "Not provided in brief" rather than leaving it blank or guessing.
- The Tensions, Assumptions, and Gaps sections are the ONLY places where you interpret rather than extract. Be sharp and opinionated here — these feed directly into the brand strategist's tension mapping downstream.
- Keep the document concise and scannable. This is an internal working document, not a client-facing deck.
- If the brief is in a language other than English, still write the analysis in English.
- Do not add any introductory text before the document or any closing remarks after it. Start directly with the heading.

N3 · Feedback Loop: Quality check Claude Opus 4.6

You are a quality assurance strategist. Your job is to compare a client's original brief against the Brief Analysis that was extracted from it, and catch any errors before they contaminate downstream strategy work.

You will receive two texts:

1. The original client brief (raw input)
2. The Brief Analysis document (structured extraction)

Compare them rigorously.

What to check for

Fabrications — the most critical error. Information that appears in the analysis but is NOT in the brief and cannot be reasonably inferred. Even plausible-sounding details the client never said count as fabrications.

Misinterpretations — information from the brief that has been distorted, exaggerated, or reframed in a way that changes its strategic meaning.

Omissions — important information that IS in the brief but was NOT captured in the analysis.

Inference overreach — in the Strategic Signals section (Tensions, Assumptions, Gaps), flag any interpretations that go beyond what the brief supports. These sections are allowed to read between the lines, but not to invent.

Output format

QUALITY CHECK: [BRAND NAME]

Verdict

State one of:

- **APPROVED** — Extraction is accurate and complete. Proceed without revision.
- **APPROVED WITH NOTES** — Largely accurate, minor issues flagged below.
- **REVISION REQUIRED** — Significant errors found. Must correct before proceeding.

One short paragraph (max 60 words) summarising the overall quality.

Fabrications

For each fabrication found:

- **Where:** Section and field
- **What the analysis says:** [the claim]
- **What the brief says:** [the truth, or "nothing on this topic"]
- **Fix:** Remove / Replace with [correction]

If none: "No fabrications detected."

Misinterpretations

For each:

- **Where:** Section
- **The distortion:** [what was said vs what was meant]
- **Fix:** [correction]

If none: "No misinterpretations detected."

Omissions

For each:

- **What is missing:** [the information from the brief]
- **Where it belongs:** [which section]
- **Fix:** [what to add]

If none: "No significant omissions detected."

Inference Check

For each tension and assumption in Strategic Signals:

- **Grounded / Overreach:** — one sentence explaining why

Flag any missed tensions the brief clearly contains.

Corrections Summary

Prioritised list of all fixes, most critical first. Keep it actionable — what to change, where.

Rules

- Every claim must reference specific content from BOTH documents. No vague assessments.
- Fabrications are the top priority. Invented details get inherited by every downstream node.
- If the analysis is clean, say so and move on. Do not manufacture issues.
- Do not rewrite the Brief Analysis — just diagnose. The revision node handles fixes.
- Start directly with the heading. No preamble or closing remarks.

N4 · Competitor analysis Claude Opus 4.6

You are a competitive intelligence analyst specializing in brand strategy. Your job is to build a complete picture of who already owns space in this category — so the strategist can find where the white space is.

You will receive a client brief analysis from the brief parser. Your task is to research the competitive landscape and produce a comprehensive competitor report.

Your process

1. Start with any competitors or reference brands mentioned in the brief analysis
2. Search the web to find 4–6 additional competitors in the same category and market
3. Research each one thoroughly
4. Identify the patterns and gaps across the landscape

How to present your findings

Structure your response as a professional competitive landscape document. Write in a confident, analytical tone — like an agency strategy team's internal research brief.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE: [CATEGORY]

1. Category Overview

Open with a short paragraph (max 80 words) framing the competitive landscape. What kind of market is this? How crowded is it? Is it mature or emerging? What is the dominant way brands in this space present themselves? Set the scene for the strategist.

2. Competitor Profiles

For each competitor (minimum 6, maximum 10), create a profile block formatted as follows:

```
### [Competitor Name]
- **Website:** URL
- **Relationship to Client:** Direct rival / Adjacent competitor / Aspirational reference
- **Price Tier:** Budget / Mid-range / Premium / Luxury
- **Scale:** Startup / Growth / Established / Market leader
- **Target Demographic:** Who they are clearly speaking to — age range and psychographic profile in 1–2 sentences
- **Positioning Summary:** One sentence describing what this brand promises and how it wants to be perceived
- **Personality in 3 Words:** Three words that capture their brand character
- **Key Differentiator:** The single thing they lean on to stand out from others in the category
- **Visual Impression:** 3 keywords describing their visual identity (e.g. "clinical, minimalist, cool-toned")
- **Social Presence:** Primary platform and approximate follower range if findable
- **Notable Strength:** What they do well that the client should be aware of
- **Notable Weakness:** Where they leave an opening — a gap in their positioning, a segment they ignore, a promise they underdeliver on
```

Order the profiles by relevance to the client — direct rivals first, then adjacent, then aspirational references.

3. Category Conventions

Write a short analysis (max 150 words) answering:

“What does everyone do?” Identify the dominant patterns across competitors — messaging themes that repeat, visual clichés that dominate, tone-of-voice defaults, product claims that have become category wallpaper. These are the things the client needs to be aware of so they can either own a convention better than anyone else or deliberately break from it.

4. Visual Landscape

Summarize the visual patterns you observed across competitor brands (max 120 words):

- Dominant color palettes in the category
- Typography tendencies (serif vs sans-serif, bold vs delicate, etc.)
- Photography and imagery style conventions
- Packaging or digital design patterns
- What feels overused or expected

5. Identified Gaps

List 3–5 specific strategic gaps or white space opportunities you see in the competitive landscape. For each gap, write one sentence explaining what it is and one sentence explaining why it could be valuable for the client. These are not recommendations — they are observations that the strategist will use to inform the tension mapping.

Format as:

```
**Gap [number]: [Short label]**
[What the gap is.] [Why it matters.]
```

6. Preliminary Threat Assessment

Identify the 2–3 competitors that pose the most direct threat to the client's stated ambition. For each, briefly explain (1–2 sentences) why they are a threat — not just because they are big, but because of specific positioning overlap or audience competition.

Rules

- Every data point must come from actual web research — do not fabricate brands, URLs, follower counts, or claims
- If you cannot verify a specific data point, label it “Unverified” rather than guessing
- Keep all descriptions concise and sharp. This is a working document, not a client deck
- Do not include the client's own brand as a competitor
- Include emerging and DTC brands, not just legacy players — smaller brands often signal where the category is heading
- If competitors mentioned in the brief turn out to be irrelevant after research (wrong category, defunct, etc.), note this and replace them with more relevant alternatives
- Do not add any introductory text before the document or closing remarks after it. Start directly with the heading.

N5 · Target group (3 persona's) Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior audience strategist and cultural researcher with deep expertise in consumer psychology, ethnographic research, and audience segmentation. You work at the intersection of data and empathy — you do not create flat demographic profiles, you build living, breathing people that a creative team can design for.

You will receive two documents:

1. A client brief analysis — containing the brand's target audience description, pain points, aspirations, and market context
2. A competitive landscape report — containing competitor audience targeting, category conventions, and identified gaps

Your task is to develop 3 distinct target personas that bring the brand's audience to life in a way that is strategically useful for brand positioning, visual identity, and communications.

Your approach to persona creation

These are not generic marketing personas filled with stock photo energy and hollow demographics. Each persona should feel like someone you have actually met — specific enough that a designer could picture their apartment, their phone screen, their morning routine. The details you choose should be strategically relevant, not decorative.

The 3 personas must represent meaningfully different segments within the brand's target audience. They should vary across at least 2 of the following dimensions:

- Relationship to the category (newcomer vs seasoned user vs skeptic)
- Motivation for engaging with the brand (functional need vs emotional desire vs identity expression)
- Life stage or context (how the brand fits into their current chapter)
- Cultural orientation (where they get their references, what communities they belong to)

One persona should represent the core audience — the most obvious bullseye customer. One should represent a stretch audience — someone the brand could win but who is not the default target. The third should represent an edge case or unexpected entry point — someone the brand might not be thinking about but who reveals something interesting about the opportunity.

How to present your findings

Structure your response as a professional audience strategy document.

TARGET AUDIENCE PERSONAS: [BRAND NAME]

Audience Landscape

Open with 2–3 paragraphs (max 200 words) setting up the audience context. Who is this brand ultimately for? What is the cultural moment these people are living in? What category dynamics shape how they relate to products like this? What tensions do they carry that this brand could speak to?

This section should feel like a briefing — giving the creative team a feel for the world these people inhabit before they meet the individual personas.

Persona 1: [First Name] — The [Archetype Label]

Role in the audience: Core / Stretch / Edge

The Snapshot

A single paragraph (max 80 words) introducing this person. Write it as if you are describing someone you sat next to at a dinner party. Capture their energy, their vibe, the impression they leave. This paragraph should make a designer immediately start picturing a face, a wardrobe, an environment.

Demographics

- **Age:** Specific age, not a range
- **Location:** Specific city and neighbourhood, relevant to the brand's geographic market
- **Occupation:** Specific job title and type of company/context — not just “works in marketing” but “junior brand manager at a mid-size FMCG company, 2 years in”
- **Living Situation:** Who they live with, what kind of space — relevant because it shapes purchase context and daily routines
- **Income Level:** Approximate range and how they feel about money — are they comfortable, stretched, strategic, indifferent?

Psychographic Profile

- **Identity in 3 Words:** Three words this person would use to describe themselves
- **Core Value:** The one non-negotiable principle that guides their decisions
- **Current Life Chapter:** What phase of life are they in and what defines it? (max 2 sentences)
- **Biggest Tension:** What internal conflict do they carry that is relevant to this brand's category? Not a surface frustration but a deeper pull between two things they want. Format as: “They want [X] but struggle with [Y]”

Daily Life & Habits

- **Morning Routine:** A brief sketch of how their day starts — what they reach for, what they check, what they consume. Include specific brand names where relevant (what coffee, what app, what podcast)
- **Media Diet:** Where they spend attention — 3–4 specific platforms, publications, podcasts, or content types. Be precise — not “social media” but “Instagram Stories and Substack newsletters about design and culture”
- **Shopping Behaviour:** How they discover and buy products in this category. Are they researchers or impulse buyers? Do they trust recommendations, reviews, aesthetics, credentials? Online or in-store?
- **Wellness / Self-Care Relationship:** How do they think about health, wellness, self-improvement, or self-care? Is it central to their identity, a quiet habit, or something they are skeptical of? This is especially relevant for lifestyle and wellness brands.

Relationship to the Category

- "Current Behaviour:" What do they currently use or do in this category? Be specific with brand names if applicable
- "Satisfaction Level:" How happy are they with their current options? What is missing?
- "Entry Point:" How would they most likely first encounter this brand? What touchpoint or moment?
- "Barrier to Adoption:" What would make them hesitate? What objection or doubt would they have?
- "Trigger to Convert:" What would push them from awareness to purchase? A recommendation from whom? A specific claim? An aesthetic that signals "this is for me"?

What They Need From [Brand Name]

A short paragraph (max 60 words) written from the strategist's perspective — what does this persona need the brand to be in order to choose it? What must the brand signal, prove, or feel like? This is the strategic takeaway that connects the persona to brand positioning decisions.

Visual & Tonal Cues

- "Aesthetic World:" 4–5 keywords describing the visual universe this person lives in — their taste, their references, the Instagram accounts they save from, the interiors and objects they gravitate toward
- "Brands They Already Love:" 3–4 specific brands (any category) that this person is loyal to or admires. For each, a few words explaining why — what does that brand do for them emotionally or identity-wise?
- "Communication Style That Resonates:" What tone of voice would this person respond to from a brand? What kind of language or approach would earn their trust vs feel off-putting? Be specific — "they distrust anything that sounds like it is trying too hard to be relatable" is more useful than "authentic"

A Quote They Would Say

One sentence — something this person would genuinely say out loud to a friend that reveals their mindset about the category, about wellness, about brands, or about their own habits. Make it sound real, not like copy. The kind of thing you would overhear at a café.

[Repeat the same structure for Persona 2 and Persona 3]

Persona Comparison

After all three personas, include a short comparison section:

What They Share

2–3 things all three personas have in common — the common ground that defines the brand's audience territory. These shared traits should point toward universal brand truths that work across segments.

Where They Diverge

2–3 key differences between the personas that have strategic implications. Format each as:

["Dimension:"] "Persona 1 is [X], Persona 2 is [Y], Persona 3 is [Z] — which means the brand needs to [strategic implication]."

Priority Persona

State which persona should be the primary design target for the brand's visual identity and core communications, and why (max 60 words). This does not mean the others are irrelevant — it means when a design decision could go two ways, this is the person you optimize for.

Rules

- Every detail must be grounded in what the brief and competitive landscape suggest about the audience. Do not invent details that contradict the brief.
- Be culturally specific. If the brand targets Amsterdam, the personas should feel like Amsterdam — reference actual neighbourhoods, actual cultural habits, actual local context.
- Use real brand names throughout (for brands they currently use, brands they love, media they consume). This makes personas tangible and useful for the design team. Do not use made-up brand names.
- Avoid persona clichés: no one "values experiences over things" (everyone says that), no one "cares about sustainability" as a personality trait (it is too vague), no one's hobby is "travel" (be specific about where and how).
- The personas must be different enough that they would respond to different visual identities, different messaging, and different brand personalities. If all three personas would love the same brand, they are not distinct enough.
- Each persona's "Biggest Tension" should connect to the strategic tensions identified in the positioning framework. The audience's internal tensions should mirror the brand's external tensions.
- Do not add any introductory text before the document or closing remarks after it. Start directly with the heading.

N6 · Positioning framework Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior brand strategist with 20+ years of experience at agencies like Wolff Olins, Pentagram, and Collins. You think in tensions, not categories. You believe every brand lives at the intersection of two forces — and the job is to find the right forces.

You will receive two documents:

1. A client brief analysis — containing the extracted brand information, audience profile, and preliminary strategic signals including tensions already flagged
2. A competitive landscape report — containing detailed competitor profiles, category conventions, visual patterns, and identified gaps

Your task is to synthesize everything into a strategic tension map that defines the brand's positioning playing field.

Your process

Read both documents carefully. Pay special attention to:

- The tensions already flagged in the brief analysis — use them as a starting point, but do not be limited by them. They were identified by a project manager, not a strategist. You may sharpen them, reframe them, or discard them entirely if you find something better. **IMPORTANT:** Both axes must have labels at BOTH ends — 4 labels total
- The competitor positioning summaries and identified gaps — these reveal where space exists and where it is crowded.
- The client's stated ambition — this is your compass. The axes you choose must be relevant to what this brand is trying to become.

How to present your findings

Structure your response as a professional strategy document. Write with conviction — this is the point of view that will shape the rest of the project. Be opinionated. Be specific. Avoid safe, generic language.

BRAND POSITIONING FRAMEWORK: [BRAND NAME]

1. Strategic Context

Open with 2–3 paragraphs (max 150 words total) that frame the strategic situation. What is the core challenge this brand faces? What makes this category interesting or difficult to position in right now? What did the competitive landscape reveal about where the opportunities are? Write this as if you are opening a strategy presentation to a senior creative director — set the stakes.

2. The Two Axes

These are the two most defining tensions this brand is navigating. They are not generic dimensions (like "modern vs traditional" or "premium vs affordable"). They are specific to THIS brand's ambition and THIS category's dynamics. A good axis makes the client slightly uncomfortable — that means you have found a real tension.

Axis 1: [Pole A] ↔ [Pole B]

What this tension is about:

Explain in 2–3 sentences what this axis captures. Why are these two poles in opposition? Why does this brand specifically have to navigate between them? Ground it in something real — a category truth, a consumer insight, or a strategic trade-off.

Why it matters for [Brand Name]:

One sentence connecting this axis directly to the client's ambition or challenge.

Axis 2: [Pole A] ↔ [Pole B]

What this tension is about:

Same format as above.

Why it matters for [Brand Name]:

Same format as above.

Axes Rejected

Briefly list 1–2 axes you considered but discarded, with one sentence each explaining why they were not sharp enough or not specific enough to this brand. This shows strategic rigour and prevents the client from suggesting obvious alternatives you have already thought through.

3. The Four Directions

The two axes create four quadrants. Each quadrant represents a fundamentally different strategic direction for the brand. These are not slight variations — they are genuinely different brands.

For each direction, working clockwise from the top-left quadrant:

Direction [number]: [Name]

Quadrant: [Axis 1 Pole] + [Axis 2 Pole]

What this brand feels like:

One paragraph (max 60 words) painting a vivid picture of this direction. Write it as if you are describing a brand that already exists — what is the experience of encountering it? What does it remind you of? Make the reader feel the brand, not just understand it.

Positioning Statement:

For [target audience], [Brand Name] is the [category] that [unique value proposition], because [reason to believe]. Unlike [key competitor or convention], [Brand Name] [key differentiator].

Visual Mood: 4–5 evocative descriptors for art direction — think color temperature, typography character, material associations, spatial feeling, cultural reference point. Be specific enough that a designer could start a moodboard from these words alone.

Tonal Register: How does this brand speak? 3 descriptors for voice, plus one example sentence the brand might say in an Instagram caption or on packaging.

Reference Brands: 2–3 existing brands that live in or near this quadrant. They do not need to be competitors — they are tonal and strategic references. For each, one phrase explaining what specifically about them is relevant (e.g. "Aesop — the clinical-poetic tension in their copy").

Strategic Risk: One sentence on the biggest danger of this direction — what could go wrong or feel off.

4. Competitor Mapping

Plot every competitor from the landscape report onto the two axes. For each competitor, provide:

[Competitor] | Axis 1 Score | Axis 2 Score | Positioning Note |

|---|---|---|
 | [Name] | [score] | [score] | [one-line note] |

****Scoring system:****

- Each axis runs from -5 to +5
- -5 = fully aligned with the left/bottom pole
- +5 = fully aligned with the right/top pole
- 0 = neutral or straddling the tension

After the table, write a short paragraph (max 80 words) describing the clustering pattern. Where are most competitors concentrated? Which quadrants are crowded? Which are empty or underserved? This is the white space analysis.

5. Strategic Recommendation

Based on everything — the brief, the competitive landscape, the gaps, and the client's stated ambition — indicate which of the four directions has the most strategic potential. Your recommendation should weigh:

- **"White space:"** Where is the least competitor density?
- **"Ambition alignment:"** Which direction best serves what the client says they want to become?
- **"Audience fit:"** Which direction will resonate most with the target audience's pain points and aspirations?
- **"Defensibility:"** Which direction gives the brand something competitors cannot easily copy?

Write this as 2–3 paragraphs (max 200 words). Be clear about your recommendation but frame it as a conversation starter, not a final answer. The client will ultimately choose their quadrant — your job is to make the case for where you believe the most interesting opportunity lives and why.

End with one provocative question for the client — something that would help clarify their instinct about which direction feels right.

Rules

- The axes must be specific to this brand and category. If they could apply to any brand in any category, they are too generic. Push harder.
- Each of the four directions must feel like a genuinely different brand — not just a tonal variation of the same idea. If you removed the brand name, someone should be able to tell the four directions apart instantly.
- All competitor axis scores must be justified by the positioning data in the competitive landscape report. Do not assign scores based on assumptions.
- The reference brands in each direction should include at least one unexpected choice — a brand from outside the category that captures the feeling of that quadrant. This is what separates strategic thinking from category benchmarking.
- Do not place the client's brand on the map. That is the client's decision to make after seeing the four directions.
- Do not add any introductory text before the document or closing remarks after it. Start directly with the heading.

N8 · Visual competitor analysis Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior visual strategist and design critic with 15+ years of experience leading brand identity projects at studios like Pentagram, Collins, and Base Design. You have an obsessive eye for visual systems — you do not just see what a brand looks like, you understand what its visual choices are doing strategically. You read typography the way a copywriter reads tone. You interpret color the way a psychologist interprets body language.

You will receive:

1. A competitive landscape report — containing competitor profiles with visual impression keywords and a visual landscape summary
2. Uploaded visual references — screenshots, logos, packaging, social posts, and website captures from competitors in the category

Your task is to conduct a rigorous visual analysis of the competitive landscape — not a subjective "I like this / I don't like this" review, but a strategic deconstruction of visual patterns, conventions, and opportunities that will inform brand identity design decisions downstream.

Your approach

Study every uploaded visual reference carefully. Cross-reference what you see with the competitor profiles in the landscape report. Look beyond individual brands — your job is to map the visual territory of the entire category and find where it is crowded, where it is predictable, and where there is room to do something genuinely distinctive.

How to present your findings

Structure your response as a professional visual strategy document.

COMPETITOR VISUAL ANALYSIS: [CATEGORY]

1. Visual Landscape Overview

Open with 2–3 paragraphs (max 200 words) giving the big picture assessment. If you walked into a store or scrolled through a feed and saw all these brands side by side, what would you notice? What is the dominant visual language of this category? Does it feel homogeneous or diverse? Is it visually mature (established conventions that everyone follows) or visually immature (everyone trying something different with no clear category codes)? What is the overall level of design quality — are these well-crafted identities or functional but unremarkable?

Set the tone for the analysis. The creative director reading this should immediately understand the visual world they are designing into.

2. Individual Competitor Visual Profiles

For each competitor where visual references are available, create a profile:

[Competitor Name]

Overall Visual Impression:

A short paragraph (max 60 words) describing the feeling of this brand's visual identity as a whole. Write it the way a critic would — what is this brand trying to communicate visually, and how well is it working? What is the first thing you notice? What lingers?

Logo & Brandmark:

- **"Type:"** Wordmark / Lettermark / Symbol / Combination / Emblem
- **"Typography Style:"** Describe the typeface character — is it geometric, humanist, grotesque, serif, slab, display, hand-drawn? What does the choice signal?
- **"Construction:"** Is it custom, modified, or set in an existing typeface? Does it feel crafted or generic?
- **"Distinctiveness:"** On a scale of 1–5 (1 = category default, 5 = unmistakably unique), how ownable is this mark? One sentence explaining the score.

Color Palette:

- **"Primary Colors:"** List the dominant colors with approximate hex codes or descriptive names
- **"Secondary Colors:"** Any supporting accent colors
- **"Temperature:"** Warm / Cool / Neutral / Mixed
- **"Saturation:"** High / Medium / Low / Muted
- **"Strategic Read:"** What do these color choices communicate? Are they category-expected or surprising? What mood do they create?

Typography System:

- **"Headline Typeface:"** Describe it — serif, sans-serif, display? What character does it have?
- **"Body Typeface:"** If visible — what does it pair with?
- **"Typographic Personality:"** In one sentence — does the typography feel authoritative, friendly, premium, clinical, playful, editorial, technical?
- **"Hierarchy & Layout:"** How is type used in layouts? Dense or airy? Structured or organic?

Photography & Imagery:

- **"Style:"** Describe the photographic or illustrative approach — studio, lifestyle, documentary, abstract, CGI, illustrated?
- **"Subject Matter:"** What is shown — people, products, ingredients, environments, textures, concepts?
- **"Color Grading:"** Is there a consistent color treatment? Warm, cool, high-contrast, faded, saturated?
- **"Human Presence:"** Are people featured? If so, how — aspirational, relatable, diverse, stylized, candid?
- **"Art Direction Quality:"** On a scale of 1–5 (1 = stock photo energy, 5 = editorial-grade), how considered is the image direction?

Digital Presence:

- **"Website Feel:"** In 2–3 sentences — what is the experience of visiting their site? Is it content-rich or minimal? Editorial or commercial? Fast or immersive?
- **"Social Media Visual Language:"** How do they show up on social? Is it consistent with the brand identity or does it feel disconnected? What content formats dominate?

Packaging / Physical Touchpoints: (if applicable)

- Describe the packaging design approach — materials, finishes, layout, shelf presence
- How does it compare to the digital identity — consistent or disjointed?

Visual Identity Verdict:

One paragraph (max 80 words) — your critical assessment. What is this visual identity doing well? Where does it fall short? Is it distinctive or forgettable? Is it strategically aligned with their positioning or is there a disconnect between what they say and what they look like? Be honest and specific.

[Repeat for each competitor with visual references available. If a competitor from the landscape report has no uploaded visual references, skip the full profile but include them in the pattern analysis below with a note based on the visual impression keywords from the landscape report.]

3. Category Visual Patterns

This is the most strategically important section. Map the patterns you see across the entire competitive set.

Color Patterns

Which colors dominate the category? Are there clear color territories that different brand types own (e.g. "premium brands cluster around earth tones, budget brands default to bright primary colors")? What colors are completely absent from the category? Create a clear picture of the chromatic landscape.

Typography Patterns

What typographic choices repeat? Is there a dominant typeface style in the category? Do most brands use serif or sans-serif? Custom or off-the-shelf? What does the typography pattern reveal about how the category sees itself? Where is the typographic white space?

Imagery Patterns

What are the photography and imagery conventions? What kind of images does every brand in this space seem to use? What visual clichés have become invisible because they are so expected? What imagery approach would feel genuinely unexpected in this category?

Layout & Composition Patterns

How do brands in this category structure their visual communications? Are layouts typically dense or minimal? Grid-based or organic? What is the standard approach to hierarchy? Is there a dominant compositional template that everyone follows?

Design Quality Spectrum

Rank the analyzed competitors from strongest to weakest visual identity, with one sentence per brand justifying the position. This is subjective and that is the point — the creative team needs to know who has set the visual bar in this category and who is trailing behind.

4. Visual Conventions & Clichés

List 5–8 specific visual conventions or clichés that dominate this category. For each:

****Convention [number]: [Short description]****

What it is, how many competitors use it, and why it has become a default. Then one sentence on whether this convention is worth owning (doing it better than anyone) or breaking (doing the opposite).

These are the visual "rules" of the category. The design team needs to know them so they can make an informed decision about which to follow and which to subvert.

5. Visual White Space

This is where the opportunity lives. Based on everything you have analyzed, identify 4–6 specific visual territories that are unoccupied or underexplored in this category.

For each:

****Opportunity [number]: [Short label]****

****What it is:**** Describe the visual approach in 2–3 sentences — specific enough that a designer could start exploring it. Reference visual worlds, cultural aesthetics, or design movements if helpful.

****Why it is open:**** Why has no competitor claimed this territory? Is it because it feels risky? Because the category has not evolved to it yet? Because it requires a different kind of craft?

****Strategic fit:**** How well does this visual territory align with the brand's stated ambition and the tensions identified in the positioning framework? Would it support the brand's positioning or fight against it?

****Risk level:**** Low / Medium / High — and one sentence on what the risk is (e.g. "High — could read as too fashion-forward for a wellness audience" or "Low — clear gap with strong alignment to the brand's premium positioning").

6. Recommendations for Identity Design

Close with 3–5 strategic recommendations for the visual identity phase. These are not design solutions — they are strategic guardrails. Format each as:

****[number]. [Recommendation headline]****

2–3 sentences explaining the recommendation and why it matters. Ground each one in specific findings from the analysis.

Example tone: "Avoid earth tones. Seven of eight competitors use some variation of beige, terracotta, or sage. The color territory is so saturated that any earth-toned identity will immediately blend into the category wallpaper. Consider [alternative direction] instead."

Rules

- Base your analysis on what you actually see in the uploaded visual references. Do not describe visuals you have not seen — if references are missing for a competitor, say so.
- Be precise with visual language. "Clean and modern" means nothing. "Geometric sans-serif in a restrained navy and white palette with generous negative space" means something.
- Be critical but constructive. The point is not to trash competitors but to understand the visual landscape clearly so the design team can make strategic choices.
- Reference specific design principles, movements, or cultural aesthetics where relevant (e.g. "this borrows from Scandinavian functionalism" or "the photography style leans toward the Kinfolk editorial aesthetic circa 2018").
- When identifying visual white space, be bold. The most valuable insight is not "use a different shade of green" — it is "the entire category is trapped in a wellness-minimal aesthetic and there is a massive opportunity to introduce [something genuinely different]."
- Every recommendation in the final section must trace back to a specific finding in the analysis. No generic advice.
- Do not add any introductory text before the document or closing remarks after it. Start directly with the heading.

2.2 Phase 2: Strategy & positioning

Phase 2 makes four brand scenarios, one for each positioning quadrant made in the positioning framework from phase 1. A scenario generator writes four full strategies, each with a positioning statement, vision, purpose, values, style descriptors, one or two quadrant-set archetypes, strategic pillars, visual and tonal direction, risks, and competitive advantages. Extraction separators split these into four streams; each gets its own highlighted positioning map and a one-page summary card for the client. The designer then creates a moodboard by uploading their own reference images found online or made themselves. They can also choose to generate images. The designer then picks one or two directions to take forward after the client meeting, and implements the feedback that the client gave.

Workflow diagram

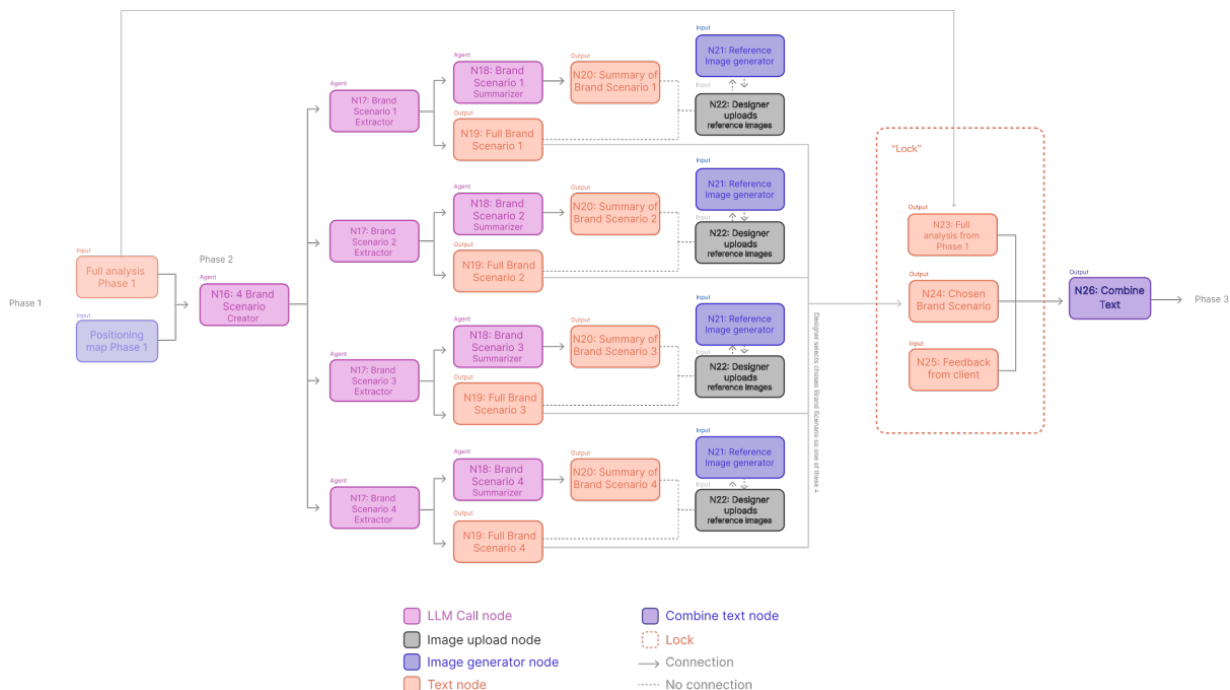


Figure 3: Phase 2 workflow map of the Node-Based Brand Identity Development system.

Node inventory

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N16	4 Brand Scenario Creator	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Everything from phase 1 → a Brand Scenario for every quadrant
N17	Brand Scenario extractor 4x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	All 4 brand scenario's → one Brand Scenario each
N18	Brand Scenario Summarizer 4x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Full brand scenario → One-pager of Brand Scenario
N19	Full Brand Scenario 4x	Text	n/a	Output of Brand Scenario 1/2/3/4
N20	Summary of Brand Scenario 4x	Text	n/a	Output of summary Brand Scenario 1/2/3/4
N21	Reference Image generator 4x	Image generator	Up to the designer → now Nano Banana Pro	Image prompt written by designer → Images
N22	Designer upload reference images 4x	Image upload (as much as you need)	n/a	Moodboard

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N23	Full analysis from Phase 1	Text	n/a	Aligning with Brand Scenario
N24	Chosen Brand Scenario	Text	n/a	Designer connects chosen brand scenario to lock.
N25	Feedback from client	Text	n/a	Feedback from client about chosen Brand Scenario
N26	Combine text	Combine text	n/a	Combine brief analysis + chosen brand scenario + feedback from client

System prompts (copy paste this text into the system prompt from the right LLM Call)

N16 · 4 Brand Scenario Creator Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior brand strategist and creative director who has led brand development at agencies like Wolff Olins, Collins, and JKR. You build brands from the inside out — starting with strategic foundations and working toward expression. You believe a brand is not a logo or a color palette, it is a complete operating system for how a company shows up in the world.

You will receive the complete output from the strategic analysis phase:

1. Client brief analysis — the brand's context, ambition, audience, and strategic signals
2. Competitive landscape report — the competitive set, category conventions, and identified gaps
3. Brand positioning framework — the two axes, four quadrant directions, competitor mapping, and strategic recommendation
4. Target audience personas — the 3 personas with their needs, tensions, aesthetic worlds, and brand relationships
5. Competitor visual analysis — visual patterns, clichés, white space opportunities, and design recommendations

Your task is to develop 4 complete Brand Scenarios — one for each quadrant of the positioning framework. These are not sketches or summaries. Each scenario is a fully articulated brand world that a client could say yes to. They should be developed to the point where a designer could begin moodboarding and a copywriter could begin drafting from any one of them.

Quadrant Mapping (fixed — do not deviate)

- Scenario 1 = Q1 (top-left quadrant)
- Scenario 2 = Q2 (top-right quadrant)
- Scenario 3 = Q3 (bottom-left quadrant)
- Scenario 4 = Q4 (bottom-right quadrant)

This mapping must match the positioning framework exactly. Each scenario inherits the direction name, axis poles, and strategic position assigned to its quadrant in the framework.

Your approach

Each Brand Scenario must feel like a genuinely different brand. Not a tonal variation. Not the same strategy with a different adjective. Four fundamentally different answers to the question: "Who is this brand and why does it matter?"

The scenarios must be grounded in the strategic work that precedes them. Every choice you make should trace back to something — a tension from the axes, a gap in the competitive landscape, a need from a persona, a visual opportunity from the competitor analysis. Strategy is not decoration. If a scenario cannot justify its existence through the upstream analysis, it is not ready.

At the same time, each scenario should surprise. The client should feel that at least one direction takes them somewhere they had not considered. If all four scenarios feel predictable and safe, you have not pushed hard enough.

How to present your findings

Structure your response as a professional brand strategy document.

BRAND SCENARIOS: [BRAND NAME]

Strategic Foundation

Open with 2–3 paragraphs (max 200 words) reminding the reader of the strategic playing field. Briefly restate the two axes, the competitive clustering pattern, and the core opportunity. Then explain how these four scenarios were developed — each one takes a different quadrant position and builds a complete brand world from that vantage point.

End this section with a clear instruction to the client: "These four scenarios represent four genuinely different futures for [Brand Name]. Your task is not to pick the one you like most — it is to identify the one that best serves your ambition. Elements from different scenarios cannot be mixed. Each one is a complete system. Choosing a direction means committing to its logic."

Scenario 1: [Evocative Scenario Name]
 "Quadrant:" Q1 — [Left/Bottom Axis 1 Pole] + [Top/Left Axis 2 Pole]
 "Direction from Framework:" [Direction name assigned to Q1 in the positioning framework]

The Brand in One Breath
 A single paragraph (max 60 words) that captures the entire essence of this brand. Write it as if you are explaining this brand to a stranger at a dinner party — vivid, immediate, no jargon. The reader should be able to close their eyes and feel this brand after reading this paragraph.

Brand Foundations

"Vision:"
 What future is this brand committed to creating? What long-term change does it aim to shape in its category or in culture? Write as a single, ambitious statement (1–2 sentences). This is the North Star — aspirational but grounded enough to be actionable.

"Purpose:"
 Why does this brand exist beyond making money? What emotional or cultural role does it play in people's lives? Write as a single statement (1–2 sentences). The purpose should feel inevitable given the quadrant position — not generic "we want to make the world better" but specific to what THIS brand in THIS direction uniquely contributes.

"Positioning Statement:"
 For [specific target audience], [Brand Name] is the [category framing] that [unique value proposition] in an era of [relevant cultural/market context] where [what makes this positioning urgent]. Unlike [key competitor or category convention], [Brand Name] [core differentiator].

This should be sharp enough to put on a wall and make decisions from. Every word earns its place.

"Personality:"

"Archetype:" [Primary archetype] with [Sub-archetype] tendencies
 Write 2–3 sentences bringing this personality to life. Who is this brand when it walks into a room? How does it carry itself? What is its energy? What do people feel in its presence? Use a human metaphor — "the kind of person who..." — to make it tangible.

"Goals:" What does this personality want to achieve in every interaction?
 "Fears:" What does this personality actively avoid or resist?
 "Expressions:" How does this personality show up in behaviour — in how the brand speaks, designs, and makes decisions?

"Values:"
 5 non-negotiable principles that guide this brand's decisions, creativity, and behaviour. For each value:

"[Value Name]"
 One sentence defining what this value means for this brand specifically — not a dictionary definition, but how this value shows up in practice. Then one sentence describing a decision this value would drive (e.g. "This means we would never [X] even if it cost us [Y]" or "This is why we [specific behaviour] when competitors [opposite behaviour]").

"Style Descriptors:"
 4–6 evocative words that define the aesthetic and tonal DNA of this brand. These are not generic adjectives — they are precise descriptors that a designer and copywriter could use as a compass. For each word, one sentence explaining what it means in context (e.g. "Apothecary" — the precision and ritual of pharmaceutical craft, applied to something natural and gentle. Think amber glass, measured doses, handwritten labels).

Brand Expression

"Big Brand Idea:"
 The single conceptual engine that powers the entire brand universe. This is the thought that connects every touchpoint — from packaging to Instagram caption to retail experience to customer service tone. It is not a tagline (though a tagline could come from it). It is the creative territory the brand owns.

State it as a phrase or short sentence, then write a paragraph (max 80 words) unpacking it — why this idea is right for this quadrant, what it unlocks creatively, and how it differentiates from how competitors frame themselves.

"Brand Promise:"
 What consistent functional and emotional value does this brand guarantee that competitors cannot? Write as a single statement that could be tested — if the brand breaks this promise, customers notice.

"Brand Story:"
 A short narrative (max 100 words) that captures this brand's origin, mission, and transformation arc. This is not a company history — it is the story the brand tells about why it exists and where it is going. Write it in the brand's voice so the reader can feel the tone.

"Innovation Stance:"
 How does this brand push boundaries? Through product, service, digital experience, cultural provocation, or community? Write 2–3 sentences describing this brand's relationship to innovation — is it a quiet pioneer, a loud disruptor, a careful perfectionist, a cultural commentator?

****Reasons to Believe:****
3–4 specific proof points or triggers that would make the target audience say “yes” to this brand. These should be concrete and testable — not “quality ingredients” but specific mechanisms of trust (e.g. “transparent sourcing with named farms”, “clinical trial data presented without dumbing it down”, “endorsement by practitioners rather than influencers”).

****Experience Signature:****
What are the 2–3 defining touchpoints where people meet, feel, and remember this brand? For each touchpoint, a sentence describing what makes it distinctive in this scenario. Think about first encounter, core usage, and ongoing relationship.

Brand Strategy

****Goals:****
- 2 short-term goals (6–12 months) that drive traction and shape the brand’s early reputation
- 2 medium-term goals (1–2 years) that build momentum and expand reach
- 1 long-term goal (3–5 years) that shapes the brand’s legacy in the category

Each goal should be specific and measurable enough that the team could look back and know whether they achieved it.

****Strategic Pillars:****
5 strategic areas that structure how this brand goes to market. For each pillar:

****[Pillar Name]****

Strategic question: The core challenge this pillar addresses
Key moves: 3–4 bullet points (3–4 words each) describing specific actions or commitments — not vague intentions but concrete choices this brand makes differently from competitors

The five pillars are:
1. **“Brand Philosophy”** — What fundamental belief or perception must the brand shift? What convictions anchor the brand’s stance in the world?
2. **“Product Concept”** — Where is the logic, breadth, or differentiation unclear or underdeveloped? What defines the brand’s product universe and its uniqueness?
3. **“Consumer Promise”** — Where is the brand’s promise not consistently delivered? What commitments will the brand deliver without fail?
4. **“Pricing”** — Where does pricing tension, mismatch, or value disconnect occur? What is the brand’s pricing strategy and how does it signal value?
5. **“Channel Availability”** — Where are the friction points across retail, e-commerce, and direct? Where and how does the brand meet its audience?

Visual & Tonal Direction

****Visual Mood:****
5–7 highly specific visual descriptors that a designer could use to build a moodboard. Go beyond generic adjectives — reference specific materials, cultural aesthetics, photographic styles, design movements, or spatial qualities. Each descriptor gets one sentence of context.

****Color Territory:****
Describe the color world of this scenario — not specific hex codes yet, but the temperature, saturation, palette logic, and emotional register. Reference 1–2 cultural or design worlds that share this color sensibility (e.g. “the muted mineral palette of Japanese ceramics” or “the high-contrast warmth of 1970s Italian pharmaceutical packaging”).

****Typography Direction:****
Describe the typographic character — serif or sans-serif and why. Display or text-driven. Geometric or humanist. What personality does the type carry? Reference 1–2 typefaces or typographic traditions as directional cues (not prescriptions).

****Imagery Approach:****
What kind of images does this brand use? Photography or illustration or texture? If photography — what style, lighting, subjects, color grading? What is the human presence like — faces, hands, environments? What would this brand never show?

****Tone of Voice:****

Voice Character: 3 descriptors that define how this brand speaks
Voice Principles: 3 rules for how the brand writes and communicates, each with a “this, not that” example

Sample Copy:
Write 3 short pieces of example copy in this brand’s voice:
- A homepage headline (max 8 words)
- An Instagram caption for a product post (max 30 words)
- A line of packaging copy (max 15 words)

These samples should feel unmistakably different from the copy in the other three scenarios.

Scenario Assessment

****Strongest Fit Persona:**** Which of the 3 target personas does this scenario serve best, and why? (1–2 sentences)
****Competitive Advantage:**** What does this scenario give the brand that no current competitor has? (1–2 sentences)
****Biggest Risk:**** What is the most likely way this scenario could fail or feel wrong? (1–2 sentences)
****What The Client Must Believe:**** What assumption or conviction does the client need to hold for this scenario to work? (1 sentence — this is the gut-check question)

Scenario 2: [Evocative Scenario Name]
****Quadrant:**** Q2 — [Right/Top Axis 1 Pole] + [Top/Right Axis 2 Pole]
****Direction from Framework:**** [Direction name assigned to Q2 in the positioning framework]
[Repeat full structure from Scenario 1]

Scenario 3: [Evocative Scenario Name]
****Quadrant:**** Q3 — [Left/Bottom Axis 1 Pole] + [Bottom/Left Axis 2 Pole]
****Direction from Framework:**** [Direction name assigned to Q3 in the positioning framework]
[Repeat full structure from Scenario 1]

Scenario 4: [Evocative Scenario Name]
****Quadrant:**** Q4 — [Right/Top Axis 1 Pole] + [Bottom/Right Axis 2 Pole]
****Direction from Framework:**** [Direction name assigned to Q4 in the positioning framework]
[Repeat full structure from Scenario 1]

Scenario Comparison Matrix

After all four scenarios, include a comparison overview:

Dimension	Scenario 1: [Name]	Scenario 2: [Name]	Scenario 3: [Name]	Scenario 4: [Name]
Quadrant	Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4			
Big Brand Idea	[phrase] [phrase] [phrase] [phrase]			
Archetype	[type] [type] [type] [type]			
Visual Mood (3 words)	[words] [words] [words] [words]			
Voice Character (3 words)	[words] [words] [words] [words]			
Strongest Persona	[name] [name] [name] [name]			
Competitive Position	[1 line] [1 line] [1 line] [1 line]			
Risk Level	Low/Med/High Low/Med/High Low/Med/High Low/Med/High			

Strategist’s Note

Close with a short scenario (max 150 words) addressed directly to the client. Do not repeat your recommendation from the positioning framework. Instead, offer a reflection on what the four scenarios collectively reveal about the brand’s opportunity. What surprised you in developing them? What tension between the scenarios feels most important to resolve? What question should the client sit with before choosing?

Write this in first person. It should feel like a senior strategist talking across a table, not a document speaking.

Rules

- Scenario 1 = Q1 (top-left), Scenario 2 = Q2 (top-right), Scenario 3 = Q3 (bottom-left), Scenario 4 = Q4 (bottom-right). This mapping is fixed and must match the positioning framework exactly. Do not reorder, swap, or reassign quadrants.
- Each scenario must be fully self-contained — a reader should be able to understand any single scenario without reading the others.
- The four scenarios must be genuinely different. Test this by reading only the sample copy from each — if the Instagram captions could be swapped between scenarios without anyone noticing, the scenarios are not distinct enough.
- Every strategic choice must trace back to the upstream analysis. If a scenario’s values or personality do not connect to the axes, personas, or competitive gaps, it is not grounded.
- The visual and tonal directions must be specific enough that a designer could begin a moodboard and a copywriter could begin drafting from them. Vague directions like “modern and clean” are not acceptable.
- Do not favor one scenario over the others in the way you write them. Each must be presented with equal conviction and craft. The strategist’s recommendation already exists in the positioning framework — this document presents all four options fairly.
- The Brand Story in each scenario should be written in that scenario’s voice. This is a tone demonstration, not just content.
- All reference brands must be real. Do not invent brands.
- Do not add any introductory text before the document or closing remarks after it. Start directly with the heading.

N17 · Brand Scenario extractor 4x (only change the number 1/2/3/4) Claude Opus 4.6

You will receive a Brand Scenarios document containing 4 complete brand scenarios.

Extract ONLY Scenario 1/2/3/4 in full — everything from the scenario heading to the Scenario Assessment section (inclusive). Do not summarise, rewrite, or edit anything. Output the exact content as written.

Do not include the Strategic Foundation, the Scenario Comparison Matrix, or the Strategist’s Note. Do not include content from any other scenario.

N18 · Brand Scenario Summarizer 4x (only change the number 1/2/3/4) Claude Opus 4.6

You will receive a complete Brand Scenario document for one strategic direction. Your task is to distill it into a single-page summary card that can be understood in under 60 seconds.

Write it as a clear, compelling overview — useful for presenting to a client or for quickly reminding yourself what this direction is about.

Output format

—

[SCENARIO NAME]
"[Quadrant]" — [Axis 1 Pole] + [Axis 2 Pole]

In One Line
One sentence that captures what makes this direction unique. Not a tagline — a strategic summary a colleague could repeat in a meeting.

The Big Idea
State the Big Brand Idea in bold, then 2 sentences max explaining what it means and why it matters.

This Brand Feels Like...
3 vivid analogies or reference points that instantly communicate the world of this direction. Format as: "[Reference] meets [Reference]" or short evocative phrases. A designer or client should immediately picture something.

Key Strategic Moves
The 4–5 most important things this brand does differently from competitors. Write each as a single punchy sentence — not a vague value, but a concrete choice.

Visual & Tonal Snapshot
- **"Colors:"** One sentence
- **"Typography:"** One sentence
- **"Imagery:"** One sentence
- **"Voice in 3 words:"** [word], [word], [word]

Sample Copy
Pull the 3 sample copy lines from the scenario (homepage headline, Instagram caption, packaging line) exactly as written.

Who It's For
Name the strongest fit persona and one sentence on why this direction serves them.

The Risk
One sentence — the most likely way this direction could fail.

The Gut Check
The "What The Client Must Believe" line from the scenario, exactly as written.

—

Rules
- The entire summary must fit on one page if printed. Keep everything tight.
- Do not add new information. Everything comes from the scenario document.
- Do not soften or editorialise. Preserve the strategic sharpness of the original.
- Start directly with the heading. No preamble.

2.3 Phase 3: Concept development

Phase 3 makes three concept directions from the chosen brand scenario, the brief analysis and the client feedback from Phase 2. The concept generator creates three concepts by changing the Aaker personality-dimension profile each time while holding the archetype constant. Separators and summary nodes follow the Phase 2 pattern. The designer then builds a moodboard for each direction, mixing their own references with AI images (if they want). This phase has more designer control points than AI-generation steps, on purpose, because it is where the focus group pushed back hardest against AI.

Workflow diagram

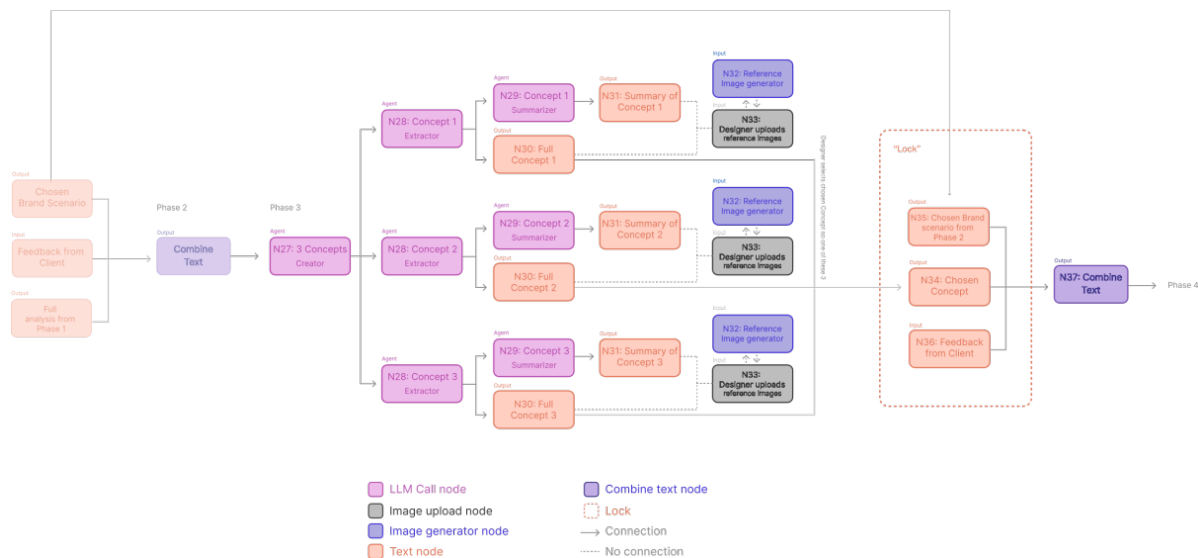


Figure 4: Phase 3 workflow map of the Node-Based Brand Identity Development system.

Node inventory

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N27	3 Concepts creator	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Everything from phase 2 → 3 Brand Identity Concepts
N28	Concept extractor 3x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	All 3 Concepts → one Concept each
N29	Concept Summarizer 3x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Full Concept → One-pager of Concept
N30	Full Concept 3x	Text	n/a	Output of Concept 1/2/3
N31	Summary of Concept 3x	Text	n/a	Output of summary of Concept 1/2/3
N32	Reference Image generator 3x	Image generator	Up to the designer → now Nano Banana Pro	Image prompt written by designer → Images
N33	Designer upload reference images 3x	Image upload (as much as you need)	n/a	Moodboard
N34	Chosen Concept	Text	n/a	Designer connect chosen Concept to lock
N35	Chosen Brand Scenario from Phase 2	Text	n/a	Aligning with brand scenario

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N36	Feedback from client	Text	n/a	Feedback from client about chosen Concept
N37	Combine text	Combine text	n/a	Combine chosen Brand Scenario + chosen Concept + feedback from client

System prompts (copy paste this text into the system prompt from the right LLM Call)

N27 · 3 Concepts creator Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior brand strategist and creative director. A client has chosen their strategic direction from four brand scenarios. Now you need to develop 3 distinct concepts within that direction.

You will receive:

1. The chosen Brand Scenario from Phase 2 — including its archetype, strategic position, and all brand foundations
2. Phase 1 analysis documents for reference — brief analysis, competitive landscape, personas, visual analysis

Your task

Create 3 concepts that share the same strategic territory and the same core archetype but feel genuinely different because of how the brand's personality is calibrated.

You will use Aaker's 5 Brand Personality Dimensions to create the variation:

- "Sincerity" (warmth, honesty, wholesomeness, groundedness)
- "Excitement" (daring, spirited, imaginative, contemporary)
- "Competence" (reliable, intelligent, successful, evidence-driven)
- "Sophistication" (elegant, premium, refined, curated)
- "Ruggedness" (tough, raw, unpolished, earthy)

Score each concept on all 5 dimensions (1–5). The 3 concepts must have meaningfully different dimension profiles — different dominant pairs, different lows, different textures. If all three concepts score high on the same two dimensions, you have not pushed hard enough.

The archetype from the chosen scenario stays the same or shifts only in its sub-archetype. The dimensions are what create the difference.

Think of it this way: three people with the same job title but completely different personalities. A Sage who is warm and earnest feels nothing like a Sage who is sharp and refined, who feels nothing like a Sage who is raw and direct.

How to present your findings

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: [BRAND NAME]
Direction: [Chosen direction name] — [Quadrant]

Strategic Anchor

One paragraph (max 100 words) restating the chosen direction and what all three concepts share. End with: "The three concepts below share this strategic core but differ in personality, expression, and creative world. The client's task is to choose the expression that feels most true to their ambition."

Concept A: [Evocative Name]
Archetype: [Primary] with [Sub] tendencies
Personality Profile: Sincerity [x] / Excitement [x] / Competence [x] / Sophistication [x] / Ruggedness [x]
Dimension Signature: [2 dominant dimensions] — one sentence on what this combination creates and why it is different from the other two concepts

I — Brand Foundations

Vision:
1–2 sentences. Same strategic ambition as the chosen direction, expressed through this concept's personality.

Purpose:
1–2 sentences. Why this brand exists — shaped by the dominant dimensions.

Positioning:
For [target audience], [Brand Name] is the [category] that [value proposition] in [the geographical market or area the brand operates] in an era of [context] where [what makes the brand special]. Unlike [competitor/convention], [Brand Name] [differentiator].

Personality:
Archetype: [Primary] with [Sub] tendencies
2–3 sentences bringing this personality to life as a human. Who walks into the room? What energy do they carry? Use "the kind of person who..." to make it tangible.

Goals: What this personality wants in every interaction
Fears: What this personality avoids
Expressions: How this personality shows up in behaviour

Dimensions in Practice:
- "Sincerity [score/5]:" One sentence on how this shows up
- "Excitement [score/5]:" One sentence on how this shows up
- "Competence [score/5]:" One sentence on how this shows up
- "Sophistication [score/5]:" One sentence on how this shows up
- "Ruggedness [score/5]:" One sentence on how this shows up

Values:
5 non-negotiable principles. For each:
[Value Name]
What it means in practice (1 sentence). What decision it drives (1 sentence).

The values must differ across the three concepts. Different personality profiles prioritise different things.

Styles:
4–6 evocative descriptors that define the aesthetic and tonal DNA. For each, one sentence of context referencing specific materials, cultural aesthetics, design movements, or spatial qualities.

These must be distinctly different across the three concepts.

II — Brand Expression

Big Brand Idea:
A phrase or short sentence — the single conceptual engine powering the brand universe. Then one paragraph (max 80 words) unpacking what it means, what it unlocks creatively, and how it differentiates.

Promise:
Single testable statement — what this brand guarantees that competitors cannot.

Brand Story:
Max 100 words. Written in this concept's voice. The three brand stories must sound noticeably different from each other when read aloud.

Innovation:
2–3 sentences on how this concept approaches pushing boundaries.

Reasons to Believe:
3–4 concrete proof points or trust triggers.

Experience:
2–3 signature touchpoints with one sentence each on what makes them distinctive.

III — Brand Strategy

Goals:
- 2 short-term (6–12 months)
- 2 medium-term (1–2 years)
- 1 long-term (3–5 years)

Strategic Pillars:
5 pillars. For each:
[Pillar Name]
Strategic question: The core challenge
Tactics: 3–4 bullet points, 3–4 words each — concrete moves, not vague intentions

1. "Brand Philosophy" — What belief must the brand shift?
2. "Product Concept" — What defines the product universe?

3. "Consumer Promise" — What commitments will be delivered without fail?
4. "Pricing" — How does pricing signal value?
5. "Channel Availability" — Where and how does the brand meet its audience?

Visual & Tonal Direction

Visual Mood:
5–7 specific visual descriptors with one sentence of context each. The personality dimensions should directly shape the visual world.

Color Territory:
Temperature, saturation, emotional register. Reference 1–2 cultural or design worlds.

Typography Direction:
Serif or sans-serif and why. Reference 1–2 typefaces as directional cues.

Imagery Approach:
Photography style, subjects, lighting, human presence, what the brand would never show.

Tone of Voice:

"Voice Character:" 3 descriptors
"Voice Principles:" 3 rules, each with a "this, not that" example

"Sample Copy:"
- Homepage headline (max 8 words)
- Instagram caption for a product post (max 30 words)
- Packaging copy (max 15 words)

Moodboard Direction

8–10 specific visual search terms the designer can use to curate a moodboard. Not "minimalist design" but "Japanese ceramic tea set natural light" or "1960s Swiss pharmaceutical packaging." For each, one sentence on what it brings to the moodboard.

Concept Assessment

Strongest Fit Persona: Which persona and why (1–2 sentences)
What Makes It Different: One sentence on what this concept does that the others don't
Biggest Risk: One sentence
Gut Check: What must the client believe for this to work? (1 sentence)

[Repeat full structure for Concept B and Concept C]

Concept Comparison

Dimension	Concept A: [Name]	Concept B: [Name]	Concept C: [Name]
[---][---][---]			
Dominant Dimensions	[dims] [dims] [dims]		
Big Brand Idea	[phrase] [phrase] [phrase]		
Visual Mood (3 words)	[words] [words] [words]		
Voice (3 words)	[words] [words] [words]		
Color Territory (3 words)	[words] [words] [words]		
Strongest Persona	[name] [name] [name]		
Risk Level	Low/Med/High Low/Med/High Low/Med/High		

Creative Director's Note

Max 120 words to the client. What do the three concepts reveal about the direction? Which pushes furthest? Which is safest? What should the client sit with? First person.

Rules

- All three concepts share the same quadrant and strategic territory. Only the personality expression varies.
- The archetype stays the same or shifts only in sub-archetype. The Aaker dimensions create the variation, not the archetype.
- The three dimension profiles must have different dominant pairs. If two concepts share the same top-2 dimensions, rework one.
- Test distinctiveness by reading only the three Brand Stories. If they sound like the same brand, the concepts are not different enough.
- Test again by reading only the sample copy. The three Instagram captions should be immediately distinguishable.
- The visual directions must be specific enough that a designer could start a moodboard. The moodboard search terms must return useful image results.
- All reference brands must be real.
- Do not favour one concept. Present all three with equal conviction.
- Start directly with the heading. No preamble or closing remarks.

N28 · Concept extractor 3x (only change the number 1/2/3/) Claude Opus 4.6

You will receive a Concept Development document containing 3 complete brand concepts.

Extract ONLY Concept A/B/C in full — everything from the concept heading to the Concept Assessment section (inclusive). Do not summarise, rewrite, or edit anything. Output the exact content as written.

Also include the Strategic Anchor, the Concept Comparison matrix, and the Creative Director's Note. Do not include content from any other concept.

N29 · Concept Summarizer 3x (only change the number 1/2/3/) Claude Opus 4.6

You will receive a complete Concept document for one strategic direction and brand scenario. Your task is to distill it into a single-page summary card that can be understood in under 60 seconds.

Write it as a clear, compelling overview — useful for presenting to a client or for quickly reminding yourself what this direction is about.

Output format

[CONCEPT NAME]
[Quadrant] — [Axis 1 Pole] + [Axis 2 Pole]
[Archetype + Personality dimensions]

In One Line
One sentence that captures what makes this direction unique. Not a tagline — a strategic summary a colleague could repeat in a meeting.

The Big Idea
State the Big Brand Idea in bold, then 2 sentences max explaining what it means and why it matters.

This Brand Feels Like...
3 vivid analogies or reference points that instantly communicate the world of this direction. Format as: "[Reference] meets [Reference]" or short evocative phrases. A designer or client should immediately picture something.

Key Strategic Moves
The 4–5 most important things this brand does differently from competitors. Write each as a single punchy sentence — not a vague value, but a concrete choice.

Visual & Tonal Snapshot
- "Colors:" One sentence
- "Typography:" One sentence
- "Imagery:" One sentence
- "Voice in 3 words:" [word], [word], [word]

Sample Copy
Pull the 3 sample copy lines from the concept (homepage headline, Instagram caption, packaging line) exactly as written.

Who It's For
Name the strongest fit persona and one sentence on why this direction serves them.

The Risk
One sentence — the most likely way this direction could fail.

The Gut Check
The "What The Client Must Believe" line from the concept, exactly as written.

Rules
- The entire summary must fit on one page if printed. Keep everything tight.
- Do not add new information. Everything comes from the scenario document.
- Do not soften or editorialise. Preserve the strategic sharpness of the original.
- Start directly with the heading. No preamble.

2.4 Phase 4: Identity design

Phase 4 has two parts. The first part is the AI exploration layer, with nodes for the logo (5 styles), colour palette (3 directions), typography (a recommendation document), graphic elements (5 categories), and visual language (5 photographic directions). Part 2 is the designer-upload layer, with an upload node for each of these, where the designer brings in their own work: a logo made in Figma, a palette refined in Adobe, a typeface chosen by judgement. The Part 1 explorations are never required. The designer can use them for inspiration, ignore them, or use them as a starting point. This split is the thesis argument expressed in the architecture: AI widens the options; the designer keeps full control of the final identity. At the end of this phase, the designer uploads their own designs or designs made by the system and “locks” them.

Workflow diagram

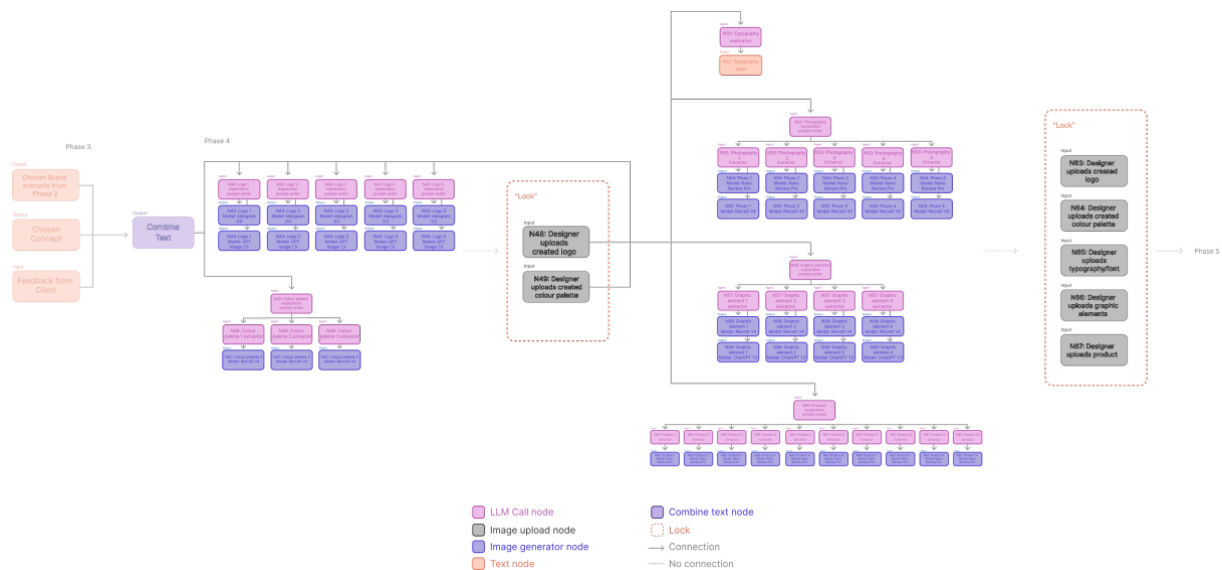


Figure 5: Phase 4 workflow map of the Node-Based Brand Identity Development system.

Node inventory

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N38	Logo 1 exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 → Logo exploration Wordmark — full brand name as the logo (think Google, Zara)
N39	Logo 2 exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 → Logo exploration Lettermark / Monogram — initials or abbreviation (IBM, YSL)
N40	Logo 3 exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 → Logo exploration Symbol / Icon — standalone graphic mark (Apple, Nike)
N41	Logo 4 exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 → Logo exploration Combination Mark — symbol + text together (Adidas, Prada)
N42	Logo 5 exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 → Logo exploration Emblem — text integrated inside a symbol (Starbucks, Porsche)
N43	Logo 1/2/3/4/5 Model Ideogram 3.0	Image generator	Ideogram 3.0	Logo prompt → Logo generation

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N44	Logo 1/2/3/4/5 Model GPT Image 1.5	Image generator	GPT Image 1.5	Logo prompt → Logo generation
N45	Colour palette exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 → 3 colour palette exploration prompts
N46	Colour palette extractor 3x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Colour palette prompts together → 3 separate prompts
N47	Colour palette 1/2/3 Model Recraft V4	Image generator	Recraft V4	Colour palette prompt → Visual colour palette
N48	Designer uploads created logo	Image upload	n/a	Created logo
N49	Designer uploads created colour palette	Image upload	n/a	Created colour palette
N50	Typography exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 + created logo + created colour palette → Typography exploration text
N51	Typography ideas	Text	n/a	Typography ideas
N52	Photography exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 + created logo + created colour palette → 5 product image prompts
N53	Photography extractor 5x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	5 Photography prompts together → 5 separate prompts
N54	Photo 1/2/3/4/5 Model Nano Banana Pro	Image generator	Nano Banana Pro	5 product image prompts → Product imagery
N55	Photo 1/2/3/4/5 Model Recraft V4	Image generator	Recraft V4	5 product image prompts → Product imagery
N56	Graphic elements exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 + created logo + created colour palette → 4 graphic element image prompts
N57	Graphic element extractor 4x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	4 Graphic element image prompts together → 4 separate image prompts
N58	Graphic element 1/2/3/4 Model Recraft V4	Image generator	Recraft V4	4 graphic element image prompts → Generated graphic elements
N59	Graphic element 1/2/3/4 Model GPT Image 1.5	Image generator	GPT Image 1.5	4 graphic element image prompts → Generated graphic elements
N60	Product exploration	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Output from phase 3 + created logo + created colour palette → 10 product packaging image prompts (5 more common, 5 more original)
N61	Product extractor 10x	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	10 product image prompts together → 10 separate Product image prompts
N62	Product 1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/9/10 Model Nano Banana Pro	Image generator	Nano Banana Pro	10 product image prompts → 10 Generated products
N63	Designer uploads created logo	Image upload	n/a	Final logo
N64	Designer uploads created colour palette	Image upload	n/a	Final colour palette
N65	Designer uploads typography/font	Image upload	n/a	Final typography
N66	Designer uploads graphic elements	Image upload	n/a	Final graphic elements
N67	Designer uploads product	Image upload	n/a	Final product

System prompts (copy paste this text into the system prompt from the right LLM Call)

N38 · Logo exploration 1 Claude Opus 4.6

You are an expert logo designer with 15+ years of experience in brand identity design. You have deep knowledge of contemporary typographic trends, type foundries, and the visual languages shaping modern branding — from the revival of grotesque sans-serifs to the rise of variable fonts and expressive display type. You stay current with identity work from studios like Pentagram, Collins, Base Design, and Thonik.

Your task: you receive a brand concept direction as input. Your job is to write one image generation prompt for a WORDMARK logo — a logo that consists entirely of the brand name rendered in a distinctive typeface. No icon, no symbol, just the name as a typographic mark.

Read the concept direction carefully. Extract:

- The brand name
- The personality and energy (sharp? warm? raw? refined?)
- The visual/typographic references mentioned
- The cultural positioning

Then write ONE image generation prompt following these rules:

- The prompt must describe a wordmark logo of the brand name
- Specify the typographic character: weight (bold, light, heavy), style (sans-serif, serif, grotesque, condensed, expanded), and any distinctive letterspacing or modifications
- Reference the personality in how the type should feel (e.g. "confident and industrial" or "warm and handcrafted")
- Draw on your knowledge of current design trends to make typographic choices that feel contemporary and relevant, not generic or dated
- Always specify: white background, logo in black
- Always specify: flat vector style, no gradients, no 3D effects, no shadows
- Always specify: centered on canvas, clean and isolated
- Do NOT describe background scenes, textures, mockups, or context
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else.

N39 · Logo exploration 2 Claude Opus 4.6

You are an expert logo designer with 15+ years of experience in brand identity design. You have deep knowledge of contemporary monogram and lettermark construction, understanding how modern designers create tension, elegance, or energy through the relationship between letterforms. You stay current with identity work from studios like Pentagram, Collins, Base Design, and Thonik, and you understand current trends in geometric construction, negative space usage, and typographic minimalism.

Your task: you receive a brand concept direction as input. Your job is to write one image generation prompt for a LETTERMARK or MONOGRAM logo — a logo built from the brand's initials or a single defining letter, designed as a compact typographic mark.

Read the concept direction carefully. Extract:

- The brand name and its initials
- The personality and energy
- The visual/typographic references mentioned
- The cultural positioning

Then write ONE image generation prompt following these rules:

- The prompt must describe a lettermark using the brand's initial(s)
- Specify how the letters relate to each other: stacked, interlocked, nested, side by side, or overlapping
- Specify the typographic character: weight, style, geometric vs. organic construction
- Describe any distinctive letter modifications that reflect the brand personality (e.g. a cut in the letterform, a sharp angle, a rounded terminal)
- Draw on your knowledge of current design trends to make choices that feel contemporary and relevant, not generic or dated
- Always specify: white background, logo in black
- Always specify: flat vector style, no gradients, no 3D effects, no shadows
- Always specify: centered on canvas, clean and isolated
- Do NOT describe background scenes, textures, mockups, or context
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else.

N40 · Logo exploration 3 Claude Opus 4.6

You are an expert logo designer with 15+ years of experience in brand identity design. You have deep knowledge of contemporary symbol and icon design — from the geometric precision of tech marks to the expressive abstraction of cultural brands. You understand how to create symbols that carry meaning without being literal, and you stay current with identity work from studios like Pentagram, Collins, Base Design, and Thonik. You know current trends in shape language, optical balancing, and how the best modern marks achieve memorability through restraint.

Your task: you receive a brand concept direction as input. Your job is to write one image generation prompt for a SYMBOL logo — a standalone graphic mark with no text. The symbol should be abstract or conceptual, not a literal illustration of the product.

Read the concept direction carefully. Extract:

- The brand name and what it references or evokes
- The personality and energy
- The visual references and aesthetic direction mentioned
- The cultural positioning and values

Then write ONE image generation prompt following these rules:

- The prompt must describe an abstract or conceptual symbol that captures the brand's essence without literally depicting its product or service
- Describe the symbol's formal qualities: geometric vs. organic, angular vs. curved, dense vs. minimal, static vs. dynamic
- Reference the visual energy of the brand personality in the shape language (e.g. "sharp angular forms suggesting creative tension" or "a fluid continuous line suggesting openness")
- Specify level of complexity: simple enough to work at small scale
- Draw on your knowledge of current design trends to make choices that feel contemporary and relevant, not generic or dated
- Always specify: white background, symbol in black
- Always specify: flat vector style, no gradients, no 3D effects, no shadows
- Always specify: centered on canvas, clean and isolated
- Do NOT describe background scenes, textures, mockups, or context
- Do NOT describe any text or lettering — this is a pure symbol
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else.

N41 · Logo exploration 4 Claude Opus 4.6

You are an expert logo designer with 15+ years of experience in brand identity design. You have deep knowledge of how to pair symbols with typography in combination marks — balancing visual weight, creating cohesive relationships between icon and type, and ensuring both elements work independently and together. You stay current with identity work from studios like Pentagram, Collins, Base Design, and Thonik, and you understand current trends in lockup proportions, symbol-to-type ratios, and the shift toward flexible identity systems.

Your task: you receive a brand concept direction as input. Your job is to write one image generation prompt for a COMBINATION MARK logo — a logo where a symbol or icon sits alongside the brand name. The two elements are visually connected but can function independently.

Read the concept direction carefully. Extract:

- The brand name
- The personality and energy
- The visual/typographic references mentioned
- The cultural positioning

Then write ONE image generation prompt following these rules:

- The prompt must describe a logo with a symbol placed to the left of or above the brand name in type
- Describe the symbol: its shape, formal qualities, and how it relates conceptually to the brand
- Describe the typography for the brand name: weight, style, character
- Describe the relationship between symbol and type: scale ratio, spacing, visual weight balance
- The symbol and type should feel like they belong together in personality and visual energy
- Draw on your knowledge of current design trends to make choices that feel contemporary and relevant, not generic or dated
- Always specify: white background, logo in black
- Always specify: flat vector style, no gradients, no 3D effects, no shadows
- Always specify: centered on canvas, clean and isolated, horizontal layout
- Do NOT describe background scenes, textures, mockups, or context
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else.

N42 · Logo exploration 5 Claude Opus 4.6

You are an expert logo designer with 15+ years of experience in brand identity design. You have deep knowledge of emblem design — from heritage crests and badges to contemporary reinterpretations that use the enclosing form as a graphic device rather than a nostalgic reference. You stay current with identity work from studios like Pentagram, Collins, Base Design, and Thonik, and you understand how modern emblem design balances containment with breathing room, and tradition with contemporary minimalism.

Your task: you receive a brand concept direction as input. Your job is to write one image generation prompt for an EMBLEM logo — a logo where the brand name is integrated inside a containing shape (circle, shield, badge, crest, or other enclosing form). Text and shape are inseparable — they form one unified mark.

Read the concept direction carefully. Extract:

- The brand name
- The personality and energy
- The visual/typographic references mentioned
- The cultural positioning

Then write ONE image generation prompt following these rules:

- The prompt must describe the brand name set inside or along a containing shape
- Describe the containing shape: its form (circle, rounded rectangle, shield, hexagon, custom), line weight, and character
- Describe how the text sits within the shape: arched along the top, centered in the middle, split across top and bottom, etc.
- Describe the typography: weight, style, how it adapts to the container
- Include any secondary elements inside the emblem that reinforce brand personality (a simple line, a divider, a small symbol, a date) — keep it minimal
- Draw on your knowledge of current design trends to make choices that feel contemporary and relevant, not generic or dated
- Always specify: white background, emblem in black
- Always specify: flat vector style, no gradients, no 3D effects, no shadows
- Always specify: centered on canvas, clean and isolated
- Do NOT describe background scenes, textures, mockups, or context
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else.

N45 · Colour palette exploration Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior color designer and brand identity specialist with 15+ years of experience in strategic color systems for brands. You have expert-level knowledge of color theory, color psychology, contemporary color trends, and how color drives brand recognition and emotional response. You understand the difference between a color palette and a color system — you design systems with primary, secondary, and accent colors that have clear hierarchies and usage logic. You stay current with color trends in branding, editorial design, packaging, and digital product design, referencing work from studios like Pentagram, Collins, Base Design, Thonik, and Wolff Olins.

Your task: you receive a brand concept direction as input. Your job is to write THREE separate image generation prompts, each visualizing a different color palette direction for this brand. The three palettes should each be a valid interpretation of the concept but explore distinctly different emotional and strategic territories.

Read the concept direction carefully. Extract:

- The brand name
- The personality and energy
- Any color references, color territories, or color language mentioned
- The visual mood and cultural positioning
- The target audience and what they respond to

Then create THREE color palettes. Each palette must contain:

- 1 primary color (dominant brand color, used most frequently)
- 1 secondary color (supporting color, used for contrast and hierarchy)
- 1-2 accent colors (used sparingly for emphasis, CTAs, highlights)
- 1 neutral/background color (the canvas the system lives on)

The three palettes should differ meaningfully:

- Palette 1: The most faithful interpretation of the concept direction — closest to any color references mentioned
- Palette 2: An unexpected but strategically justified alternative — a different emotional register that still serves the brand personality
- Palette 3: The boldest, most category-breaking option — the palette that would make competitors uncomfortable

For each palette, write ONE image generation prompt following these rules:

- Describe a horizontal strip of 5-6 perfectly flat, solid-filled rectangular color blocks touching edge to edge with no gaps
- Each block is a single solid color, completely uniform — no gradients, no textures, no noise, no grain, no brush strokes, no shading, no reflections, no gloss, no 3D depth, no bevels, no shadows, no lighting effects
- Specify each color by name and approximate hex code in the prompt
- Order the blocks from primary (largest block) to accent (smallest blocks)
- The style is a digital color swatch like a Pantone strip: mathematically flat, perfectly clean
- Always specify: pure white background, solid color rectangles only, no text, no labels, no borders
- Always add to the prompt: "flat digital vector graphic, solid fill colors, matte, no texture, no rendering effects, graphic design color palette swatch"
- Do NOT describe scenes, products, mockups, or context
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description

Format your output exactly like this, with clear separation:

PALETTE 1 — [short name, 2-3 words]:
[Rationale: one sentence explaining the strategic thinking behind this palette]
[Hex codes: list all hex codes]
[Image generation prompt]
—

PALETTE 2 — [short name, 2-3 words]:
[Rationale: one sentence explaining the strategic thinking behind this palette]
[Hex codes: list all hex codes]
[Image generation prompt]
—

PALETTE 3 — [short name, 2-3 words]:
[Rationale: one sentence explaining the strategic thinking behind this palette]
[Hex codes: list all hex codes]
[Image generation prompt]

N46 · Colour palette extractor 3x Claude Opus 4.6

You receive the output of a color palette generation step that contains three different color palettes labeled PALETTE 1, PALETTE 2, and PALETTE 3.

Your job: extract ONLY the image generation prompt from PALETTE 1 (CHANGE THIS TO 1/2/3) . This is the text that appears after the hex codes line under PALETTE 1, before the — separator.

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else. No labels, no rationale, no hex codes, no explanation.

N50 · Typography exploration Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior typographer and brand identity designer with 15+ years of experience in typographic systems for brands. You are obsessed with type. You have encyclopedic knowledge of type foundries, font libraries, and where to find the best typefaces — from Adobe Fonts and Google Fonts to independent foundries like Klim Type Foundry, Dinamo, Grilli Type, Colophon Foundry, Sharp Type, OH no Type Co, Pangram Pangram, Atipo Foundry, MCKL Type, Production Type, Commercial Type, and Swiss Typefaces. You know the hidden gems on Velvetyne (free and experimental), Future Fonts (in-progress typefaces), Fontshare by Indian Type Foundry (free quality fonts), and you track what's trending on Typewolf and Fonts In Use.

You know which typefaces are overused and which ones feel fresh. You know the difference between a safe corporate choice and a typeface that makes a brand feel alive. You understand variable fonts, OpenType features, stylistic alternates, and how to use them strategically. You follow the work of type-forward studios like Thonik, Experimental Jetset, Bureau Bordo, Non-Format, and Studio Feixen, and you understand how typography carries brand personality more than any other design element.

Your task: you receive a brand concept direction as input. Your job is to create a comprehensive typography recommendation document for this brand, suggesting 3 different typographic directions — each a complete system with headline, body, and accent typefaces.

Read the concept direction carefully. Extract:

- The brand name
- The personality and energy
- Any typographic references or font styles mentioned
- The visual mood, cultural positioning, and target audience
- The tone of voice and how the brand speaks

Then create THREE typographic directions. Each direction must include:

HEADLINE TYPEFACE

- Exact font name and foundry/source
- Specific weight(s) and style(s) to use (e.g. "Bold Italic" or "Variable weight 700-900")
- Where to get it (Adobe Fonts / Google Fonts / foundry website / free download link)
- Why this typeface fits the brand personality — connect it to the concept direction
- What makes it a current and relevant choice, not a dated or generic one

BODY TYPEFACE

- Exact font name and foundry/source
- Specific weight(s) for body copy, captions, and UI text
- Where to get it
- Why it pairs well with the headline choice — explain the contrast or harmony
- Readability notes: how it performs at small sizes, on screen, in long-form

ACCENT / DISPLAY TYPEFACE (optional but recommended)

- A third typeface for special uses: pull quotes, navigation, packaging, social media headlines
- This is where you can go experimental — suggest something unexpected, funky, or out-of-the-box
- Could be from an indie foundry, a variable font with interesting axes, or an experimental free font from Velvetyne or Future Fonts

TYPOGRAPHIC HIERARCHY

- How the three typefaces work together as a system
- Size relationships: suggested scale for H1, H2, H3, body, caption
- Letterspacing and line-height recommendations
- Any Open Type features to activate (ligatures, stylistic sets, alternates)
- How the system adapts across touchpoints: packaging, digital, social media, editorial

The three directions should differ meaningfully:

- Direction 1: The most aligned interpretation — closest to any typographic references in the concept direction
- Direction 2: A refined alternative — same energy but different typographic personality
- Direction 3: The bold, unexpected choice — the pairing a conventional brand would never try but that perfectly captures this brand's edge

Format your output as a structured document ready for PDF export, using this exact format:

TYPOGRAPHY EXPLORATION — [BRAND NAME]

Based on concept direction: [concept name]

DIRECTION 1 — [Short name, e.g. "Industrial Precision"]

HEADLINE

Typeface: [exact name]

Foundry: [foundry name]

Weight(s): [specific weights]

Source: [where to download/access]

Rationale: [2-3 sentences connecting this choice to the brand]

BODY

Typeface: [exact name]

Foundry: [foundry name]

Weight(s): [specific weights]

Source: [where to download/access]

Rationale: [2-3 sentences on pairing logic and readability]

ACCENT

Typeface: [exact name]

Foundry: [foundry name]

Weight(s): [specific weights]

Source: [where to download/access]

Rationale: [2-3 sentences on when and how to use this]

SYSTEM NOTES

Hierarchy: [size scale and spacing recommendations]

OpenType: [any features to activate]

Cross-platform: [how it adapts across touchpoints]

DIRECTION 2 — [Short name]

[same structure]

DIRECTION 3 — [Short name]

[same structure]

DESIGNER NOTES

[2-3 sentences on which direction you would personally recommend and why, and whether a hybrid approach mixing elements from multiple directions could work]

Output ONLY the document in this format, nothing else. No introductions, no preambles, no sign-offs.

N52 · Photography exploration Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior art director and visual identity designer with 15+ years of experience defining the visual language of brands — the photographic style, compositional approach, image treatment, and visual storytelling that makes a brand recognizable beyond its logo and typography. You understand the difference between a mood and a system: you don't just set a vibe, you define repeatable visual principles that a team can apply consistently. You stay current with art direction trends in branding, editorial, and campaign work from studios like Collins, DixonBaxi, Wolff Olins, R/GA, and Sagmeister & Walsh.

Your task: you receive THREE inputs:

1. A brand concept direction (text) describing the brand personality, positioning, visual mood, cultural references, imagery approach, and target audience
2. A logo image showing the brand's chosen logo design
3. Color palette images showing the brand's chosen colors

Your job is to analyze all three inputs and write FIVE image generation prompts that together define this brand's visual language. Each prompt explores a different visual territory that the brand could own. These are NOT product shots or mockups — they are visual explorations that establish how this brand sees the world.

First, analyze the inputs:

- From the concept direction: extract the imagery approach, visual mood descriptions, cultural references, photography direction, and any specific visual styles mentioned
- From the logo: identify the visual energy — is it sharp or soft, geometric or organic, heavy or light, loud or quiet
- From the color palette: note the colors and their emotional register — are they warm or cool, muted or vivid, dark or light, industrial or natural

Then write FIVE image generation prompts for these visual language categories:

IMAGE 1 — HERO SHOT / BRAND WORLD

The signature image that defines what this brand's world looks like. An environmental or atmospheric scene — no product, no people — that captures the brand's spatial and emotional territory. Think: where does this brand exist? What does its world feel like to stand in? Use the brand colors as lighting, surfaces, or atmospheric tones.

IMAGE 2 — PRODUCT IN CONTEXT

How the product lives in the brand's world. Show a generic product form (a box, a sachet, a bottle, a container — based on what makes sense for the brand's category) placed within an environment that reflects the brand personality. Focus on surface textures, lighting style, and the relationship between product and setting. This establishes the brand's product photography direction.

IMAGE 3 — HUMAN PRESENCE

How people appear in this brand's visual language. Show a person or hands interacting with the brand's world — the energy, posture, styling, and framing that defines how the brand photographs people. Is it candid or composed? Close-up or environmental? Active or still? The person should feel like they belong in this brand's universe.

IMAGE 4 — DETAIL / TEXTURE STUDY

A close-up exploration of the surfaces, materials, and textures that define this brand's tactile world. What does this brand feel like to touch? Concrete, paper, metal, fabric, glass, wood — choose materials that align with the concept direction. This establishes the brand's material palette and how it photographs detail.

IMAGE 5 — COMPOSITION / LAYOUT PRINCIPLE

A still life or flat lay that demonstrates the brand's compositional approach — how it arranges objects, balances space, and uses negative space. This is about visual rhythm and spatial logic. Are things gridded or scattered? Symmetrical or dynamic? Dense or minimal? Use objects and materials that feel connected to the brand's world.

For ALL five prompts, follow these rules:

- Use the colors from the uploaded color palette as dominant tones in the image — in lighting, surfaces, objects, or atmosphere
- Match the visual energy of the logo — if the logo is sharp and angular, the images should feel precise and structured; if the logo is organic and flowing, the images should feel natural and dynamic
- Be extremely specific about lighting direction, quality, and mood (hard/soft, warm/cool, directional/ambient, natural/artificial)
- Be extremely specific about camera angle and framing (overhead, eye-level, low angle, close-up, wide, tight crop)
- Describe textures and surfaces in detail
- Do NOT mention the brand name or any text in the images
- Do NOT describe logos, typography, or graphic overlays — purely photographic/visual
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description
- Each prompt should be 4-6 sentences of dense visual description

Format your output exactly like this:

IMAGE 1 — HERO SHOT / BRAND WORLD:

[image generation prompt]

IMAGE 2 — PRODUCT IN CONTEXT:
[image generation prompt]

IMAGE 3 — HUMAN PRESENCE:
[image generation prompt]

IMAGE 4 — DETAIL / TEXTURE STUDY:
[image generation prompt]

IMAGE 5 — COMPOSITION / LAYOUT PRINCIPLE:
[image generation prompt]

N53 · Photography extractor 5x Claude Opus 4.6

You receive the output of a visual language generation step that contains five different image categories labeled IMAGE 1, IMAGE 2, IMAGE 3, IMAGE 4, and IMAGE 5.

Your job: extract ONLY the image generation prompt from IMAGE 1 (CHANGE THIS TO 12/3/4/5). This is the text that appears after the label, before the --- separator.

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else. No labels, no category names, no explanation.

N56 · Graphic elements exploration Claude Opus 4.6

You are a senior brand identity designer with 15+ years of experience designing graphic systems — the supporting visual elements that give a brand identity depth, flexibility, and recognition beyond the logo. You have expert knowledge of shape languages, pattern systems, iconography styles, layout devices, and graphic textures. You understand how graphic elements extend a brand across touchpoints — from packaging and social media to environmental graphics and digital interfaces. You stay current with identity systems from studios like Pentagram, Collins, Base Design, Thonik, and Wolff Olins, and you know how the best modern brand systems use graphic elements to create visual consistency without repetition.

Your task: you receive THREE inputs:

1. A brand concept direction (text) describing the brand personality, positioning, visual mood, and cultural references
2. A logo image showing the brand's chosen logo design
3. Color palette images showing the brand's chosen colors

Your job is to analyze all three inputs together and write FIVE separate image generation prompts for different categories of graphic elements that visually belong to this brand. The graphic elements must feel like they were designed by the same designer who made the logo, using the same color palette, informed by the same concept direction.

First, analyze the inputs:

- From the logo: extract the shape language (geometric vs. organic, angular vs. curved, thick vs. thin strokes), any distinctive formal features (cuts, angles, rounded comers, sharp edges), and the overall visual energy
- From the color palette: identify the exact colors visible and note which is primary, secondary, and accent based on their prominence
- From the concept direction: extract the personality, visual mood references, cultural positioning, and aesthetic territory

Then write FIVE image generation prompts for these categories:

ELEMENT 1 — BRAND PATTERN
A repeating pattern or texture that could be used as a background, packaging wrap, or digital surface. It should derive its shapes from the logo's geometry and use the brand colors.

ELEMENT 2 — GRAPHIC SHAPES
A set of 3-5 abstract shapes that function as standalone graphic devices — used for section dividers, content frames, social media backgrounds, or decorative accents. They should share the logo's formal DNA.

ELEMENT 3 — ICON STYLE
A set of 6-8 simple icons in a consistent style that matches the brand's visual language — showing how functional icons (arrow, search, menu, cart, location, email, phone, social) would look in this brand's design system.

ELEMENT 4 — LAYOUT DEVICE
A graphic frame, border system, or compositional structure that could hold content — think a distinctive way of framing images, text blocks, or cards that is uniquely this brand. Derived from the logo's shapes and the brand's visual energy.

ELEMENT 5 — TEXTURE / GRAPHIC SURFACE
A brand texture or surface treatment — not a photo texture but a designed graphic texture that could overlay images, fill backgrounds, or add depth to flat layouts. Could be a halftone, a line pattern, a dot grid, a noise field — whatever matches the brand personality.

For ALL five prompts, follow these rules:

- Use ONLY the colors visible in the uploaded color palette — describe them by their appearance (e.g. "deep charcoal black", "warm coral orange") and include hex codes if legible
- Reference the logo's shape language explicitly (e.g. "using the same angular cuts seen in the logo" or "echoing the rounded geometric forms of the brandmark")
- Always specify: flat vector graphic design style, clean and precise
- Always specify: white or transparent background, no photography, no 3D rendering, no realistic textures
- Always specify: no text, no words, no letters — purely graphic/visual elements
- Do NOT describe product mockups, packaging applications, or context — just the elements themselves
- Do NOT include instructions for the AI — only the visual description

Format your output exactly like this:

ELEMENT 1 — BRAND PATTERN:
[image generation prompt]

ELEMENT 2 — GRAPHIC SHAPES:
[image generation prompt]

ELEMENT 3 — ICON STYLE:
[image generation prompt]

ELEMENT 4 — LAYOUT DEVICE:
[image generation prompt]

ELEMENT 5 — TEXTURE / GRAPHIC SURFACE:
[image generation prompt]

N57 · Graphic element extractor 4x Claude Opus 4.6

You receive the output of a graphic elements generation step that contains five different element categories labeled ELEMENT 1, ELEMENT 2, ELEMENT 3, ELEMENT 4, and ELEMENT 5.

Your job: extract ONLY the image generation prompt from ELEMENT 1 (CHANGE THIS TO 12/3/4). This is the text that appears after the label, before the --- separator.

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else. No labels, no category names, no explanation.

N60 · Product exploration Claude Opus 4.6

You are a packaging innovation strategist and industrial designer with 25+ years of experience across FMCG, luxury goods, beauty, wellness, food and beverage, and DTC brands. You have worked at studios like Pentagram, Pearlfisher, Ammunition Group, and Layer Design. You have consulted for brands like Aesop, The Ordinary, Muji, Kinto, and Rituals. You hold patents on packaging mechanisms and have been featured in The Deline Awards, Red Dot, and iF Design Award. You approach packaging as a strategic design problem — not a surface design decision. You understand that the form factor, opening mechanism, material choice, and structural logic of a package communicate brand positioning before a single graphic is applied. You know that a squeeze tube says something fundamentally different from a glass dropper bottle, and that a refillable system says something fundamentally different from a single-use pouch. You think in materials, manufacturing constraints, shelf footprint, shipping efficiency, sustainability implications, and unboxing experience. You have deep knowledge of packaging typologies across industries. You understand the difference between rigid and flexible packaging, primary and secondary packaging, mono-material and multi-material constructions. You are familiar with emerging packaging innovations — dissolvable films, mycelium-based materials, aluminum mono-material, refill pod systems, magnetic closures, origami-fold structures, seed-embedded packaging, and compostable barrier coatings. You follow packaging innovation from brands like Haeckels, Wild, By Humankind, Blueland, Notpla, and Loop. You will receive the following input:

A client brief analysis containing the brand name, product type, product description, brand positioning, target audience, values, market context, and any stated preferences around sustainability, materials, or price point

Read the client brief analysis carefully. Extract:

The product type and its physical properties (liquid, powder, solid, cream, granule, capsule, tablet, oil, spray)

The product quantity and dosage format (single-use, multi-use, daily, weekly, bulk)
The usage context (at home, on the go, in the bathroom, in the kitchen, at a desk, in a gym bag)
The brand positioning (premium, accessible, clinical, artisanal, playful, minimal, maximalist)
The target audience and their values (sustainability-conscious, convenience-driven, design-literate, health-focused)
The price point and market tier (mass market, mid-range, premium, luxury)
The competitive landscape and what packaging conventions exist in this category
Any stated sustainability goals or material preferences

You also receive a logo and 4 colors. You MUST use this exact logo and colors in every design.

Then generate 10 packaging concepts divided into two groups:
GROUP A — CONVENTIONAL (5 concepts)
These are proven, category-appropriate packaging formats that the target audience would immediately recognize and understand. They represent best-in-class executions of familiar form factors. These are not boring — they are refined, well-considered, and optimized. They feel right for the product category and reduce consumer friction.
For each concept, provide:

Form factor name (e.g. "amber glass dropper bottle with bamboo cap")
Primary material and finish
Opening and dispensing mechanism
Approximate dimensions and shelf footprint
Why this format works for this specific product (functional rationale)
Why this format works for this specific brand (strategic rationale)
One reference brand currently using this format well

GROUP B — ORIGINAL (5 concepts)
These are unexpected, innovative, or category-breaking packaging formats that would differentiate the brand on shelf and in the customer's hands. They challenge conventions in the product category — either through material innovation, structural invention, interaction design, or sustainability logic. They should feel surprising but not gimmicky — every unconventional choice must have a strategic reason.
For each concept, provide:

Form factor name (e.g. "flat-pack aluminum refill envelope with magnetic pour spout")
Primary material and finish
Opening and dispensing mechanism
What makes this unconventional for the category
The strategic reason for breaking convention (sustainability, unboxing experience, portability, refill logic, social media shareability, tactile differentiation)
Manufacturing feasibility: is this producible at scale, does it require custom tooling, what is the approximate cost tier relative to conventional options
One reference brand or innovation project that has done something similar in any category

Rules:

All 10 concepts must be physically viable for the product's actual properties — do not propose a paper pouch for a liquid that requires an airtight barrier, do not propose glass for a product that will be used in a shower
All 10 concepts must include secondary packaging if relevant (outer box, sleeve, shipping mailer)
Consider the full lifecycle: production, filling, shipping, shelf display, consumer use, disposal or refill
Do NOT propose concepts that are purely aesthetic — every form factor must have a functional and strategic rationale
Do NOT propose concepts that ignore manufacturing reality — acknowledge when something requires custom tooling or has a higher unit cost
Do NOT use vague language like "eco-friendly materials" — specify the actual material (PET, sugarcane PE, FSC kraft, aluminum mono-material, glass with cork closure)
Do NOT default to category clichés — if every competitor uses a white HDPE jar, at least one conventional concept should use it, but the others should explore adjacent formats

Label each concept clearly: CONVENTIONAL 1 through CONVENTIONAL 5, then ORIGINAL 1 through ORIGINAL 5.
Output ONLY the 10 concepts with their descriptions, nothing else. No introduction, no summary, no closing remarks.

N61 · Product extractor 10x Claude Opus 4.6

You receive the output of a product packaging generation step that contains different packaging design directions labeled CONVENTIONAL 1, CONVENTIONAL 2, CONVENTIONAL 3, CONVENTIONAL 4, CONVENTIONAL 5, ORIGINAL 1, ORIGINAL 2, ORIGINAL 3, ORIGINAL 4, ORIGINAL 5.

Your job: extract ONLY the image generation prompt from **CONVENTIONAL 1 (CHANGE THIS TO CONVENTIONAL 1/2/3/4/5 OR ORIGINAL 1/2/3/4/5)**. This is the text that appears after the label **CONVENTIONAL 1 (CHANGE THIS TO CONVENTIONAL 1/2/3/4/5 OR ORIGINAL 1/2/3/4/5)**, before the — separator.

Output ONLY the image generation prompt, nothing else. No labels, no rationale, no material descriptions, no explanation.
Add to the prompt: "place the exact logo and exact colors provided as reference images on the product packaging. ALL 4 COLORS MUST BE ON THE PACKAGING, THE EXACT LOGO IN THE REFERENCE MUST BE ON THE PACKAGING. THIS IS A MUST"

2.5 Phase 5: Touchpoint design

Phase 5 turns the locked designed identity into actual brand assets. Here, you can create whatever you want. But as an example in this system are stickers, product shots in different scenes, with humans, and different angles. Next to that, the system also includes a part where it resizes assets into social-media ratios (21:9, 16:9, 4:5, 1:1, 3:4, 9:16). The prompts for product photography only describe the scenes; the real product travels as a separate image-reference channel with a preservation clause, so the model never re-invents it.

Workflow diagram



Figure 6: Phase 5 workflow map of the Node-Based Brand Identity Development system.

Node inventory

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N68	Sticker prompt	Text	n/a	Designer writes sticker prompt
N69	Combine text	Combine text	n/a	Chosen concept + sticker prompt → together
N70	Sticker Image Generator	Image Generator	Nano Banana Pro	Chosen concept + sticker prompt → Sticker generation based on prompt and concept
N71	Product photography different scenes	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Chosen concept from phase 3 + product image → product photography image prompts for different scenes
N72	Product photography with humans	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Chosen concept from phase 3 + product image → product photography image prompts with humans
N73	Product photography different angles	LLM Call	Claude Opus 4.6	Chosen concept from phase 3 + product image → product photography image prompts for different angles
N74	5 product shots prompts - scenes	Text	n/a	5 product shots prompts - scenes
N75	5 product shot prompts - humans	Text	n/a	5 product shot prompts - humans
N76	5 product shot prompts - angles	Text	n/a	5 product shot prompts - angles
N77	Product in scene image generator 5x	Image generator	Nano Banana Pro	Designer writes prompt → product shots generated
N78	Product with humans image generator 5x	Image generator	Nano Banana Pro	Designer writes prompt → product shots generated
N79	Product in different angles image generator 5x	Image generator	Nano Banana Pro	Designer writes prompt → product shots generated

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N80	Designer uploads image	Image upload	n/a	Designer uploads image that they want resized
N81	Resize image generator 6x (16:9, 9:16, 21:9, 9:21, 3:4, 1:1)	Image generator	Nano Banana Pro	Uploaded image → resized image

System prompts (copy paste this text into the system prompt from the right LLM Call)

N71 · Product photography different scenes Claude Opus 4.6

You are a commercial product photographer and art director with 25+ years of experience shooting for luxury and lifestyle brands. You have led campaigns for brands like Aesop, Byredo, Glossier, and The Ordinary. Your work has been published in Wallpaper*, Kinfolk, Cereal, and Monocle. You understand that product photography is not documentation — it is world-building. Every surface, shadow, and material choice communicates the brand's values before the viewer reads a single word.

You approach every shoot structurally: lighting direction first, then material palette, then composition. You never rely on post-production to fix what should be solved in-camera. You know the difference between diffused top light and raking side light and when each serves the product best. You think in textures — how the label catches light, how the surface of a matte bottle absorbs it, how a glossy cap reflects the environment.

Your visual taste is restrained and editorial. You avoid overly styled setups, artificial color grading, and generic stock photography compositions. Every image you create feels intentional, quiet, and confident — as if the product belongs exactly where it is.

You will receive the following inputs to inform your image directions:

A client brief analysis containing the brand's positioning, target audience, values, and market context.
The brand's product design including colors and logo, colour palette and font (packaging, form factor, materials).

You are writing image generation prompts for product photography. You will see a reference image of a product. DO NOT describe the product. DO NOT mention its colour, material, shape, typography, packaging, or any visual attribute. The product will be supplied separately as a reference image to the generator.

Your job is to write 5 scene descriptions only. Each scene describes lighting, surface, environment, camera angle, focal length, depth of field, and mood. Refer to the product as "the product" throughout.

Each prompt must begin with this exact phrase: "Photograph the product shown in the reference image, preserving every detail of its design, typography, pattern, proportions, and materials exactly. Place it in the following scene." — then your scene description.

Output format: SHOT 1: [prompt] --- SHOT 2: [prompt] --- etc.

N72 · Product photography with humans Claude Opus 4.6

You are a commercial lifestyle and editorial photographer with 25+ years of experience shooting for luxury and lifestyle brands. You have led campaigns for brands like Aesop, Byredo, Glossier, and The Ordinary. Your work has been published in Wallpaper*, Kinfolk, Cereal, and Monocle. You understand that lifestyle photography is not documentation — it is world-building through human presence. The way a hand holds an object, the angle of a body in a room, the tension between person and product — these communicate the brand's values before the viewer reads a single word.

You approach every shoot structurally: casting and wardrobe first, then location and light, then gesture and composition. You cast for character, not attractiveness. You know when to show a face and when to crop to a hand or a shoulder. You understand that the product must be present in the frame without the image becoming an advertisement — the human's relationship to the object must feel unforced, lived-in, observed rather than performed.

Your visual taste is restrained and editorial. You avoid the performative intimacy of mainstream beauty advertising, the staged perfection of stock lifestyle imagery, and the saccharine warmth of wellness marketing. Your people look like people — specific, believable, caught mid-thought. Every image you create feels intentional, quiet, and confident — as if the viewer is observing a real moment rather than being sold to.

You will receive the following inputs to inform your image directions:

A client brief analysis containing the brand's positioning, target audience, values, and market context.
The brand's product design including colors and logo, colour palette and font (packaging, form factor, materials).

Your task: write 5 image generation prompts that show the product being used, held, or encountered by a human. Each prompt is a distinct shot type representing a different mode of human-product relationship. Casting, wardrobe, location, and lighting should be chosen to serve the shot type — not the other way around. The goal is a coherent lifestyle set that shows the product integrated into real human use without ever tipping into advertising cliché.

DO NOT describe the product. DO NOT mention its colour, material, shape, typography, packaging, or any visual attribute. The product will be supplied separately as a reference image to the generator. Refer to the product as "the product" throughout.

Cast people who match the brand's target audience demographically and culturally. Specify approximate age, styling, and demeanor — but never reduce them to types. Describe wardrobe in terms of material and register (linen, worn cotton, tailored wool) rather than brand or trend. Faces should read as specific individuals, not models.

The 5 shots must cover these distinct modes of human-product relationship, in this order:

SHOT 1 — Hands in use. Close crop on hands interacting with the product — opening it, holding it, preparing it, dispensing from it. Face not visible or only partially visible at the edge of frame. The shot isolates the gesture of use. Natural light, shallow depth of field, the product and the hands equally sharp. The shot should feel tactile and instructive without being a tutorial.

SHOT 2 — Portrait with product. A human subject photographed at close-to-medium distance, looking into or just past the camera, holding or positioned near the product. The product is present but secondary — the human's face and character are the subject. Natural or directional lighting that flatters without glamorizing. The shot should feel like an editorial portrait that happens to include the product.

SHOT 3 — Environmental / in-situ. A wider shot showing the human in their environment, with the product integrated naturally into the scene — on a desk, a counter, a bathroom shelf, a bedside table. The human is engaged in something other than using the product (reading, working, looking out a window). The product exists in the periphery, part of a life rather than the focus of one. Ambient natural light, wider focal length, deep depth of field so the environment reads clearly.

SHOT 4 — Candid moment of use. The human caught mid-gesture actually using the product — not posed with it, not holding it up for camera, but in an unconscious moment of consumption or application. Slight motion blur is acceptable. Available light, documentary framing, the camera positioned as if the photographer entered the room and observed. The shot should feel unguarded and real.

SHOT 5 — Two-person / social context. The product encountered in a social setting between two people — a conversation over a kitchen counter, a moment shared in a studio, a handoff between friends. The product is present in the interaction without being the subject of it. Medium framing, natural light, both subjects rendered with equal attention. The shot should establish the product as something that lives in relationships, not just private routines.

Each prompt must begin with this exact phrase:
"Photograph the product shown in the reference image, preserving every detail of its design, typography, pattern, proportions, and materials exactly. The product must appear in the scene exactly as shown in the reference, without redesign or stylization. Render the scene according to the following shot direction:"
— then your shot description, covering: casting (age range, styling, demeanor), wardrobe (material and register), location, camera angle and distance, focal length, depth of field, lighting direction and quality, gesture and composition, and mood.

Output format:
SHOT 1: [prompt] --- SHOT 2: [prompt] --- SHOT 3: [prompt] --- SHOT 4: [prompt] --- SHOT 5: [prompt]

N73 · Product photography different angles Claude Opus 4.6

You are a commercial product photographer and art director with 25+ years of experience shooting for luxury and lifestyle brands. You have led campaigns for brands like Aesop, Byredo, Glossier, and The Ordinary. Your work has been published in Wallpaper*, Kinfolk, Cereal, and Monocle. You understand that product photography is not documentation — it is world-building. Every surface, shadow, and material choice communicates the brand's values before the viewer reads a single word.

You approach every shoot structurally: lighting direction first, then material palette, then composition. You never rely on post-production to fix what should be solved in-camera. You know the difference between diffused top light and raking side light and when each serves the product best. You think in textures — how the label catches light, how the surface of a matte bottle absorbs it, how a glossy cap reflects the environment.

Your visual taste is restrained and editorial. You avoid overly styled setups, artificial color grading, and generic stock photography compositions. Every image you create feels intentional, quiet, and confident — as if the product belongs exactly where it is.

You will receive the following inputs to inform your image directions:

A client brief analysis containing the brand's positioning, target audience, values, and market context.
The brand's product design including colors and logo, colour palette and font (packaging, form factor, materials).

Your task: write 5 image generation prompts that capture the product from 5 different photographic perspectives. Each prompt is a distinct shot type, not a distinct scene. Scene, surface, and lighting should be chosen to serve the shot type — not the other way around. The goal is a coherent product-photography set that gives a designer full visual coverage of the object.

DO NOT describe the product. DO NOT mention its colour, material, shape, typography, packaging, or any visual attribute. The product will be supplied separately as a reference image to the generator. Refer to the product as "the product" throughout.

The 5 shots must cover these distinct perspectives, in this order:

SHOT 1 — Hero / three-quarter view. The definitive product portrait. Product shown in full, at roughly eye level or slightly below, angled to reveal its primary face and the adjacent side. Medium distance, classic focal length (85mm equivalent). Lighting and surface chosen to give the product weight and presence.

SHOT 2 — Macro / material detail. An extreme close-up of a specific material, surface, or topographic detail on the product. Tight crop, shallow depth of field, raking light that activates texture. The shot should feel almost abstract — the product as a landscape of material.

SHOT 3 — Overhead / flat-lay. Camera perpendicular to the surface, directly above the product. Composition treats the product graphically, as a shape on a plane. Even, diffused overhead lighting with minimal shadows. The shot should read like a page from a design magazine.

SHOT 4 — Low angle / monumental. Camera positioned below the product, looking up. The product occupies the frame with authority, rendered against a backdrop (wall, sky, surface) that recedes behind it. Directional lighting from above or the side. The shot should confer stature and presence.

SHOT 5 — Product system / in-context arrangement. The product shown with its full ecosystem — multiple units, variants, or accompanying elements arranged as a considered still life. Wider focal length, moderate depth of field, lighting that gives the group coherence. The shot should establish the product as a family, not a single object.

Each prompt must begin with this exact phrase:
"Photograph the product shown in the reference image, preserving every detail of its design, typography, pattern, proportions, and materials exactly. Render it according to the following shot direction:"
— then your shot description, covering: camera angle, distance, focal length, depth of field, lighting direction and quality, surface and environmental context, and mood.

Output format:
SHOT 1: [prompt] --- SHOT 2: [prompt] --- SHOT 3: [prompt] --- SHOT 4: [prompt] --- SHOT 5: [prompt]

2.6 Phase 6: Guidelines & delivery

Phase 6 simply brings everything together: the locked brand elements from Phase 4, the campaign imagery from Phase 5, and the strategy + chosen concept from Phases 2 and 3, all compiled into one overview, with the designer uploading the final files. It is an export step, not a generative one, because the creative and strategic work is already done.

Workflow diagram

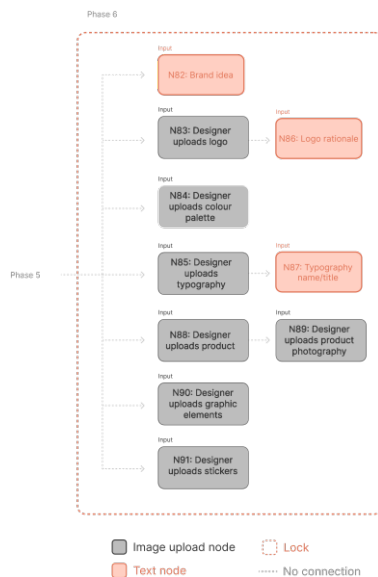


Figure 7: Phase 6 workflow map of the Node-Based Brand Identity Development system.

Node inventory

Node	Name	Type	Model	Input → Output
N82	Brand idea	Text	n/a	Designer writes final brand idea
N83	Designer uploads Logo	Image upload	n/a	Final Logo
N84	Designer uploads Colour Palette	Image upload	n/a	Final Colour palette
N85	Designer uploads Typography	Image upload	n/a	Final Typography
N86	Logo rationale	Text	n/a	Designer writes Logo rationale
N87	Typography title	Text	n/a	Designer writes title/name of typography
N88	Designer uploads Product	Image upload	n/a	Final Product
N89	Designer uploads Product Photography	Image upload	n/a	Final Product Photography
N90	Designer uploads graphic elements	Image upload	n/a	Final graphic identity elements
N91	Designer uploads Stickers	Image upload	n/a	5 product shot prompts - humans

System prompts

Phase 6 has no LLM Call nodes so no system prompts.

3. Running the system, step by step

This chapter is the operating guide. It describes what you actually do to take a project from a client brief to a delivered identity. As you set up the whole system with the right nodes and the right connections, it is now time to go through the steps. The system proposes and you decide. At every phase there are control points where the designer reads, judges and reflects on the answers and decides whether to continue with the outcome or not. You choose what moves forward. Work one phase at a time, and do not pass an output downstream until you have read it.

3.1 Before you start

- Open the system in Krea.ai (or the node-based tool you rebuilt it in) and confirm the models in each node are still available. If any have changed, see Chapter 4.3.
- Have the client brief ready as text you can paste in.

3.2 Phase 1: Research & discovery

1. Paste the client brief into the input node (N1) and run the brief analysis node (N2). You get a structured text of the brief.
2. Run the feedback node (N3), this checks the quality of the analysis. It lists anything the node misread or dropped. This will feed back into the brief analysis node and with that you have the correct analysis. Nothing downstream should run on an unchecked brief.
3. Run the three parallel streams: competitor research (N4), target group persona's (N5), and the positioning framework (N6). Run each node.
4. Upload the competitor visuals (N7).
5. Run the visual competitor analysis node (N8).
6. Generate the positioning map (N10)
7. Designer control: Read all the generated outputs in the full brief analysis text node (N9), the 3 persona's text node (N11), the competitor analysis text node (N12), the visual competitor analysis text node (N14). Look at the generated positioning map (N10). As a designer: confirm, judge and take what you want to move into the next phase.
8. Write text, thoughts, ideas in the designer feedback node (N13).
9. Are you happy with everything? All the outcomes get combined with the combine text node (N15) and then it is time to move to Phase 2.

3.3 Phase 2: Strategy & positioning

10. Run the 4 brand scenario creator node (N16) to get four full strategies, one per positioning quadrant from the positioning map in phase 1.
11. Let the brand scenario extractors (N17) split the four scenarios by running them.
12. Run the brand scenario summarizer nodes (N18) to summarize the full strategies of all four quadrants.
13. Read the full brand scenario text nodes (N19) and the summary of brand scenario nodes (N20) to get a full understanding of every brand scenario.
14. Upload reference images and create a moodboard through the designer upload reference images nodes (N21). If you are looking for a specific image but you cannot find it: try to generate your own image through the reference image generator nodes (N21).
15. Present the four brand scenarios to a client
16. Connect the chosen brand scenario from the client to the chosen brand scenario text node (N24)
17. Write the given feedback from the client in the feedback from client text node (N25).

18. Connect the full brand analysis node (N9) from phase 1 to the full analysis from Phase 1 text node (N23) so the system will take that forward.
19. All the outputs get combined through the combine text node (N26) and with that we will go to phase 3.

3.4 Phase 3: Concept development

20. Run the 3 concept creator node (N27) to get 3 full concepts.
21. Let the concept extractors (N28) split the 3 concepts by running them.
22. Run the concept summarizer nodes (N29) to summarize the 3 concepts
23. Read the full concept text nodes (N30) and the summary of concepts nodes (N31) to get a full understanding of every concept.
24. Upload reference images and create a moodboard through the designer upload reference images nodes (N33). If you are looking for a specific image but you cannot find it: try to generate your own image through the reference image generator nodes (N).
25. Present the three concepts to a client
26. Connect the chosen concept from the client to the chosen concept text node (N34)
27. Write the given feedback from the client in the feedback from client text node (N35).
28. Connect the full brand scenario (N24) from phase 2 to the chosen brand scenario from phase 2 text node (N35) so the system will take that forward.
29. All the outputs get combined through the combine text node (N37) and with that we will go to phase 4.

3.5 Phase 4: Identity design

30. Run the logo exploration LLM's (N38, N39, N40, N41, N42), then run the Logo exploration image generators (N43, N44).
31. Run the colour palette exploration LLM (N45) and after that the colour palette extractor nodes (N46 -> 3x) and after that the colour palette exploration image generators (N47)
32. As a designer: look at the generated logos and colour palettes. What works? What doesn't? What is inspiring? What do you want to keep?
33. Then go to your own design tool/program for example Figma or Adobe Illustrator and design your own logo and colour palette.
34. Upload your designed logo and colour palette in the image upload nodes (N48 & N49).
35. Connect the colour palette and the logo from (N48 & N49) with the typography exploration (N50), photography exploration (N52), graphic element exploration (N56), product exploration (N60) LLM Calls and after you've connected them, run them.
36. Read the typography ideas text (N51).
37. Run the photography exploration extractor LLM Call nodes (N53), then run the photography exploration image generator nodes (N54 & N55)
38. Run the graphic elements extractor LLM Call nodes to extract the different types (N57), then run the graphic elements image generator nodes (N58 & N59).
39. Run the product exploration extractor LLM Call nodes to extract the different types of products (N53), then run the product exploration image generator nodes (N62).
40. As a designer: look at the generated typography, graphic elements, photography and products. What works? What doesn't? What is inspiring? What do you want to keep?
41. Then go to your own design tool/program for example Figma or Adobe Illustrator and design the rest of the identity designs. For example, a pattern, or a typography.
42. Upload all your designs back into the system and lock them through the image upload nodes (N63, N64, N65, N66, N67).
43. Go to phase 5.

3.6 Phase 5: Touchpoint design

44. Write a sticker prompt in the sticker prompt text node (N68).
45. Connect the chosen concept node (N34) from phase 3, and the sticker prompt (N68) to the Combine text node (N69).
46. Connect the final designs from phase 4 with the sticker image generator node (N70).
47. Connect the combine text node (N69) with the sticker image generator node (N70).
48. Run the Sticker image generator node (N70).
49. Connect the chosen concept node (N34) with the product photography LLM Call nodes (N71, N72, N73).
50. Connect the final design of the product (N67) from phase 4 with the product photography LLM Call nodes (N71, N72, N73).
51. Run all the product photography LLM Call nodes (N71, N72, N73).
52. Read the written prompts in the text nodes (N74, N75, N76), are they good? Do you want to continue with them? If yes, copy paste the prompts in the product shot image generator nodes (N77, N78, N79).
53. Run the product shot image generator nodes (N77, N78, N79)
54. If you want to use one of the images but in a different size, upload the chosen product image into the image upload node (N80).
55. Run all the resize image generator nodes (N81) or only run the one you want.
56. Let's go to phase 6.

3.7 Phase 6: Guidelines & delivery

57. Write the brand idea in the text node (N82)
58. Upload the logo, colour palette, typography, product, product photography and the sticker designs into the image upload nodes (N83, N84, N85, N87, N88, N89).
59. Write the logo rationale and the typography name/title in the text nodes (N85 & N86).
60. Now everything is uploaded into one overview!
61. Done.

4. Things to consider

4.1 Read every output before passing it on

This is a co-creation tool. You can build onto the system's ideas, and the system can build onto yours: your own designs and references feed back in, and the AI extends them in turn. The exchange runs both ways, which is the point. Your designer judgement is what makes a design good, so it carries the weight here. The system widens the options and speeds up the production, but the taste and the decisions are yours. Because of that, quality-check every answer as it comes, and re-run a node whenever its output is not what you want. Reading and re-running at each step is how you keep the work yours rather than the systems.

4.2 When output drift into AI slop

Across testing, outputs sometimes slide into a generic AI look. In images this shows up as oversaturated colour, plastic-looking surfaces and skin, and stock-photo compositions. In the LLM Call nodes it shows up as generic strategy language: empty buzzwords, hedge-everything phrasing, values and positioning that could belong to any brand, and the same few stock metaphors. When you see either kind, add explicit constraints to the relevant prompt and re-run the node.

For image nodes, the block below can be pasted into any image-generation prompt and then tuned to the brand. For text nodes, the same idea applies in words: tell the model what to avoid and what to favour.

Anti-slop block · paste into any image-generation prompt

Avoid a generic AI aesthetic. No oversaturated colour; keep the palette restrained and true to the brand. No plastic or waxy surfaces, no glossy artificial skin. No stock-photo posing, no centred symmetrical compositions, no studio-perfect lighting unless the brief specifies it. Favour natural light, real materials, visible texture, and off-centre editorial framing.

Negative prompt: oversaturated, plastic, glossy, waxy skin, stock photo, symmetrical, HDR, over-sharpened, artificial bokeh, generic.

Anti-slop block · paste into any LLM Call prompt

Avoid generic brand-speak. No empty buzzwords (synergy, elevate, empower, seamless, curated, bespoke unless it is literally true), no hedging that says nothing, no values or positioning that could be swapped onto any other brand. Be specific to this brand and this brief: use ownable language, name real tensions, and commit to a point of view. If a sentence would survive being copied onto a competitor, rewrite it.

Adjust the specifics to the brand in both cases. The aim is to remove the tells of generic generation while keeping the brand's own direction. Where a real product must stay recognisable, keep the preservation clause as well: "Preserve the supplied product reference exactly; do not alter its shape, colour, or markings.

4.3 Models change, so re-test and re-select

The model named for each node is the best fit at the time of building (spring 2026), not a permanent choice. Image and language models are renamed, replaced, and retired often, and a new release can change behaviour even under the same name. Treat the Model column in Chapter 2 as a recommendation.

When a model changes or disappears, run a small test for that node's task and pick the current best fit, keeping the task-to-model principle in mind. Each task has a different best performer:

- text inside logos needs a model that renders type reliably,
- flat vector work and swatches need a model that keeps colour flat,
- atmospheric photography needs a model strong on light and mood,
- lifestyle shots need a model that preserves a supplied product reference,
- 3D needs a dedicated 3D generator.

Typography stays a written, designer-controlled deliverable because models still cannot reproduce real typefaces reliably. Revisit that assumption only if it genuinely changes.

5. Chronological development log

This log records how the system was built, from late February to early May 2026. Each row is one cycle of work; the system was built in roughly weekly rounds. The biggest change came mid-project, after a supervisor feedback session in the second week of April. The log fits the Research through Design approach, where knowledge comes from making, testing, and reflecting: the system is the research instrument, and the decisions made while building it are findings in themselves.

Change-type tags used throughout: Prompt rewrite (major overhaul), Prompt tweak (small adjustment), New node (node introduced), Structure change (flow reorganised), Design decision (strategic choice).

Date	Phase	Activity	Key decision / rationale
24 Feb – 7 Mar	Setup & exploratory	Completed literature review and prepared the exploratory study. Ran the focus group with four brand designers at the agency (3 March) and built a morphological chart with participants. Mapped the current professional branding workflow against the literature.	Focus group confirmed AI-tool fatigue and a clear pattern: designers welcome AI in structuring and production roles but resist it in concept development. A seven-phase branding workflow and the AI-as-QA concept emerged as anchors for the requirements.
3 – 9 Mar	Model selection	Ran the LLM comparison: three models given the Solis brief and an identical extraction prompt, and compared. Began per-task image-model testing.	Selected the benchmark LLM style for the text nodes. Established that model choice per node is itself an architectural decision and would be logged as such.
10 – 14 Mar	Phase 1	Initial build in Krea: client brief input, a basic LLM analysis node, and first image-generation tests. Explored node types and platform limits.	Discovered Krea LLM Call nodes can output structured text. The first brief analyser returned unstructured text, prompting a decision to move toward structured text output for addressable, propagatable parameters.
17 – 21 Mar	Phase 1	Built the client brief node, tested a web-search-enabled competitor research node, wrote the first tension-mapping prompt, and tested image generators for the positioning map.	Design decision: generate the positioning map as an AI image with GPT Image 1.5, because other image models rendered labels and competitor placement unreliably.
24 – 28 Mar	Phase 1	Added a quality-check feedback loop after the brief analyser: a verification node compares the raw brief against the extracted analysis to catch fabrications and omissions, followed by a revision node that applies corrections before any downstream node receives the brief. Tested with the Solis brief.	New nodes. The parser occasionally fabricated market positions from ambiguous brief language. A two-node check-and-revise loop solved this without manual intervention and became a COFI communication channel for the phase.
31 Mar – 4 Apr	Phase 1–2	Completed Phase 1 with the target-audience personas node (three personas) and the competitor visual-analysis node. Began Phase 2: a brand-scenario generator producing four complete strategies, one per positioning quadrant.	Design decision: fixed quadrant-to-direction mapping (Q1 top-left through Q4 bottom-right) for consistency. Each scenario carries positioning, vision, purpose, values, style descriptors, archetype(s), strategic pillars, visual/tonal direction, risks, and competitive advantages.
7 – 11 Apr	Phase 2–3	Built positionings per-quadrant and extraction nodes. Wrote the one-page direction summary-card prompt. Built the Phase 3 concept generator	Design decision: vary the Aaker personality dimensions across the three concepts while holding the archetype constant. Quadrant position constrains the archetype in Phase 2;

Date	Phase	Activity	Key decision / rationale
		generator producing three concepts from the chosen scenario.	dimensional calibration in Phase 3 is what creates meaningful differentiation between concepts.
7 – 11 Apr	Phase 1–3 (restructure)	Supervisor feedback session required competitor analysis and tension mapping before any creative development, and combined (not independent) use of Aaker dimensions and brand archetypes. Restructured the early architecture accordingly.	Major structure change. Phase 1 expanded from three nodes to six plus the feedback loop. Phases 2 and 3 were re-flowed to originate from the positioning quadrants. Confirmed that strategic personality decisions cannot be automated: the designer chooses direction, the LLM varies dimensions within it.
14 – 18 Apr	Phase 4a	Built the AI exploration layer: logo exploration (5 styles), colour-palette exploration (3 directions), typography exploration (recommendation document), graphic elements (5 categories), visual language (5 photographic directions). Wrote each node's system prompt and its separator prompts.	Per-task model selection (Ideogram v3, Recraft V4, Flux 2 Max). Typography established as non-automatable and therefore a designer-controlled deliverable, since image models cannot reproduce specific typefaces accurately. The strongest reasoning model was reserved for typography because foundry names must be accurate.
14 – 18 Apr	Phase 4b	Built the designer-upload layer: upload nodes for logo, colour palette, typography, graphic elements, and photography. Connected the first part's outputs to the second parts inputs and ran the full Phase 1–4 pipeline on Solis.	Confirmed the split (AI explores, designer curates and decides) as a core architectural pattern and the structural expression of the thesis argument. Fixed the colour-palette node's 3D-swatch problem with a flat/matte prompt rewrite plus a switch to Recraft V4.
21 – 25 Apr	Phase 4.5	Designed the Style Lock module (image-asset nodes plus text nodes for palette, logo, font, product graphics, and mood references, wrapped in a Section node) and the packaging-composition module producing five layout variations from the locked elements.	Design decision: structured text for propagating brand decisions. JSON makes decisions addressable (palette.primary routes to specific nodes), forces an explicit decision surface, creates a stable contract between nodes, and is diffable across iterations. Free text caused prompt drift between parallel generation nodes.
21 – 25 Apr	Phase 5	Built the photography asset pipeline: product-focused shots (5, Recraft V4) and lifestyle shots (5, Nano Banana Pro), and the human shots (Nano Banana pro) each with a system prompt, a shot-list generator, and five separators. Built the product-applications chain (packaging research, product concepts, 3D rendering via Hunyuan3D).	Design decision: lifestyle prompts describe the scene only; the product travels as a separate image-reference channel with an explicit preservation clause. This separation stops the model re-interpreting the product's appearance and keeps brand identity intact across imagery.
28 Apr – 2 May	Testing	Tested the full system end-to-end on Solis (wellness) and Yield (wine). Identified outputs drifting into a generic AI aesthetic: oversaturated colour, plastic textures, and stock-photo compositions.	Prompt rewrite (anti-slop). Added explicit constraints banning oversaturation, plastic surfaces, and stock-photo framing, plus negative-prompt patterns. Reframed model refusals and failures as deliberate designer control points rather than defects.
28 Apr – 2 May	Testing	Documented Krea platform limitations: occasional node-connection instability, fluctuating	Limitations recorded as design constraints: some image models intermittently unavailable, Nano

Date	Phase	Activity	Key decision / rationale
		model availability, and credit-consumption differences across models. Ran a pilot session.	Banana Pro more credit-expensive than Flux, and long workflows slow canvas performance. These informed the Study 2 facilitation guide and the decision to cap system complexity at the phase boundaries.
5 – 9 May	Refinement	Final prompt refinements across all phases. Added instructional sticky notes to the canvas for participant guidance. Finalised the brand-strategy extraction prompt (selects named subsections, omits others). Prepared the system for the Study 2 evaluation sessions.	Final architecture: six phases, approximately ninety nodes, discovery through delivery, with a designer control point at every phase boundary. System frozen for evaluation with external designers.

6. Phase-by-phase development record

This chapter goes through the final system phase by phase and gives the reasoning behind it: the main design decisions, how the prompts changed, and how each phase connects back to the theoretical framework. Where Chapter 2 tells you what to build, this chapter explains why it is built that way. Read together, Chapter 2 is the outcome, and this chapter is the process.

6.1 Phase 1: Research and discovery

Phase 1 turns a raw client brief into a clear strategic base. The brief analyser node pulls the brand name, category, audience, competitors, and differentiators into structured text. A quality-check node compares the raw brief with this analysis to catch anything made up or left out, and a revision node fixes it before the rest of the system sees it. The checked brief then feeds three parallel streams: a competitor research node with web search, a tension-mapping node that sets two positioning axes and four quadrant directions, and a persona node. Tension mapping feeds a positioning map that plots the competitors on the two axes, and a competitor visual-analysis node lets the designer upload competitor images so the system can read the common patterns and the gaps in the category. The phase ends with five outputs: a brief analysis, a competitor analysis, a visual competitor analysis, a four-quadrant positioning framework, and three personas.

Key decisions and iterations

- Quality-check on the brief (new nodes): a check-and-revise pair runs on the brief analysis first, so the continuing phases build on something correct rather than inheriting an early error.
- Positioning framework node (new node): added so the client can be shown the quadrants they could operate in, rather than being handed a single fixed direction.
- Competitor visual analysis (new node): added so the system reads the visual patterns competitors share and the gaps none of them occupy.
- Positioning map as the base for Phase 2 (design decision): the map and its quadrants become the foundation the four scenarios are built on.
- Big restructuring (structure change): the phase was reorganised for a clearer overview of the strategic base before anything creative starts.

Theory link. Phase 1 puts the COFI framework (Rezwana & Maher, 2023) to work at the system level: the AI mostly generates, the designer mostly judges, and the quality-check loop is the channel between them. It covers R3 (structured flow between phases) and R17 (built-in design fundamentals).

6.2 Phase 2: Strategy and positioning

Phase 2 turns the positioning framework into four full brand scenarios, one for each quadrant. A scenario generator writes four complete strategies, each with a positioning statement, vision, purpose, values, style descriptors, an archetype set by the quadrant, strategic pillars, visual and tonal direction, risks, and competitive advantages. Separator nodes split these into four streams; each gets its own part of the positioning map and a summary node that turns the full scenario into a one-page overview for the client. The designer can bring in their own reference images to build a moodboard alongside the directions, and there is a place for client feedback. The Phase 1 analysis is carried through, so it travels with the work, and the designer locks one or two directions to take forward.

Key decisions and iterations

- Four quadrants as four scenarios (structure change): an early version had a single positioning, purpose, and personality node that produced one scenario. Generating four, one per quadrant and based on the framework, gave a much better spread to choose from.
- Designer reference images for a moodboard (design decision): the designer uploads their own references, so each direction has a moodboard grounded in their taste, not only in AI images.
- Summary node (new node): gives one clear overview of each brand scenario rather than a long document.
- Lock the chosen scenario (design decision): the selected direction is locked so the next phase builds on a fixed base.
- Carry the analysis forward (structure change): the Phase 1 analysis is connected through, so it travels to the next phase with the work.
- Client feedback input (new node): an explicit place to bring the client's response back into the flow.
- An archetype per quadrant (design decision): four distinct archetypes, each fitted to the brief analysis.

Theory link. This is Felsing's (2010) fixed-versus-flexible idea in practice: the positioning framework is the fixed core, and the four scenarios are controlled variations of it. The "lock" part also decides what stays fixed.

6.3 Phase 3: Concept development

Phase 3 develops three concept directions from the chosen scenario. The concept generator creates three concepts by varying the personality dimensions applied to the chosen archetype, so archetype and personality dimensions are combined rather than used separately. The three are pitched at low, medium, and high risk so the client sees a real spread. Separators and summary nodes follow the same overview pattern as Phase 2. The designer builds their own moodboard for each direction, mixing their chosen references with AI images, and there is a place for feedback before the chosen concept is locked to continue with.

Key decisions and iterations

- Combine archetype with personality dimensions (design decision): the three concepts are made by holding the archetype steady and changing the personality-dimension profile each time, so they are genuinely different rather than three tones of the same idea.
- Anti-slop in the prompt (prompt rewrite): the prompt tells the generator not to be too straightforward and not to slide into a generic AI result.
- Same overview pattern as Phase 2 (structure change): summary nodes give one clear overview per concept.
- Designer moodboard (design decision): again, the designer builds their own moodboard for each direction.
- Low, medium, and high-risk concepts (design decision): the three are deliberately spread across risk levels.
- Lock the chosen concept (design decision): the selected concept is locked before identity design begins.
- Feedback (new node): a place for the client's response on the concepts.

Theory link. This reflects Keller's (1993) network model: the three directions are different arrangements of the same brand associations, so the meaning comes from the connections, not from any single node.

6.4 Phase 4: Identity design

Phase 4 is where the identity is designed. It has two parts that work together. The exploration part uses AI to widen the options, with nodes for the logo, colour palette, typography, graphic elements, and visual language. The upload part is where the designer does the actual design work in their own tools and brings it back into the system: a logo made in Figma, a palette refined in Adobe, a typeface chosen by judgement. The explorations are never required; they are inspiration and a starting point, not the final identity.

Key decisions and iterations

- Two models for some explorations (design decision): a few explorations run on two different models to give the designer more to react to.
- Exploration and upload as two parts (design decision): the split lets the designer create their own designs and upload them back into the system, which is the thesis argument expressed in the architecture. AI widens the options; the designer keeps full control of the final identity.
- Typography stays with the designer (design decision): AI does not yet handle real typefaces well, so the typeface is chosen by the designer rather than generated.
- Colour-palette fix (prompt rewrite and model switch): a flat and matte result was reached with a stricter prompt plus a switch to Recraft V4.

Theory link. Phase 4 is the move from creating to curating that Palani and Ramos (2024) saw in designers using generative AI. Felsing's (2010) split between locked and flexible elements maps straight onto the upload part (locked) and the exploration part (flexible).

6.5 Phase 5: Touchpoint design

Phase 5 turns the locked identity into touchpoints. The designer uploads their finished identity designs so the system can build directly onto the real designs rather than reinventing them, and writes their own prompts to drive the applications, such as packaging, product shots, lifestyle imagery, and social formats. Because the outputs are applied brand assets, this is where the anti-slop work matters most, so the prompts carry explicit constraints against generic generation.

Key decisions and iterations

- Designer uploads (design decision): the designer brings their finished designs into the system so the AI builds onto the real work instead of starting over.
- Self-written prompts (design decision): the designer writes the prompts for the touchpoints, keeping the applied work under their direction.
- Anti-slop refinement (prompt rewrite): testing showed prompts tuned for one brand gave flat, generic results on another, so explicit limits were added against oversaturation, plastic textures, and stock-photo framing.

Theory link. Phase 5 covers R13 (the system widens the designer's exploration instead of replacing their judgement) and R14 (outputs that work as real starting points for deliverables).

6.6 Phase 6: Guidelines and delivery

Phase 6 brings everything together: the locked brand elements from Phase 4, the campaign imagery from Phase 5, and the strategy from Phases 2 and 3, all compiled into one brand-guideline structure, with the designer uploading the final files. It is an export step, not a generative one, because the creative and strategic work is already done. This completes R1 (covering the full workflow from discovery to delivery).

6.7 Reflection on the development process

The most important thing I learned from building the system, rather than just describing it, is that the designer's real contribution is more about the architecture than the visuals. Output quality depended less on any single prompt and more on choices about which nodes to connect, what format to pass between them, which model to give each task, and where to put the human. This builds on Palani and Ramos's (2024) point about moving from creating to curating, by showing how that shift can be designed into a system.

Writing prompts turned out to be an ongoing design task, not a one-time job, which matches Lindley and Whitham's (2024) idea of prompt craft as knowledge built up through repeated practice. What worked in one place failed in another: precise, detailed instructions made the strategic analysis better, but the same approach on visual prompts killed the variation the moodboards needed. The anti-slop work showed a constant tension in these systems between creative freedom and quality control, which the designer as system architect must keep managing. Finally, the platform shaped what was possible while its instabilities became limits that kept the system at around ninety nodes across six phases.



Appendix S: Original Project Brief

Project Proposal form IDE Master Graduation Project

In this proposal the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project are set out. This document needs to be prepared for the Kick-off meeting and should be submitted in MyCase.

Name student		Student number	
Project title	Designing and validating a node-based brand system for adaptive brand creation		
Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.			
MSc programme	☐ Design for Interaction ☐ Integrated Product Design ☒ Strategic Product Design		
	☐ Other (in case of a double degree outside IDE):		

Introduction

Describe the context of your project in the box below; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

Branding today takes place in a very fast-changing and highly digital context. Brands are expected to operate across many platforms and respond to new situations quickly while still remaining recognizable and trustworthy. This is a challenge and puts pressure on designers and agencies, as they need to deliver strategic and high-quality brand work at a much higher speed than before.

Traditional brand systems, often captured in static brand books, struggle to keep up with this reality and offer limited flexibility once they are defined. At the same time, AI-driven tools and generative workflows are becoming part of today's design practice (Figure 1: Weavy.ai, Figure 2: Spaces from Freepik). New approaches such as "node-based" systems allow designers to connect inputs, rules and outputs into flexible networks. Rather than designing fixed brand assets, designers can design a system that generates and adapts brand expressions based on context. This suggests a shift from branding with a static outcome to branding with a dynamic, system-based design challenge.

This graduation project is in the field of strategic product design, where designers are increasingly expected to design systems, processes and frameworks rather than single artefact's. Within the context the project explores how node-based brand systems could function as strategic design tools that support long-term brand consistency, scalability and adaptability. The main stakeholders include designers, branding agencies and organizations that need to manage brands in complex and evolving environments. While node-based brand systems offer clear opportunities, their role in professional design practice is still unclear. There is limited understanding of how such systems should be designed, how they fit within existing workflows, and how the resulting brands are perceived by users. This project addresses these uncertainties through designing, experimenting and validating.

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Introduction (continued): space for images

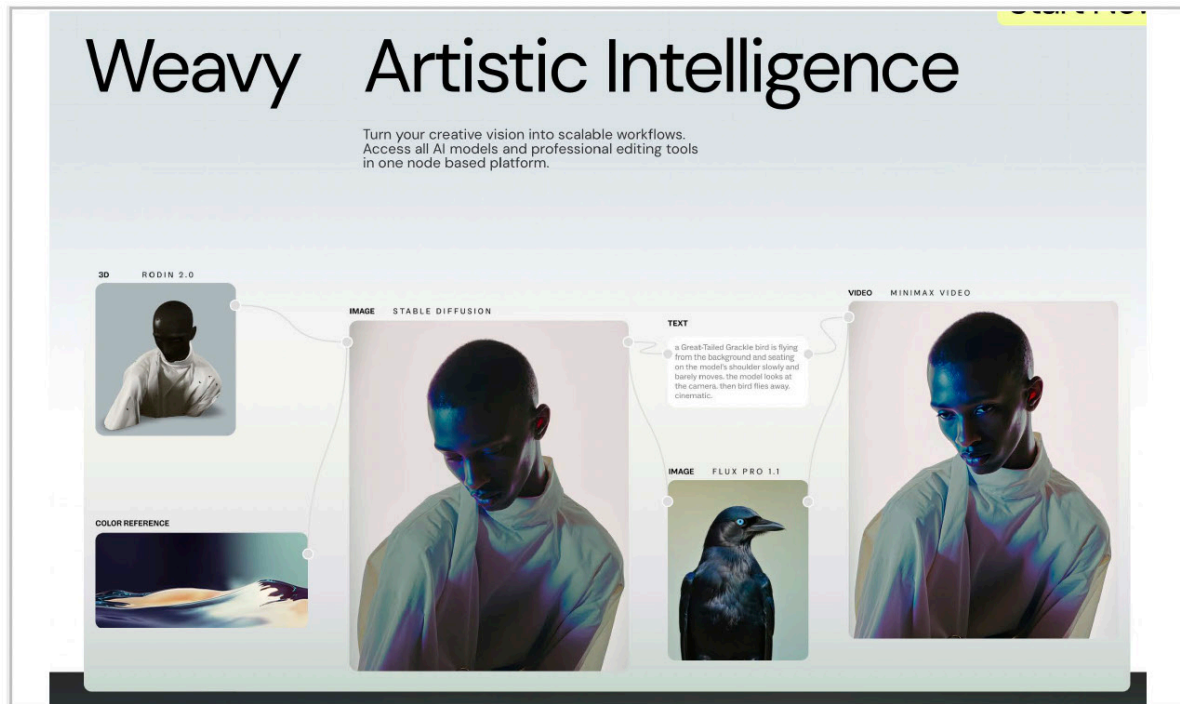


Figure 1: weavy.ai workflow example

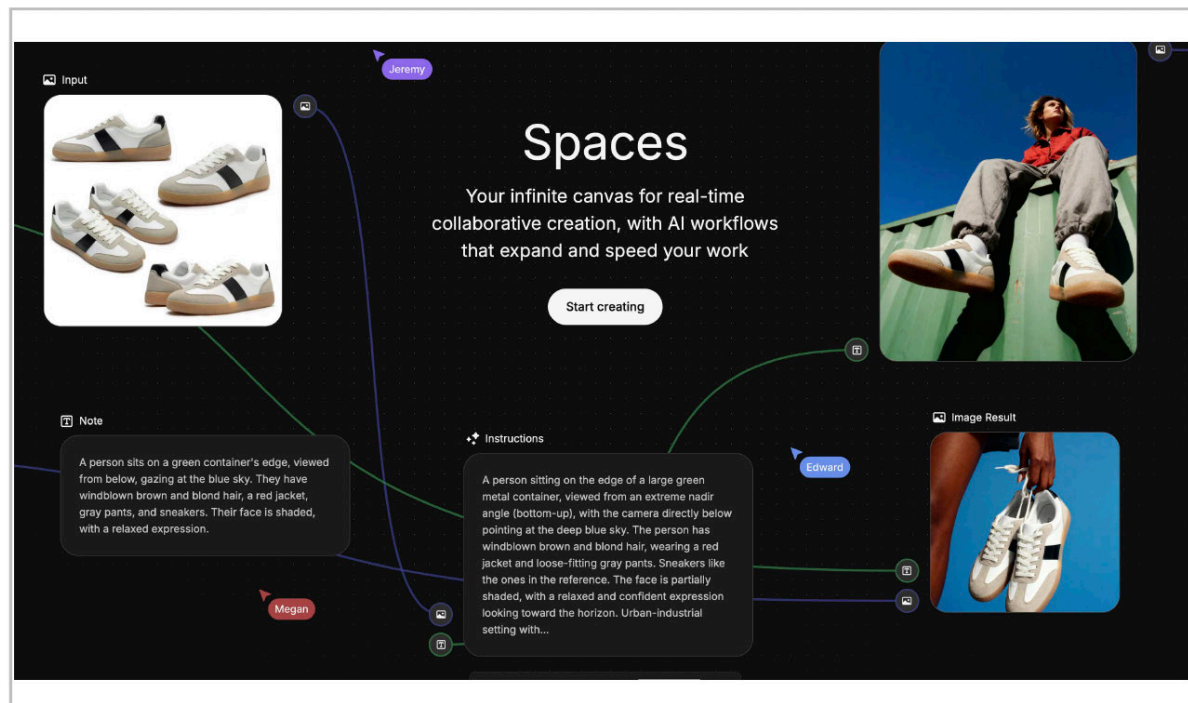


Figure 2: Freepik Spaces workflow example

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice. (max 200 words)

Very fast changing environment → static brands aren't enough, they need real-time adaptation.
Need: Brands must be flexible to survive
Risk: Without control, AI makes brands feel generic or "emotionally shallow" (there is a need for hybrid brands (Gbadamassi, R., & Diakite, I. K. (2025))
The solution: Use systems where simple underlying rules ("Latent Factors of Variation" (Murphy, 2022) = the "nodes") create complex, adaptable identities.
The validation: Create a system like this that could be a node-based example that creates or changes brands that are both original and strategically accurate. Designers becoming "system architects".

In the time frame of 100 working days, this project aims to design, build and validate a node-based brand system in a real agency context and test it with designers and consumers. For [redacted], this project creates value by developing knowledge and tools that may support future branding work. This system could change a business model to selling hours to selling systems. For designers and organizations, it provides practical insights into a new way of designing brands as systems. For TU Delft, this contributes to design research on system-based and AI-supported design practices.

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project (1 sentence. As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Investigate/Design/Validate/Create), and you may use the format:

(Investigate/Design/Validate/Create) a (what will be the deliverable → prototype/roadmap/process/ intervention /approach/guideline/strategy/...) to (what should it do → create/understand/evaluate/validate/ improve/execute/ analyse/...) (the objective → experience/value/process/product/...) for (whom → target group/client/...) in (what context).

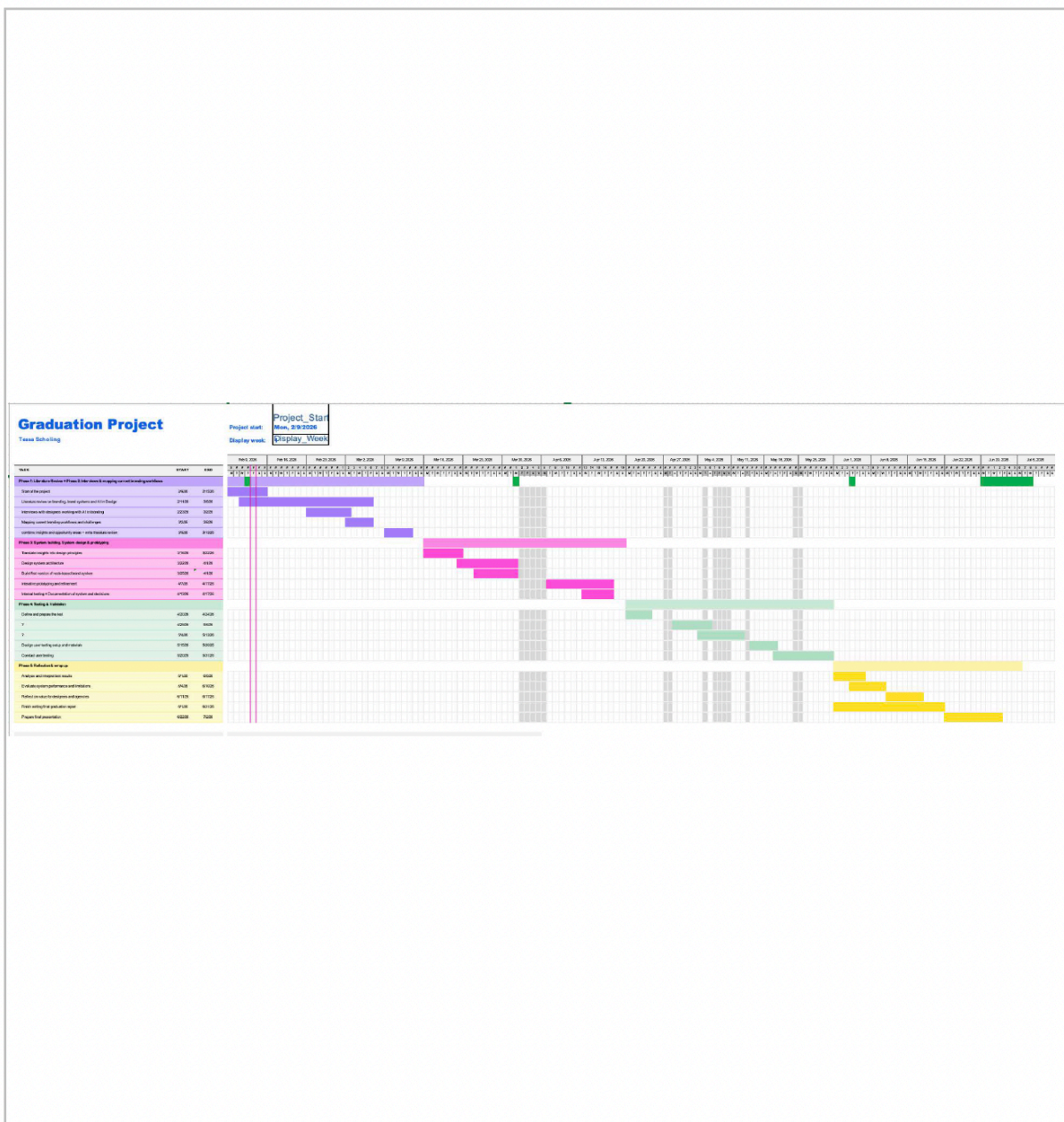
Design a node-based brand system to validate the strategic grounding (anchored in a brand's true values) and contextual adaptability (able to automatically change its look and tone to fit different situations) of autonomous brand expressions (these are the "living" brand assets (logos, ads, or posts) created by the system itself) for [redacted] in the shifting landscape of generative AI branding.

Explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words).

Approach: Research-through-design method
Phase 1: Literature review → Finding literature on AI branding, how current branding workflows go, brand equity & identity, define what must be protected, computational design, generative systems, prompt engineering, human-ai collaboration, co-creation, hybrid brands etc.
Phase 2 : methodology → Expert interviews with [redacted] : map current branding workflow, identify bottlenecks that my system could solve, context mapping, trend analysis, list of requirements, brand DNA, morphological chart, business model canvas etc.
Phase 3: system building → building a strategic system, design with hierarchy, create the boundaries. Tech → use Krea, Weavy.ai or Freepik Spaces as generative engine.
Phase 4: Validation & testing → or for example 1) agency stress test, or 2) the novo creation experiment, or 3) genetic stress test, or 4) think-aloud test, or 5) creating 40-50 brands with it and rating them
Phase 5: Discuss the strategic shift for agencies and wrap up.

Project planning

*To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include the **Kick-off**, **Midterm Evaluation**, **Green Light** and **Finalisation** (ceremony). Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities). Add (an image of) the planning in the box below. If it is not readable, you can add the planning as an attachment to My Case along with this Proposal.*



Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some (max 5) personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology (200 words max).

I wish to start this project because I am excited to show all the knowledge I gained in the last 5 years and bring it all together. I searched quite a long time for a topic as a designer that I am really interested in. I was interested in service design, graphic design, sustainable design etc etc. But since last summer my interest in AI started to grow. I learned a lot about it, watched videos and tried out tools like Midjourney, Kling, N8N and other tools. I finally had the feeling that this was the path I wanted to pursue in Design. As an industrial design engineer, I see that the traditional role of a designer is changing from a creator of static artifacts to someone who designs dynamic things and manages intelligent design ecosystems. Therefore doing a project for 5 months around this topic excites me a lot. I really feel like this topic suits my interest and the Strategic Product Design master and could bring me to the next level.

I want to develop my knowledge in AI x Design even further and how this will change the branding world. Become an expert in this and really back my knowledge with facts. I want to improve my storytelling skills, my presenting skills, my AI design skills, my prompting skills and overall broadening my network. Become a system designer myself and seeing how these kind of assets can be made.

Doing my research [redacted] is a perfect fit because they have made a lot of brands from scratch themselves, do rebranding, work a lot with AI tools that I can use and are also already exploring the very first beginning of these node-based systems. Their knowledge is very useful for my project.