

DESIGNING A STRATEGY FOR BRANDING STUDIO *OFFFF*

TO SUPPORT THEIR CLIENTS IN BRINGING NEW BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE

COLOPHON

DESIGNING A STRATEGY FOR BRANDING STUDIO OFFFF TO SUPPORT THEIR CLIENTS IN BRINGING NEW BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE

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Master Thesis

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OFFFF

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PREFACE

My graduation journey started in June, when I began looking for a suitable graduation project. In the months before, I had been travelling in Asia, so it had been a while since I had worked full-time on a project. Nevertheless, I was very much looking forward to starting this final stage of my studies.

While browsing the TU Delft graduation opportunities, I struggled to find a topic that truly resonated with me – something I would be motivated to explore for several months. Therefore, I decided to take the initiative and reach out to companies myself in order to find a project that genuinely interested me. From the start, I knew that startups and branding were topics that intrigued me. Although OFFFF is a more established branding studio, many of their clients are startups. When I contacted OFFFF, I spoke with Maarten. From the very beginning, he was open to the idea of a graduation research project. After a few inspiring conversations, everything fell into place and I was able to start my graduation project in September.

Conducting my research within a company provided valuable insights into how business operates in practice. I conducted interviews with several former clients of OFFFF, which was particularly interesting because some of these companies were already familiar to me, such as De Gele Kanarie, Nolet, and Colorado Charlie. This made the project even more engaging and gave me additional motivation to further explore the topic.

Overall, I truly enjoyed working on this project, partly because of the tangible nature of the research. I felt that both OFFFF and their clients took my work seriously, and I am very grateful for that, as it made this graduation journey a memorable experience.

Of course, there were also moments that were less exciting, such as the days spent coding and analysing interviews. There were also nerve-racking moments, such as conducting my first client interview or deciding to change the direction of the design. However, “that is part of the creative process,” as Maarten often reminded me whenever I felt stuck. I would like to thank Maarten for giving me the freedom to explore ideas and for the opportunity to collaborate with OFFFF on this project.

I am also very grateful for the guidance of Erik-Jan and Emily. Erik-Jan, thank you for keeping me sharp on the quality of my research and for your critical perspective and motivating words when I needed them most. Emily, thank you for supporting my ideas and for sharing your experience on this topic. Your insights helped me find direction throughout the process.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me during this journey. Their encouragement meant a lot throughout the process.

Overall, I truly enjoyed working on this project, and I hope that this report will be of interest to you as well.

Kirsten Neuteboom

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the strategic design project conducted in collaboration with OFFFF, a branding studio based in Rotterdam that focuses, among other things, on creating new brand identities for its clients. One of the challenges OFFFF encounters is that not every new brand identity actually comes to life after delivery.

This project investigates what makes some brand identities come to life and generate results, while others gradually lose momentum. To explore how OFFFF can play a more structural and impactful role in this process, the project follows the Double Diamond approach. The research is based on interviews with both clients of OFFFF and members of the OFFFF team. In addition, several exploratory interviews were conducted with different strategy agencies to investigate whether there are similarities between the way OFFFF works and the approaches used by other agencies. Furthermore, the context of OFFFF was analysed in depth.

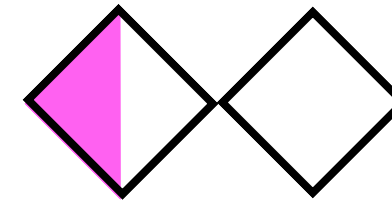
The insights gathered during the analysis phase were synthesised through a mapping session, in which the team reflected on the role OFFFF would like to take in supporting their clients and how they could create value through this role. Based on these insights, a design brief was formulated containing several design principles. These principles formed the basis for developing a strategy that helps OFFFF support clients in taking ownership of bringing their brand identity to life. The resulting strategy is captured in a roadmap that highlights three different phases and includes several applicable interventions.

The first phase focuses on creating a shared vision between OFFFF and the client on how the brand identity can be brought to life. To support this process, a playbook was designed for OFFFF containing interventions such as games and templates that can be used during the moment the brand guide is delivered. These interventions help clients actively engage with how the new brand identity can be lived within their organisation. The second phase aims to ensure that OFFFF remains involved in the emerging changes and opportunities that arise when the client starts working with the brand identity in practice. For this purpose, a card deck was developed that provides OFFFF with guidance during check-in moments with the client. These moments help identify new opportunities and explore potential business possibilities within the ongoing collaboration. The final phase focuses on reflecting on the collaboration with the client. Using a reflection matrix, OFFFF can determine whether it makes sense to remain structurally involved with the client or whether it is better to shift priorities to other projects. This decision is based on the extent to which the client has taken ownership of living the brand identity and how open the client is to additional input or services from OFFFF. Together, these outcomes show how OFFFF can play a role in helping clients bring their brand identity to life and how the agency can remain structurally and impactfully involved in this process.

READING GUIDE

This report follows the following structure

The Double Diamond icon in the corner of each chapter shows the current phase of the Double Diamond, indicated by a pink marker.



Within these phases is the following format:

1. CHAPTER

1.2 SUBCHAPTER

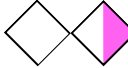
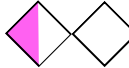
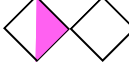
1.2.3 Subsection

Body text

SUBQUESTION RESEARCH

Quote references

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1.INTRODUCTION

Branding is rarely accidental; it requires strategic thinking, design skills, and creative judgement (Mindrut et al., 2015). For this reason, organisations often work with specialised branding agencies.

Branding communicates a company's unique value within a competitive market (Morgan, 2011). As markets change quickly, organisations tend to trust agencies that can adapt and understand different contexts (Bilton & Cummings, 2010).

OFFFF is one of those agencies that offers their expertise in the field of branding. Many organisations seek this external support because it can be difficult to maintain a clear and consistent brand identity. Kapferer (2005) describes three common identity problems that organisations often face when developing their brand identity: mimicry, opportunism, and idealism.

Mimicry occurs when organisations copy competitors instead of developing their own clear position. Opportunism occurs when brands focus on adopting trends without alignment to their core identity, resulting in inconsistent brand expressions. Idealism refers to a misalignment between a brand's communicated identity and the organisational practices that are meant to support it.

Neumeier (2005) elaborates on this by mentioning that employing a branding agency can represent a valuable long-term investment. Branding agencies are often hired to prevent these problems.

Similarly, Beverland (2016) notes that agencies offer fresh, outsider perspectives that internal teams may overlook. They provide structure, focus, and an external perspective that helps organisations develop brand identities that are clear, distinctive, and realistic. These branding agencies create brand identities that reflect the core of the organisation.

However, even when an agency develops a strong brand identity, this does not automatically mean that the identity will continue to live within the organisation after delivery. As Beverland (2018) states, "However you define the brand's position, you still have to bring it to life for users."

Although branding agencies play an important role in developing clear and distinctive brand identities, creating the identity itself is only the start of the process of bringing brand identity to life.

THE DELIVERY OF A NEW BRAND IDENTITY
DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY LEAD TO THE
BRAND IDENTITY COMING TO LIFE.

1.1 PROJECT APPROACH

This project follows the Double Diamond method (Figure 1). The model consist of 4 phases: discover, define, develop and deliver. These phases alternately between divergent and convergent thinking.

1.1.1 DOUBLE DIAMOND

The discover phase explores the broader concept of branding strategy and the context of the branding agency OFFFF. Through company analysis, qualitative interviews, and exploratory interviews, insights are gathered about how branding agencies and their clients approach brand identity and its activation. In addition, relevant branding theory is reviewed to build a theoretical foundation.

The define phase deepens the perspectives of OFFFF and its clients within their context. The insights gathered in the Discover phase are synthesised, and a mapping session together with a Value Proposition Canvas is used to structure the findings and translate them into a clear design direction.

In the develop phase, different routes toward ownership are explored to understand how OFFFF can take a stronger role in guiding clients in bringing their brand identity to life. Through ideation, the TAKE OFFFF strategy and its components are developed and validated with OFFFF.

This deliver phase presents the final design: the TAKE OFFFF strategy and the playbook that supports OFFFF in helping clients bring their brand identity to life. Finally, the solution is analysed based on feasibility, viability, and desirability.

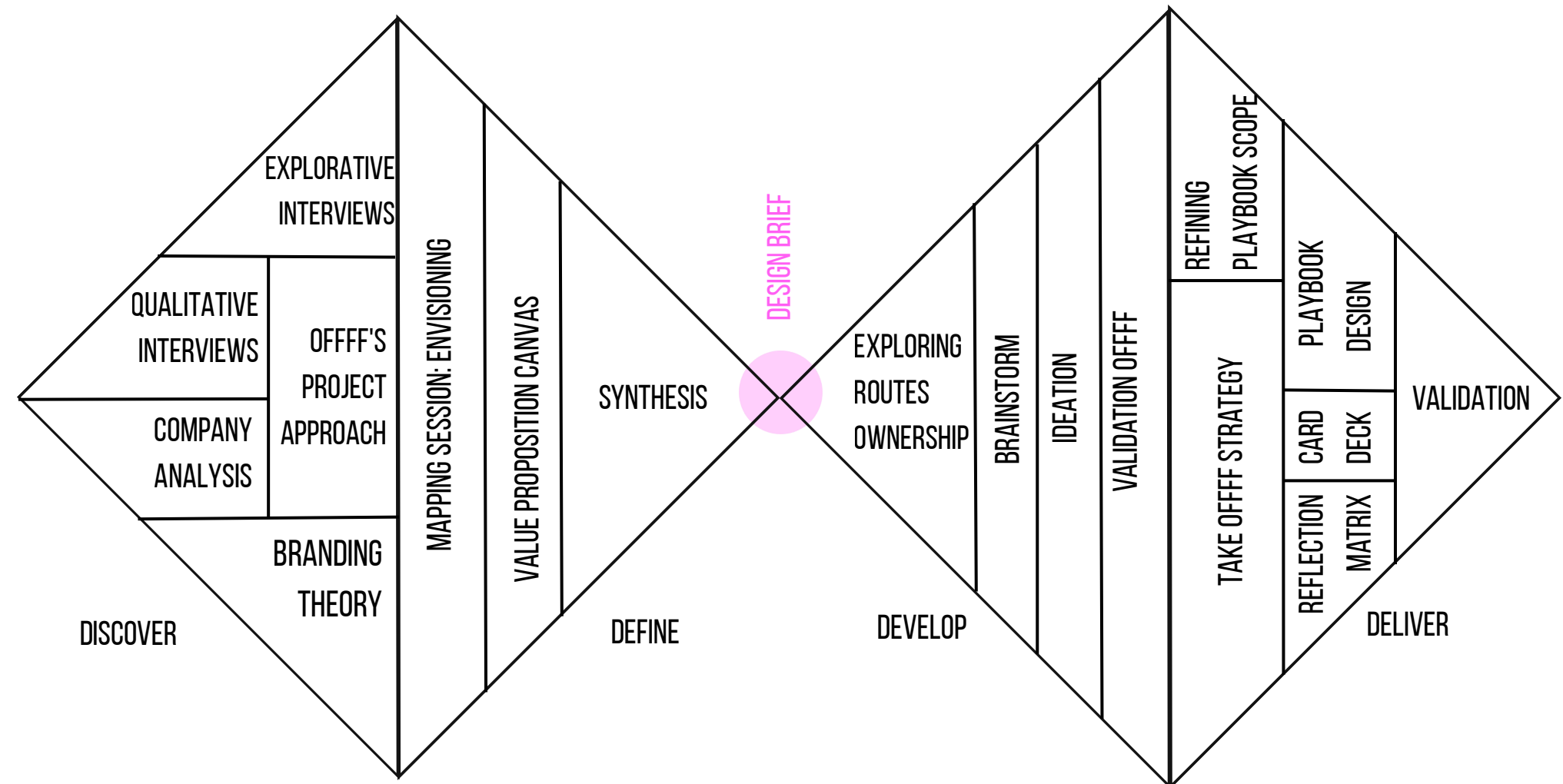
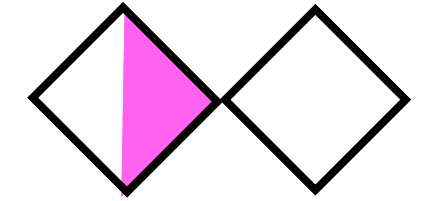


Figure 1: Double diamond method

1.2 DESIGN METHODOLOGY



To gain a deeper understanding of the context, insights were collected on three levels, as shown in Figure 2: explicit, observable, and tacit knowledge. To achieve this, multiple qualitative research methods were applied, including interviews with strategists from other agencies, members of the OFFFF team, and their clients. In addition, a mapping session was conducted to understand how the OFFFF team views its role in bringing the brand identity to life. These methods made it possible to uncover not only what people say and do, but also the underlying motivations, experiences, and assumptions that influence their behaviour.

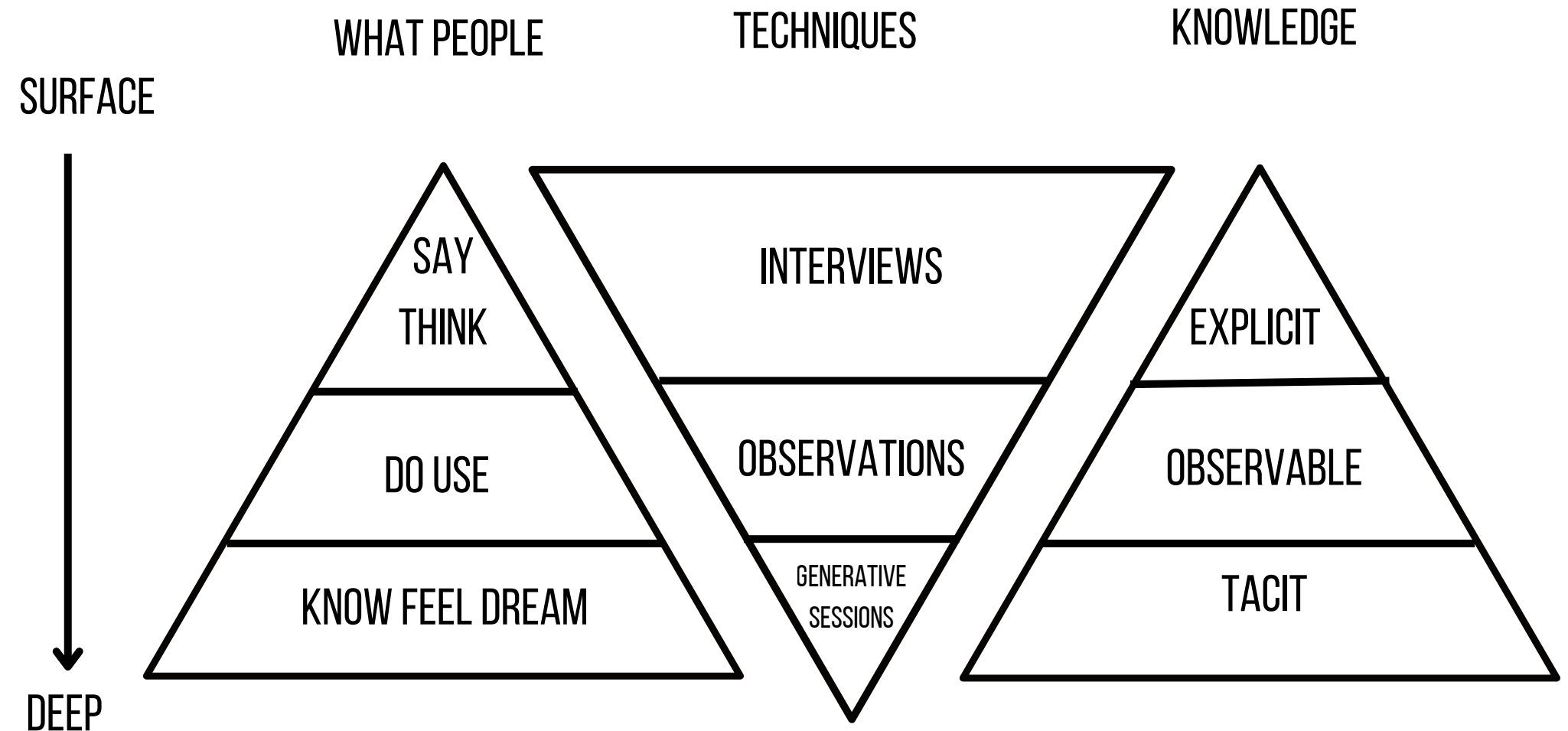


Figure 2: Design method

1.2.1 GROUNDED THEORY METHOD

Several qualitative interviews were conducted within this research. The interviews were coded in Atlas.TI (Appendix A) using the grounded theory method as described by Kester et al. (2011).

Figure 3 visualizes the steps of the grounded theory method. Throughout this report, this visual is used to indicate when GTM coding is applied. The analysis started with initial coding to extract detailed insights from the interview transcripts. This was followed by focused coding, which synthesised the initial codes into larger and more meaningful patterns. Finally, axial coding was conducted to specify the properties and dimensions of the emerging categories and to identify relationships between categories by comparing them across cases.

During the axial coding phase, Corbin and Strauss's Coding Paradigm (Figure 4) served as an analytical tool to identify if-then relationships and underlying processes.

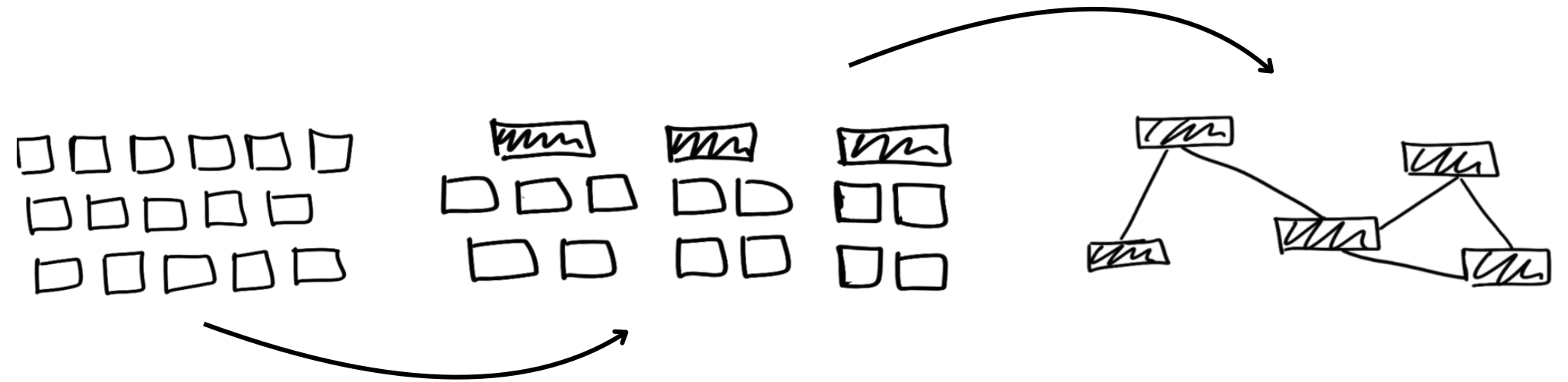


Figure 3: Grounded theory method coding

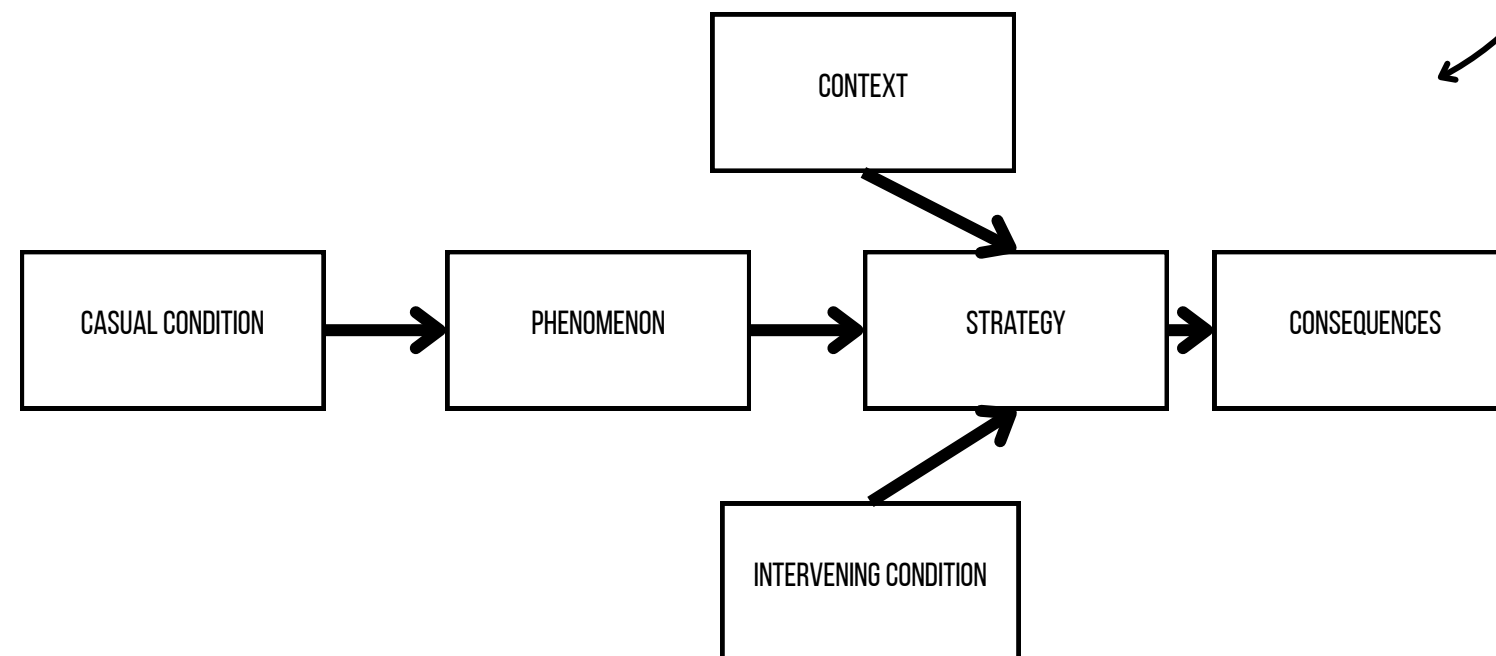


Figure 4: Corbin and Strauss's Coding Paradigm

1.3 PROJECT INTRODUCTION

This graduation project is conducted in collaboration with OFFFF, a branding focussed design studio in Rotterdam that combines strategic insight with creative execution. The agency recently relocated from Delfshaven to Hofbogen in Rotterdam North. The Hofbogen are known for hosting working spots for creative businesses, such as several creative agencies, shops, bars en coffeespots. This reflects OFFFF's ambition to operate within a vibrant and creative community that aligns with its own creative identity. It is not only an environment for themselves to work in, but also one that allows their clients to experience this atmosphere when visiting OFFFF for meetings.

OFFFFF has a wide range of clients who operate in different sectors. Most of them are small to medium-sized businesses in the hospitality and beverage sector, such as restaurants, bars, and emerging food brands. OFFFF faced a recurring challenge in their practice. What they found particularly remarkable was the period after the delivery of a new brand identity. In practice, they observed that some clients truly start to live their brand and benefit from it, while others gradually neglect it after receiving the brand guide. As a result, the brand fails to take root and does not grow or develop further. To explore what causes these differences and how OFFFF can play a role in this process, the following research questions (RQ) form the starting point of this research.

RQ1: WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRANDS THAT TRULY ACHIEVE RESULTS FROM THEIR NEW IDENTITY AND BRANDS WHERE IT GRADUALLY LOSES MOMENTUM?

RQ2: HOW CAN OFFFF, AS AN AGENCY, PLAY A MORE STRUCTURAL AND IMPACTFUL ROLE IN THAT PROCESS?

1.3.1 PROJECT FIT IDE DOMAIN

HOW DOES THE PROJECT FIT WITHIN THE IDE DOMAIN?

Within the Industrial Design Engineering (IDE) domain (Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, Delft University of Technology, 2025), design projects are often understood at the intersection of technology, people, and business considerations (Figure 5).

This project can also be positioned within this intersection. Branding projects involve collaboration between agencies and their clients, where people play an important role in understanding and applying a brand identity in practice. At the same time, both the agency and the client operate within a business context where decisions are influenced by priorities such as time, resources, and organisational goals. In addition, technological developments such as digital tools and AI increasingly influence how brand identities are created and used. Looking at this challenge through these three perspectives helps to understand how branding practice can be explored within the IDE domain.

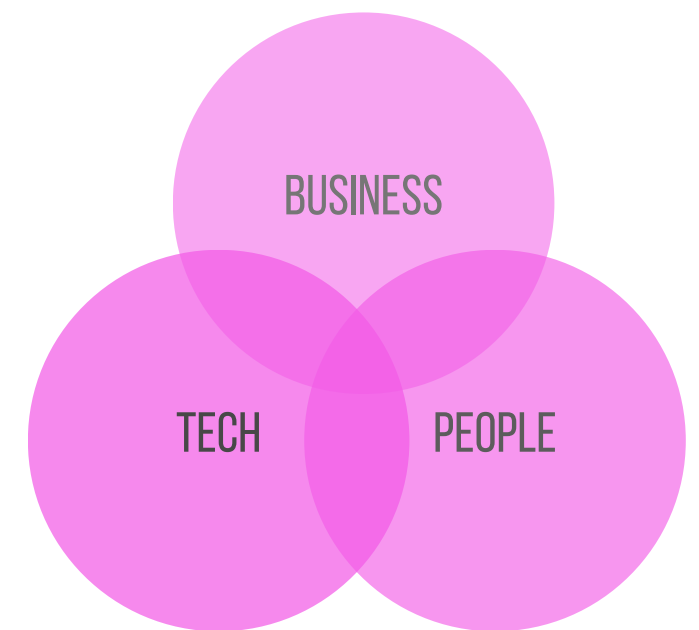
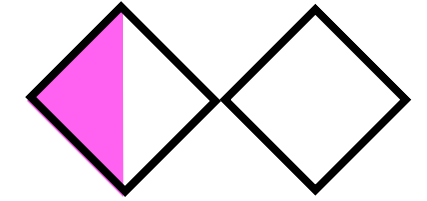


Figure 5: The IDE domain represented through the intersection of technology, people, and business perspectives.

2.DISCOVER



The goal of the discover phase is to create a strong foundation for this project. In this phase, the problem is broken down and analysed using different research methods. Figure 6 illustrates the approach used in the discover phase. First, the context of OFFFF is explored. Several qualitative interviews are conducted with members of the OFFFF team and their clients. In addition, exploratory interviews are carried out with different strategy agencies from various industries to investigate whether similarities can be found with the context in which OFFFF operates. Based on the insights obtained from these interviews, the theory behind branding is examined and the way OFFFF approaches its projects is further analysed.

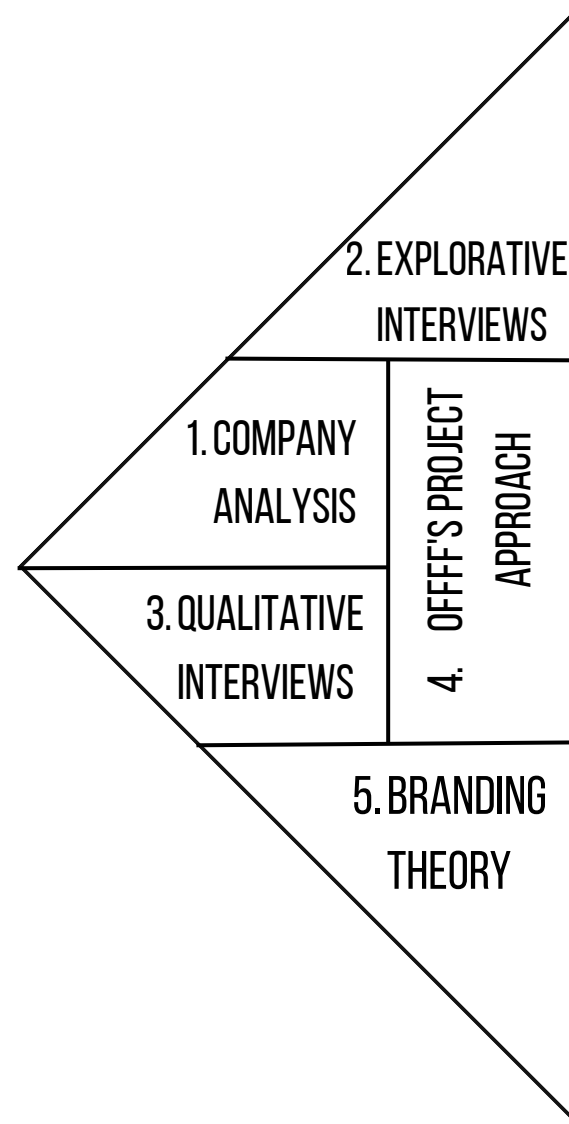
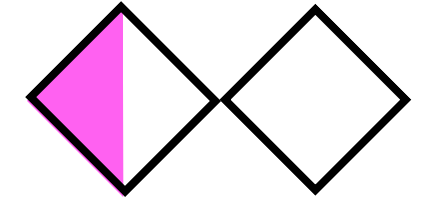


Figure 6: Discovery phase

**EEN MERKGEDREVEN BRANDING &
DESIGN STUDIO UIT ROTTERDAM. WE
ONTWERPEN VISUELE IDENTITEITEN,
VERPAKKINGEN EN WEBSITES,**

Translation: A brand-driven branding & design studio based in Rotterdam. We design visual identities, packaging, and websites.

2.1 COMPANY ANALYSIS



2.1.1 DNA OFFFF

Analysing the DNA of OFFFF helps to understand how the agency operates and how it makes strategic and creative decisions. The DNA of OFFFF is therefore examined through its purpose, mission, and vision. These elements describe why the organisation exists, how it creates value for clients, and the long-term role it aims to play within the branding industry. Figure 5 presents the relationship between OFFFF’s purpose, mission, and vision.

The agency recognises the common identity traps described by Kapferer (2005) that often occur among brands competing in crowded markets. Companies may focus on competing on content and values while becoming disconnected from organisational reality, or chase trends instead of developing truly distinctive brands. OFFFF therefore aims to create brand identities that are distinctive, clearly defined, and genuinely connected to the organisation’s core.

2.1.2 PURPOSE

OFFFF helps organisations to avoid looking like everyone else. The agency encourages companies to make clear choices and to stand for something specific, instead of trying to appeal to everyone.

This connects to their belief that “Different always wins.” OFFFF does more than design visual identities. It helps organisations define what truly makes them different and translate that into a brand that people recognise and remember. It is not just about how a brand looks, but about making sure it has a clear and distinctive place in people’s minds.

2.1.3 MISSION

OFFFF combines intuition with insight, and creativity with marketing science. This means that brand development is not approached purely from a creative perspective, but is grounded in strategic thinking and market understanding.

The mission turns the idea of “fighting sameness” into practical work. It involves developing clear brand strategies, strong visual identities, and design systems that can be used consistently in everyday practice. In other words, it makes the ambition to be distinctive concrete for clients.

OFFFF therefore aims to create brand identities that are distinctive, clear about what they stand for, and genuinely connected to the organisation’s core.

2.1.4 VISION

OFFFF has a vision of markets in which brands compete on distinctiveness rather than similarity, and where recognition is understood as a primary driver of growth.

OFFFF believes that brands grow when they are easy to recognise and easy to remember. Growth does not come from small, subtle differences, but from being clearly distinctive. OFFFF aims to build strong brands for clients that bring those brands to life within the organisation and to the outside world, so they create lasting results.

Figure 7 illustrates how OFFFF’s purpose, mission, and vision are connected. The purpose describes the fundamental reason for the agency’s existence: helping organisations bring their brand to life in a meaningful and lasting way. The mission explains how OFFFF aims to achieve this, by developing strong brands through a combination of intuition, market knowledge, and a deep understanding of the client’s organisation. Finally, the vision reflects the broader ambition of OFFFF, namely a market in which brands compete based on distinctiveness rather than similarity.

Together, these elements provide a strategic foundation that guides the agency’s work and its approach to branding projects.



Figure 7: The relationship between OFFFF’s purpose, mission, and vision.

2.1.5 WAY OF WORKING OFFFF

HOW DOES OFFFF BRING THEIR MISSION INTO PRACTICE

To understand how OFFFF practices its mission, one of the OFFFF Road Workshops was observed, in which the brand DNA of their client Fishermen's Choice was determined. The OFFFF Road Workshop is the first workshop that OFFFF offers to its clients when starting the process of creating a new brand identity.

This strategic workshop helps OFFFF and its clients understand and determine the foundation of the brand, on which the visual brand identity can be built at a later stage. During the workshop, the strategists, the designer, and representatives of the client were present. The team of Fishermen's Choice consisted of five people, which led to discussions and revealed that different needs and preferences existed within the client team while defining the foundation of the brand. The session showed how the dynamics between strategists, designers, and the client worked in practice. The strategists and the client were mainly involved in discussing the content of the brand, while the designer had more of an observing role.

Part of the workshop is discussing the brand values, led by OFFFF during the OFFFF Road Workshop. Before this can happen, the client has to select the values they think are most suitable for their brand. Figure 8 shows part of the workshop setup in which the client selects brand values from a set of cards.

By selecting the most relevant value cards from this setup, both the client and OFFFF are able to develop a shared understanding of the brand's core values and positioning before moving into the design phase. This setup allows the client to gain an overview of the possible values and stimulates thinking about which values best suit their brand. Later, the selected values are discussed among the client team and OFFFF.

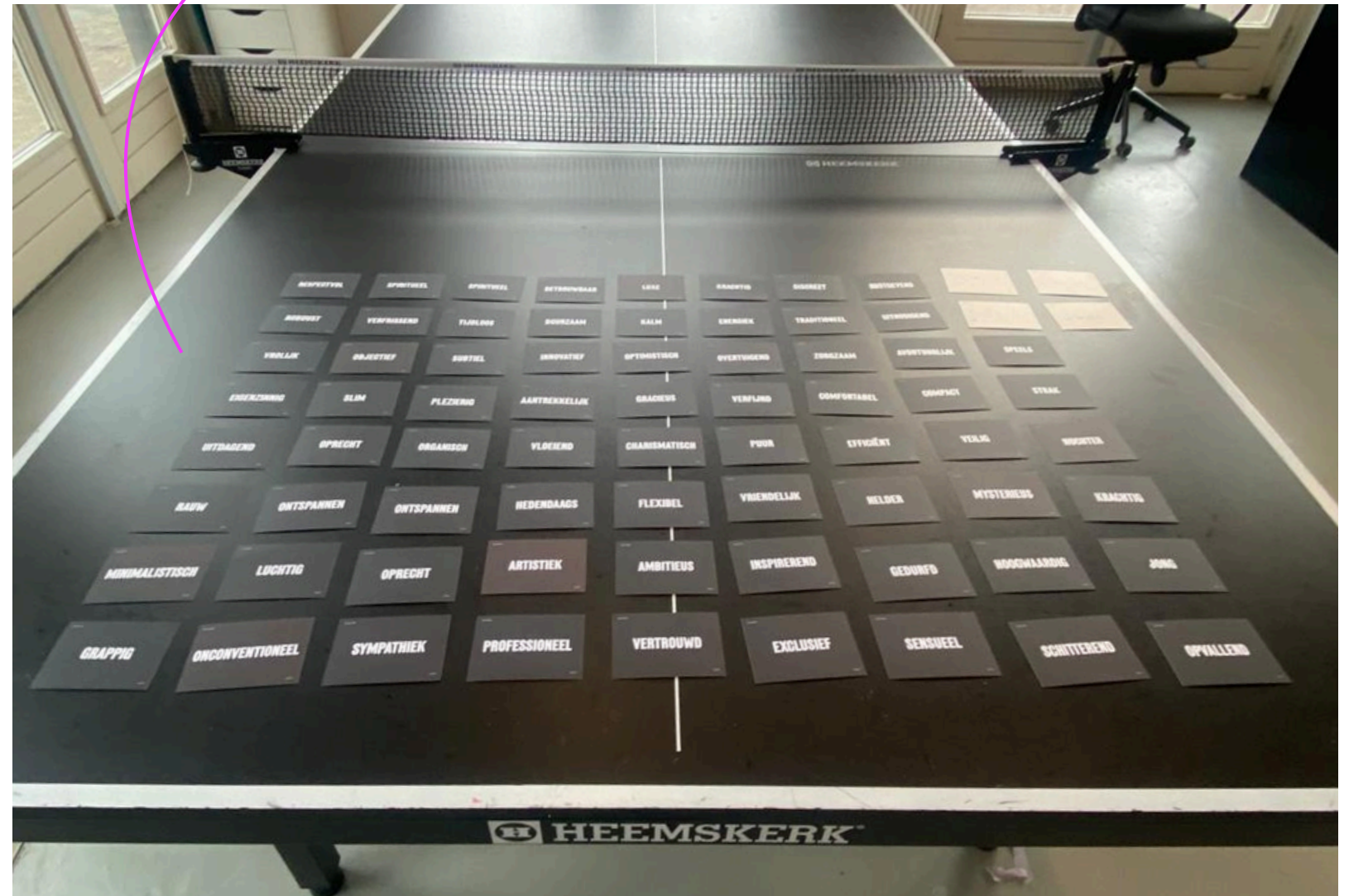


Figure 8: OFFFF road workshop set up

2.1.6 COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

WHO IS OFFFF COMPETING AGAINST?

The branding industry is highly competitive, both in terms of the supply of and demand for branding services. In an increasingly competitive branding industry, clients tend to place greater trust in agencies that demonstrate the ability to adapt and anticipate changing contexts, as this signals relevance and creative resilience (Bilton & Cummings, 2010). Thousands of branding consultants now offer guidance on building strong brand identities, indicating that organizations increasingly seek external expertise to manage the growing complexity of branding (Bastos & Levy, 2012).

OFFFF also has to deal with competition. Besides its direct competitors, such as other branding agencies, OFFFF also faces competition from less obvious sources. This section elaborates on the different competitors OFFFF encounters.

Recent developments in design tools and outsourcing platforms have increased the number of actors involved in branding work. Besides branding agencies, companies can also rely on freelancers or handle branding internally through in-house marketing teams.

"It is also related to professionalism. As a branding agency, we look at the designs we create with a certain nuance and a critical eye." - Designer, OFFFF



Freelancers

Besides agencies, OFFFF also competes with freelancers. Freelancers often work independently and usually have lower costs. Because of this, they can offer lower tariffs to customers compared to branding agencies.

For organisations with a limited budget, hiring a freelancer can be an attractive option. Figure 9 shows an example of the online platform Fiverr, where freelancers offer creative services such as design, website development, and content creation (Fiverr, 2026). On this platform, many freelancers present their services, allowing organisations to easily find professionals for specific tasks.

This illustrates how organisations can outsource design-related tasks to freelancers through online platforms. As a result, freelancers have become an accessible alternative to branding agencies, especially for companies that require execution rather than strategic branding support.

"After the brand guide is delivered, you can easily go to online platforms like Fiverr where creatives offer their services and have something made. It may not be perfect, but it's good enough." – Upcourt, client OFFFF

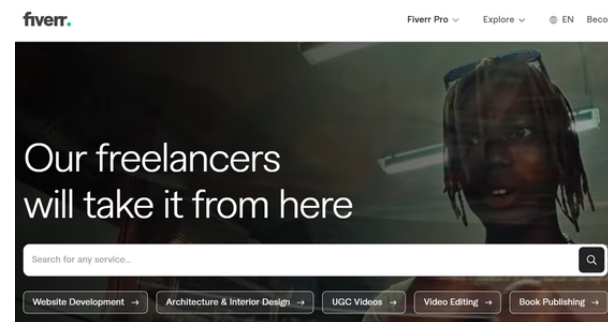


Figure 9: Example of an online freelance platform (Fiverr) offering creative services

Inhouse marketeers

Many larger organisations have their own in-house marketing department. These teams often have experience with branding, communication, and sometimes design, which allows them to handle part of the branding process internally.

OFFFF has experienced multiple times that after delivering a new brand identity, it is usually the client's in-house marketing team that takes over. They are responsible for bringing the brand to life in daily practice, for example through campaigns, content, and internal communication. Because design tools have become more accessible, clients may feel more confident in executing brand expressions themselves. The ongoing development of AI makes it easier for companies to generate content for brand activation. As a result, agencies are not only competing for the initial branding project, but also for continued involvement after the delivery phase.

Figure 10 shows the design tool Adobe Express. This tool allows users to easily create visual content using templates and pre-designed elements. Tools like this make it easier for in-house marketing teams to produce branded content themselves, enabling organisations to execute parts of brand activation internally without relying on external branding agencies.

"There is often someone intern in the organisation of the client who can take care of implementing the brand guide." - Designer, OFFFF

"There are simply cheaper options. As a result, clients quickly think: for a few thousand euros I can get the whole package arranged. With OFFFF it would cost much more, so for them the cheaper option feels like a much easier step to take." - Designer, OFFFF

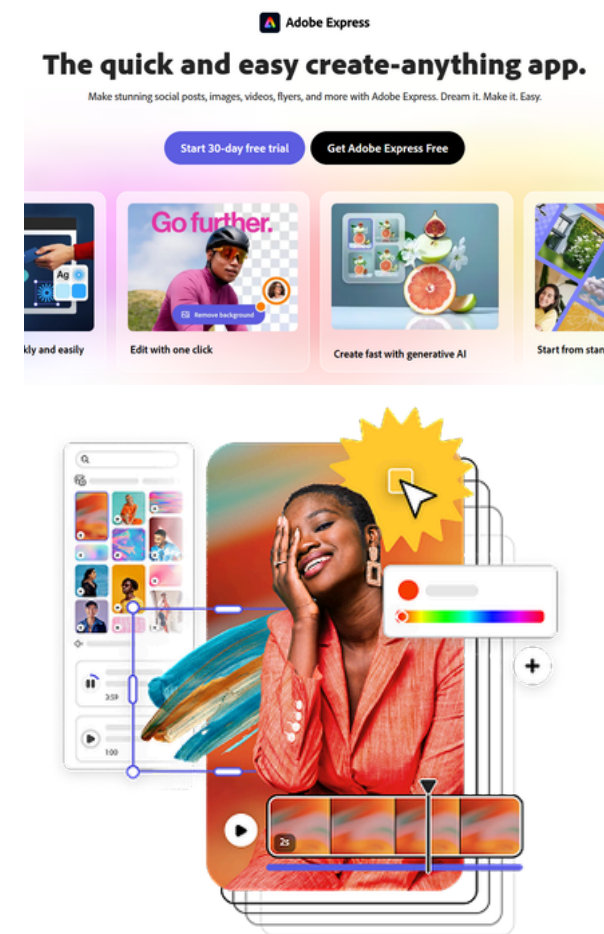


Figure 10: The design tool Adobe Express

Other branding agencies

OFFFF competes with other branding agencies operating in the same market. These agencies differ in their working methods and their vision of branding.

Figure 11 shows examples of competing branding agencies. LAVA is a branding and design studio that combines strategy, design, and technology, with a strong focus on digital branding and the creation of "living identities" (LAVA - Strategy, Design & Technology, 2023). Studio Beige, another design studio, differentiates itself through its distinct visual style and strong focus on the creative process, positioning itself with refined yet bold design (Studio Beige, Creative Agency, 2024).

Competition becomes especially visible in tender processes, where multiple agencies compete for assignments at larger organisations. OFFFF, for example, has participated in tenders for VakantieVeilingen and HEMA. In these tenders, agencies differentiate themselves through their approach, portfolio, pricing, and strategic vision, after which the client selects the agency they want to collaborate with.

LAVA

studio beige

Figure 11: Competitive branding agencies: LAVA en Studio Beige

2.2 EXPLORATIVE INTERVIEWS

ARE THERE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN STRATEGY AGENCIES AND BRANDING AGENCIES IN TERMS OF THEIR CONTEXT AND APPROACH?

This section presents the findings from exploratory interviews with strategists working at different strategy agencies. The aim of these interviews was to explore whether similarities exist between strategy agencies and branding agencies in terms of their context and approach. Figure 13 gives an overview of the interviewed agencies and their expertise. By analysing how these agencies involve clients during strategy development and how they follow up after delivering a strategy, insights can be gained into practices that may also be relevant for branding agencies. The interviews were analysed using a grounded theory approach to identify recurring themes and patterns across cases, as described by Kester et al. (2011). Figure 10 visualizes the grounded theory method.

Bilton and Cummings (2010) argue that the success of a strategy lies not only in what is defined, but in how it is translated into everyday practice. This highlights the importance of processes that support the use of a strategy after it has been delivered.

Mooij (2025) defines strategy as a fundamental pattern of present and planned objectives, resources deployments and interactions of an organisation with markets, competitors and other environmental factors, with there being 3 different levels of strategy: corporate, business and marketing. Whereas OFFFF focuses on developing brand identity as part of a marketing strategy, the other agencies involved in this study primarily operate at the corporate and business strategy level.

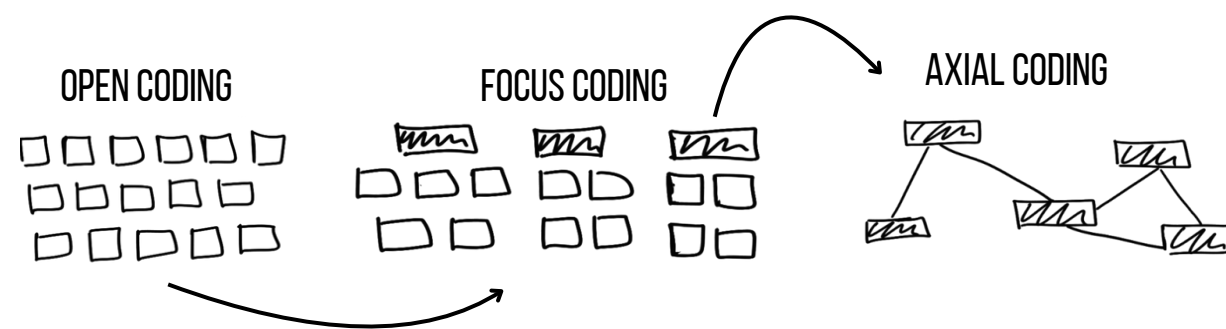
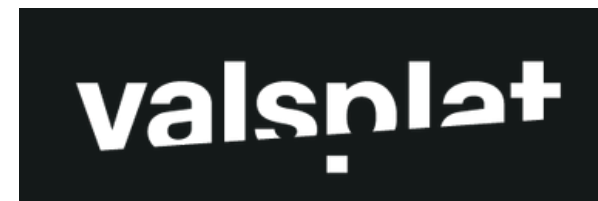


Figure 12: Grounded theory method coding



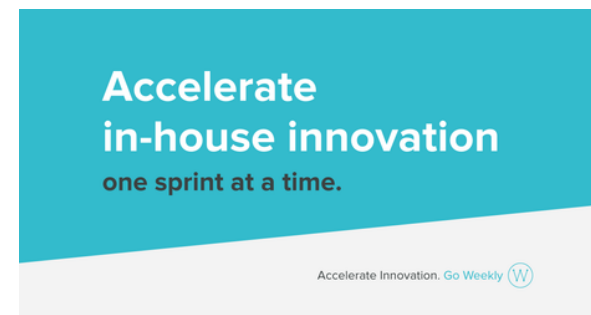
KOOS

Service design agency that supports organizations in addressing societal and organizational challenges.



VALSPLAT

Design and research agency focused on keeping the human perspective central in the digital world.



GOWEELY

Innovation and strategy startup focused on digital product concepts



BUSINESS MODELS INC

Global innovation firm that helps organizations transform by tackling their business models

Figure 13: Overview of interviewed strategy agencies

2.2.1 INTERVIEW STRATEGISTS

HOW DO AGENCIES ENGAGE CLIENTS IN THE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

Client involvement

This category shows the importance of actively involving the client throughout the branding trajectory. When clients participate in workshops, discussions, and decision-making moments, they develop a stronger understanding of the design process and feel more connected to the outcome. This involvement increases engagement and makes it more likely that the organisation will successfully adopt and activate the new brand identity.

"It is important to involve the people who will ultimately work with the outcome early in the process. By making them part of the process and giving them the feeling that they help create the ideas, they develop a stronger sense of ownership." -Valsplat

Understand the client and their organisation

When agencies try to deeply understand the client's organisation, goals, and internal context. Insights into the organisation's vision, communication style, and internal dynamics help ensure that the developed brand identity aligns with the client's strategic objectives. A strong understanding of the client perspective enables the agency to make more relevant design decisions.

Co-creation with client

This theme emphasises the collaborative nature of strategy development. Through co-creation sessions, clients actively contribute to shaping the strategic direction. This collaborative process helps incorporate organisational knowledge while also increasing the client's sense of ownership over the strategy.

"Through intensive co-creation, clients develop a sense of ownership over the solution." - GoWeekly

HOW DO AGENCIES FOLLOW UP AFTER HANDING OVER THE STRATEGY?

Guiding the client

Agencies support the client in structuring the process, clarifying decisions, and helping the organisation move from strategy development to implementation. Without guidance, strategies risk remaining abstract and difficult to apply in practice.

"We stay in-house for longer, sometimes almost like a project manager within the client's organisation." – KOOS

Building a client agency relationship

Building strong and long-term relationships between agencies and clients. Trust and continued collaboration help create a more open working relationship and improve the effectiveness of strategic projects. Strong relationships can also lead to longer-term partnerships beyond individual projects.

"It revolves around long-term relationships: honesty, trust, and continuous small touchpoints." – BMI

Staying involved after delivery

Follow-up moments, check-ins, or aftercare services help support the organisation during the implementation phase. Staying involved allows the agency to help translate the strategy into concrete actions while maintaining the client relationship.

"We usually check in with the client again later. It is both a service moment and a commercial opportunity." - GoWeekly



Figure 14: Brewing a magic drink together metaphor

2.4.1 FINDINGS

When clients are actively involved during the process—through workshops, discussions, and co-creation moments—they not only observe the development of the strategy, but also contribute to shaping it.

This involvement creates a sense of ownership, as clients feel that the strategy partly reflects their own ideas and contributions. As a result, the strategy is perceived less as something delivered by an external agency and more as something the organisation helped create.

This sense of ownership increases the likelihood that the strategy will be actively supported and implemented within the organisation, because the people responsible for execution already feel connected to the outcome. Figure 14 illustrates this process through a metaphor of brewing a "magic drink" together. This metaphor highlights how shared involvement leads to a stronger sense of ownership, which in turn supports the implementation of the brand identity within the organisation.

2.2.2 INTERVIEW BRANDING AGENCY LAVA

An interview with a creative strategist from LAVA, a branding and design studio based in Amsterdam that focuses on building “living brands.” The interview was conducted to better understand how LAVA approaches the branding process and how they collaborate with their clients in the process of bringing brands to life.

The aim was to explore whether they experience differences between clients, how they deal with client involvement, and how they ensure that a brand continues to live after the visual identity has been delivered.

Creative strategist at LAVA, acknowledges this shift by stating that “everyone is a designer nowadays.” According to him, clients increasingly see themselves as designers due to accessible tools such as Canva and Adobe express. He explains that especially small companies with limited budgets “will just try things themselves,” rather than involving a professional designer.

The strategist highlights that external parties come with their own design perspective to content that needs to be generated, by stating:

“You see that more complex elements, especially in digital and editorial contexts, become challenging. Things start to grow out of control because they do not fully know how to handle them properly. At the same time, there are ongoing developments in the market”

The interview with LAVA revealed that the level of post-delivery involvement strongly depends on the size and budget of the client. Smaller brands, such as hospitality businesses, often lack the financial resources to structurally involve an external agency after delivery and therefore continue independently. Larger organisations, on the other hand, either have internal teams or operate at such scale and speed that continued agency involvement becomes more logical and feasible (Creative Strategist, LAVA, interview).

This suggests that post-delivery collaboration is not only a strategic choice, but also influenced by organisational capacity and available budget.

BY SYNERGIZING STRATEGY, DESIGN, AND TECHNOLOGY, WE CREATE LIVING IDENTITIES AND BESPOKE TOOLING FOR ORGANISATIONS TO LAST AND STAND OUT - (LAVA - STRATEGY, DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY, 2023)

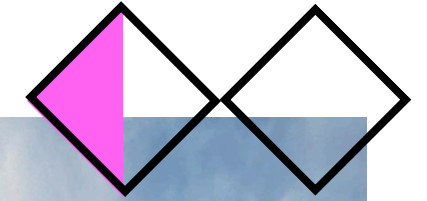

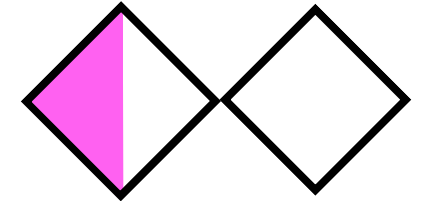


Figure 15: Created content by LAVA (LAVA - Strategy, Design & Technology, 2023)

A herd of sheep is running through a field. In the foreground, a large white sheep is running towards the right, its body slightly blurred. Behind it, several other sheep are running in the same direction. The background shows a green field and a blue sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

JUST LIKE ORGANISMS, LIVING BRANDS
ARE ABLE TO ADAPT, RELATE AND
EVOLVE IN REAL-TIME (LAVA ,2026)



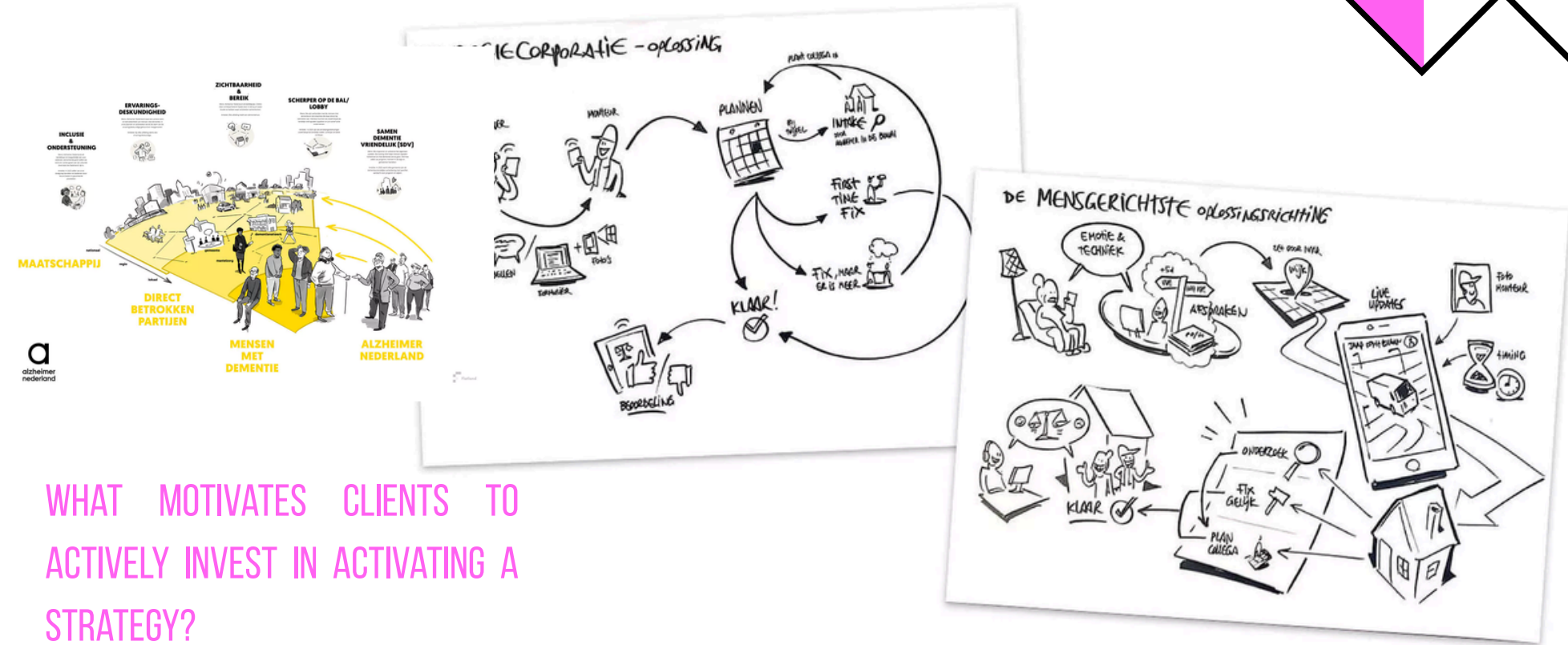
2.2.3 INTERVIEW FLATLAND

An interview with Flatland explored how strategy agencies ensure that strategies are not only delivered but also truly embedded within organisations, and how this approach can be applied to the context of activating newly created brand identities.

Flatland is a strategy agency that helps organisations clarify complex challenges and accelerate change through co-creation and visualisation. They support clients in developing clear visions and strategies that are understood and embraced throughout the organisation. Their approach to visualising strategy aims to turn abstract ideas into shared understanding and practical action. With their slogan, “Drawing a better world together,” they strive to make a positive impact in the major transitions of our time—from energy to healthcare. Flatland not only involves its clients but also the entire organisation, because it is convinced that real change happens when everyone participates (About Us – Flatland, 2026).



Figure 16: Live drawing (Flatland, 2026)



WHAT MOTIVATES CLIENTS TO ACTIVELY INVEST IN ACTIVATING A STRATEGY?

People within the organisation need to understand what the brand means for them and how it affects their daily work. Only when the brand is fully embedded within the organisation will it truly come to life for the outside world.

“People are more motivated when they feel ownership over the success.” -Visual strategist Flatland

HOW CAN A STRATEGY TRULY BECOME EMBEDDED WITHIN AN ORGANISATION?

For a strategy to become embedded within an organisation, the organisation must first understand its value. Next, people need to develop a connection to it. Only then can the strategy be confidently implemented, allowing true activation to take place. When team members actively involve and inform each other, the strategy genuinely comes to life.

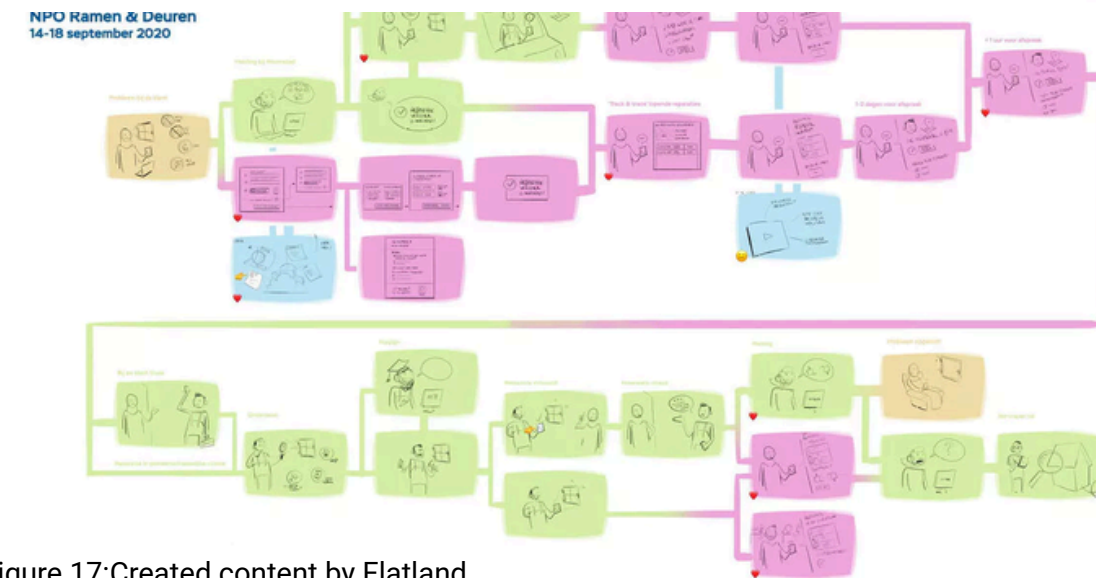
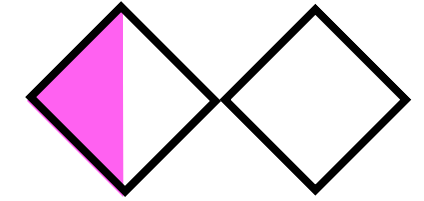


Figure 17: Created content by Flatland





For a strategy to become embedded, it first has to live within the organisation. This aligns with Bilton and Cummings (2010), who argue that the success of a strategy lies not only in its definition, but also in how it is translated into everyday organisational practice. Insights from Flatland reinforce this idea, suggesting that activation requires internal ownership and engagement before external impact can occur.

Figure 18 was created by Flatland during the interview and illustrates that, for a strategy to become embedded within an organisation, it first needs to be activated internally. People within the organisation need to communicate its value in order to create and understand its purpose. As this understanding grows, people begin to develop a stronger connection to the strategy, allowing it to be more widely embraced within the organisation.

During an observation in which OFFFF presented the brand guide to a client in one of their ongoing projects, the organisation's in-house marketer stated:

"The brand guide does not need to be presented to everyone in the team during the presentation, because I am the only one who is going to use it." - (In-house Marketeer, OFFFF client)

This quote highlights that the client perceives the brand guide primarily as a tool for brand activation for the in-house marketer, rather than as the foundation for the entire organisation to bring the brand identity to life. When only one person feels responsible for using it, the rest of the team is not actively involved in understanding or embracing the new brand identity.

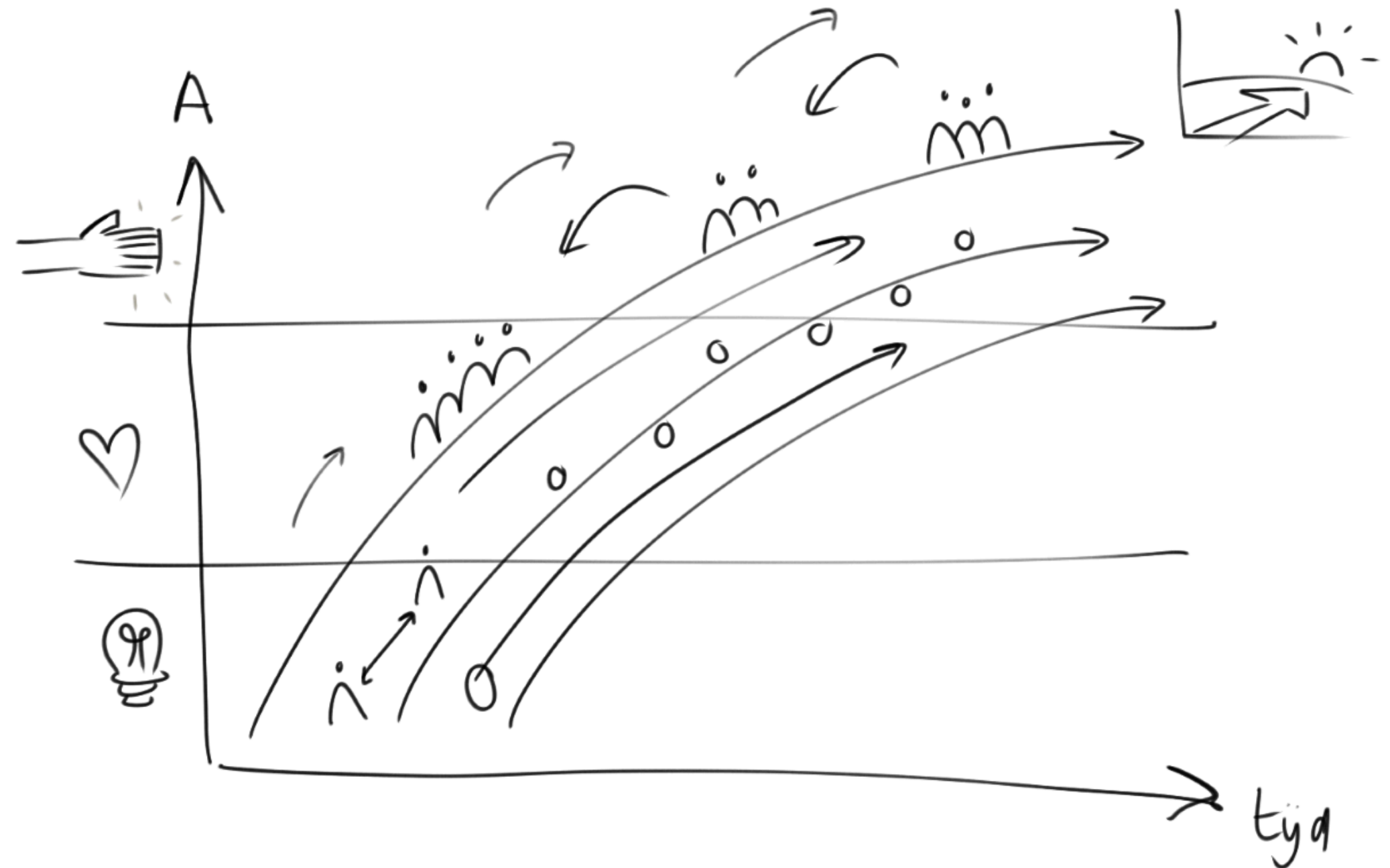


Figure 18: Bringing a strategy to life within an organisation, showing the level of activation over time.

2.3 INTERVIEWS CLIENTS AND OFFFF

In the Discover phase, it was found that for a brand identity to be successfully activated externally, it first needs to live within the organisation.

Multiple clients were interviewed to better understand what happens after the branding trajectory at OFFFF has been completed. The interviews focused on how clients experienced the transition from brand creation to brand activation, and how they ensured that the brand continued to live within their organisation after delivery.

A semi-structured interview approach was used to gather qualitative data and gain deeper insights into the perspectives of both clients and the OFFFF team. This format allowed flexibility to explore topics in greater depth by following up on the interviewees' responses while maintaining a consistent structure across interviews.

Both the client interviews (Appendix C) and the interviews with the team of OFFFF (Appendix D) were separately coded by using the grounded theory approach as described by Kester et al. (2011)

In the following section, the interviewed clients are introduced. A short background of their businesses is provided, and the **bold text** describes why they reached out to OFFFF. The images of the clients' brands were created by OFFFF.

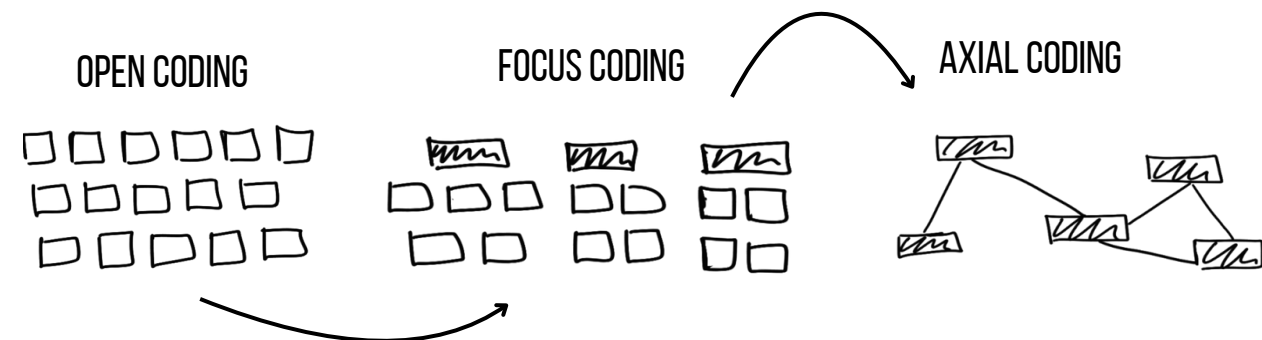
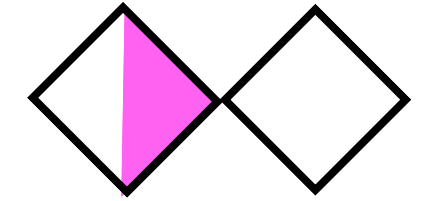


Figure 19: Grounded Theory Method coding

2.3.1 INTERVIEW CLIENTS OFFFF

WHO ARE THE INTERVIEWED CLIENTS OF OFFFF?



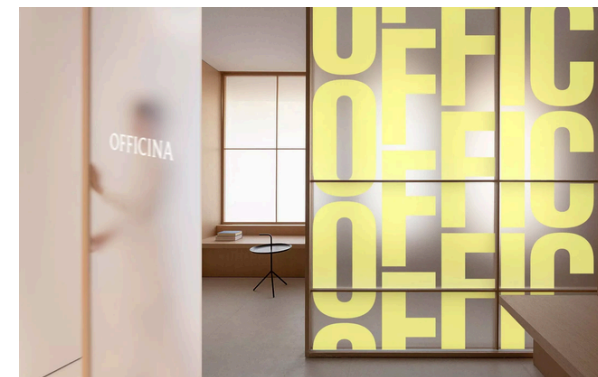
UPCOURT



UPCOURT is a startup that makes padel accessible in places where a permanent padel court would normally not be possible. They do this by offering a modular pop-up padel court that can be quickly assembled and disassembled.

This client came to OFFFF to create their full branding to make sure their business had a professional start

OFFICINA



Officina is a high-quality and welcoming office location in Rotterdam, positioned with a refined and premium character while maintaining an inviting atmosphere.

Former Workspot approached OFFFF with the request to reposition the brand in its entirety – from strategy to visual identity, from interior concept to online presence. Ultimately, this also included the development of a new name that would align with the next phase of the organisation: Officina.

DE GELE KANARIE



De Gele Kanarie is a popular city café and brewery in the centre of Rotterdam. You can find them at two locations.

De Gele Kanarie approached OFFFF with the request to develop the complete brand concept: from name to identity, from story to atmosphere. The ambition was to create a place with a strong character and a cohesive identity, where people would want to stay and spend time.

&DONUTS



&Donuts is a donut shop located at Metro Station Beurs in Rotterdam. The successful donut shop and website Donuts.nl, based in the station. **OFFFF** was asked to create a brand that truly matched the craftsmanship of the product, stood out in the market, and offered room for expansion to multiple stores.

NOLET



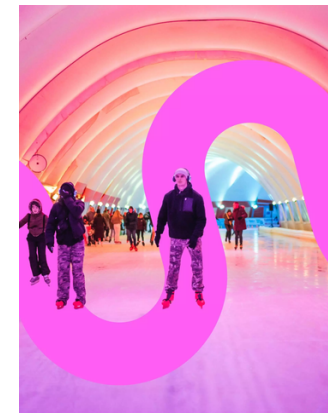
Nolet Distillery, located in the heart of Schiedam, has been continuously owned by the Nolet family since its founding in 1691. This makes it one of the oldest family-owned businesses in the Netherlands. **Over the years, Nolet's Gin had primarily built brand awareness in the United States. However, in the Netherlands, the brand was less visible and felt more distant to consumers. The question they brought to OFFFF was how to make Nolet's relevant for the Dutch market.**

COLORADO CHARLIE



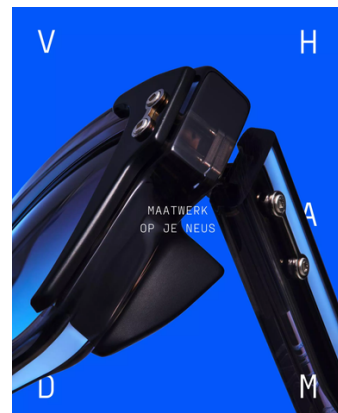
Colorado Charlie is a beach club located at the Zwarte Pad in Scheveningen. It is known as a vibrant "party beach venue," where house and techno events are regularly organised during the summer season, alongside a relaxed setting for gatherings, drinks, and dinners. **Colorado Charlie had grown into a social media phenomenon, but their brand identity had not kept up. They asked OFFFF to turn Colorado Charlie into a brand with a clear and distinctive character**

SCHAATSBAAN ROTTERDAM



Schaatsbaan Rotterdam is an indoor ice skating rink located in Rotterdam, featuring a 400-metre ice track that is open during the winter season. It started as a city initiative supported by a subsidy, but has since grown into a vibrant and independent sports complex. **The client came to OFFFF to create a distinctive brand identity that could serve as a foundation for long-term growth and future expansion, as they have the ambition to open multiple locations.**

VAN DER HAM



Van der Ham is a specialised optical and optometry retailer. The company is recognised for its extensive eye care expertise. **Van der Ham approached OFFFF with the request to develop a brand that is as distinctive as the people behind it. The assignment covered the full scope of branding: from brand strategy to visual identity, from logo to packaging, and from website to brand story.**

INSINO



ISINO Frozen Cappuccino is a beverage product specifically developed for the horeca and hospitality sector, offered by Scanwic Food Services. **This client came to OFFFF to create their full branding to make sure their business had a professional start when entering the competitive retail market**

2.3.2 FINDINGS CLIENT INTERVIEWS

The interviews conducted with clients provided insight into how they handled the period after the branding trajectory and how they perceive branding and the process of bringing a brand identity to life.

HOW DO CLIENTS NAVIGATE THE PERIOD AFTER THE BRANDING TRAJECTORY?

Clients show the need to continuously adapt to changes in their market and environment. Shifts in customer preferences, competition, and demand influence how brands need to be activated and adjusted over time.

Fast from strategy to execution

Clients express a need to move quickly from strategic decisions to concrete execution. Being able to act fast allows them to respond to opportunities in the market and avoid falling behind competitors.

An example of the need to move quickly from strategy to execution is the startup Scanwic. After the branding trajectory was completed, they aimed to enter the market as soon as possible, as delays would result in lost revenue.

"We were able to quickly create a concrete package for the hospitality sector, allowing the first locations to launch within months."
– Scanwic

Changing market

Market demand is not static and can change as products grow, mature, or decline. Clients indicate that the success of a product can vary over time, requiring adjustments in how the brand is positioned and activated.

"In terms of production, we were well prepared, as that had been clearly agreed upon. However, the market has grown significantly over the past year, particularly due to the rise of hard seltzers such as Viper."
– Nolet

Staying ahead of competitors

Clients are motivated to continue differentiating themselves from competitors by using their newly created brand identity. They take risks in how they activate their brand, for example by hiring external parties for brand activation, such as web development or photography. This way of generating brand touchpoints can cause them to align less with the original brand identity created by OFFFF.

Staying ahead of competitors requires making bold choices, which involves uncertainty but is seen as necessary to remain visible and relevant in the market.

"Choosing a different path from what is known to work and being willing to take that risk is something few people dare to do. We did take that step, and it proved successful. Now we already see other parties starting to copy it. That is why it is important to keep staying one step ahead." – Officina

Emerging business insights

After the delivery of a brand identity, clients may gain new insights into their business or market, such as shifts in customer behaviour or operational challenges. This can lead to uncertainty about whether the brand is being activated correctly. These insights may influence how the brand is implemented and can result in adjustments that were not anticipated during the branding trajectory. Over time, this can weaken or dilute the original brand activation.

"I notice that over time our branding has become a bit flat, even though OFFFF created a very specific and distinctive brand identity." - Meet Tuesday

Another client indicated that OFFFF currently receives very limited feedback on how the brand is experienced by end customers. While the client does gather customers feedback, this information is rarely fed back to the agency. According to the client Officina "feedback loops are crucial" for understanding the choices that are made in the brand activation. Figure 20 illustrates a feedback loop between the consumer and the client organisation during the process of activating the brand.

"Our visitors can be very critical. When we first went online with the new changes, we immediately received negative reactions. Some people even asked whether our designer had passed away. That kind of feedback really affects you, it makes you question whether you made the right decision." - Colorado Charlie

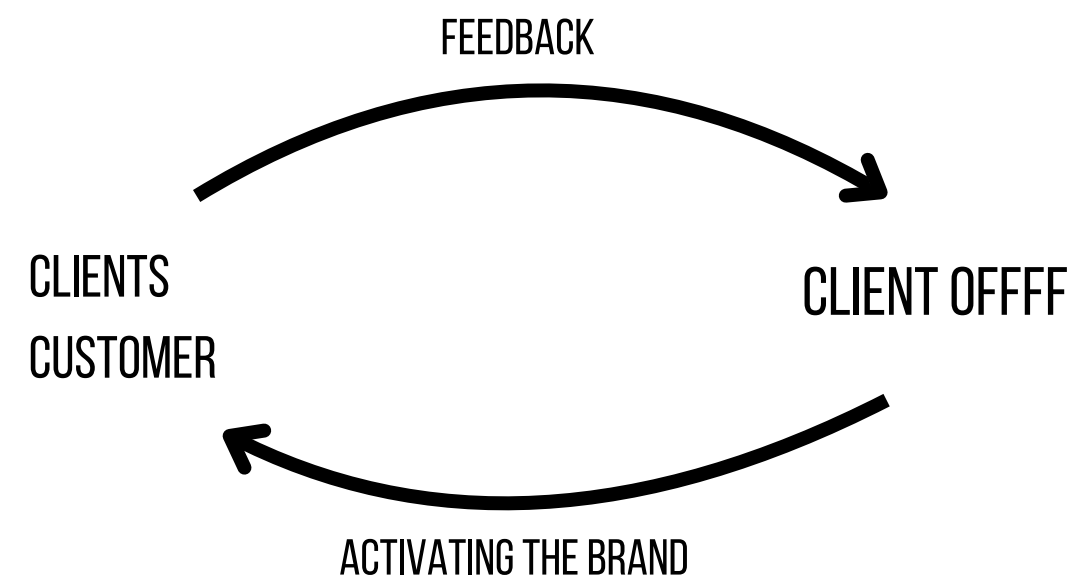


Figure 20: Feedback loop customers

Sporadic investment in branding

Investing in branding is seen as a way to remain relevant in the future. Clients view the brand identity as a foundation that can be expanded when needed, for example when new opportunities arise.

"I would like to make more use of the branding next year. It doesn't necessarily have to be something very big, but simply to show it more. I was thinking that it might be nice to do something with Keukenhof around Mother's Day next year. Something that reflects the surprising character of Floral gin— something you wouldn't immediately expect."

— Nolet

This quote shows that branding is perceived as something that can be activated at specific moments, rather than as a continuous process. The brand identity is seen as a resource that can be picked up when time and opportunity allow, rather than as an ongoing strategic practice embedded in daily operations. As a result, branding becomes an additional initiative on the checklist rather than being lived.

CLIENT PERSPECTIVE ON BRANDING AND ON BRINGING THE BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE

Brand pride

Clients express pride in their business and are therefore willing to invest in a professionally designed brand identity. Even though it is quite an investment, they see it as valuable.

"We didn't have a very large budget for this project, but we wanted it to be really good."

— Upcourt

Functional view of branding

This quote reflects a practical view of branding, in which the brand identity is mainly seen as a set of visual elements such as colours and fonts. Because the brand is perceived as something relatively straightforward, clients feel confident in managing it themselves. As a result, they take decision-making autonomy in the activation process and believe that the brand can be handled internally without continued involvement from the agency.

"We don't see it as something very complex. It largely comes down to colours and fonts. If you understand the basics and apply them logically, you can manage it yourself"

— &Donuts

Brand guide perceived finished deliverable

The brand guide is often viewed as a finished deliverable that describes the brand identity, rather than as a foundation for building a living brand. When it is seen mainly as a practical tool, its strategic role may gradually fade over time. As a result, brand activation can become less focused and more reactive, which may weaken the original strategic direction and reduce the distinctiveness of the brand.

Because of this perception, clients do not always see the need to make agreements about long-term adjustments or ongoing guidance from the start. This is especially the case for startups, who are primarily focused on launching their business successfully and entering the market as quickly as possible.

"I didn't see the need for a subscription or ongoing commitment around the brand book. In my opinion, it was already finished and wouldn't need many changes unless we asked for something specific."

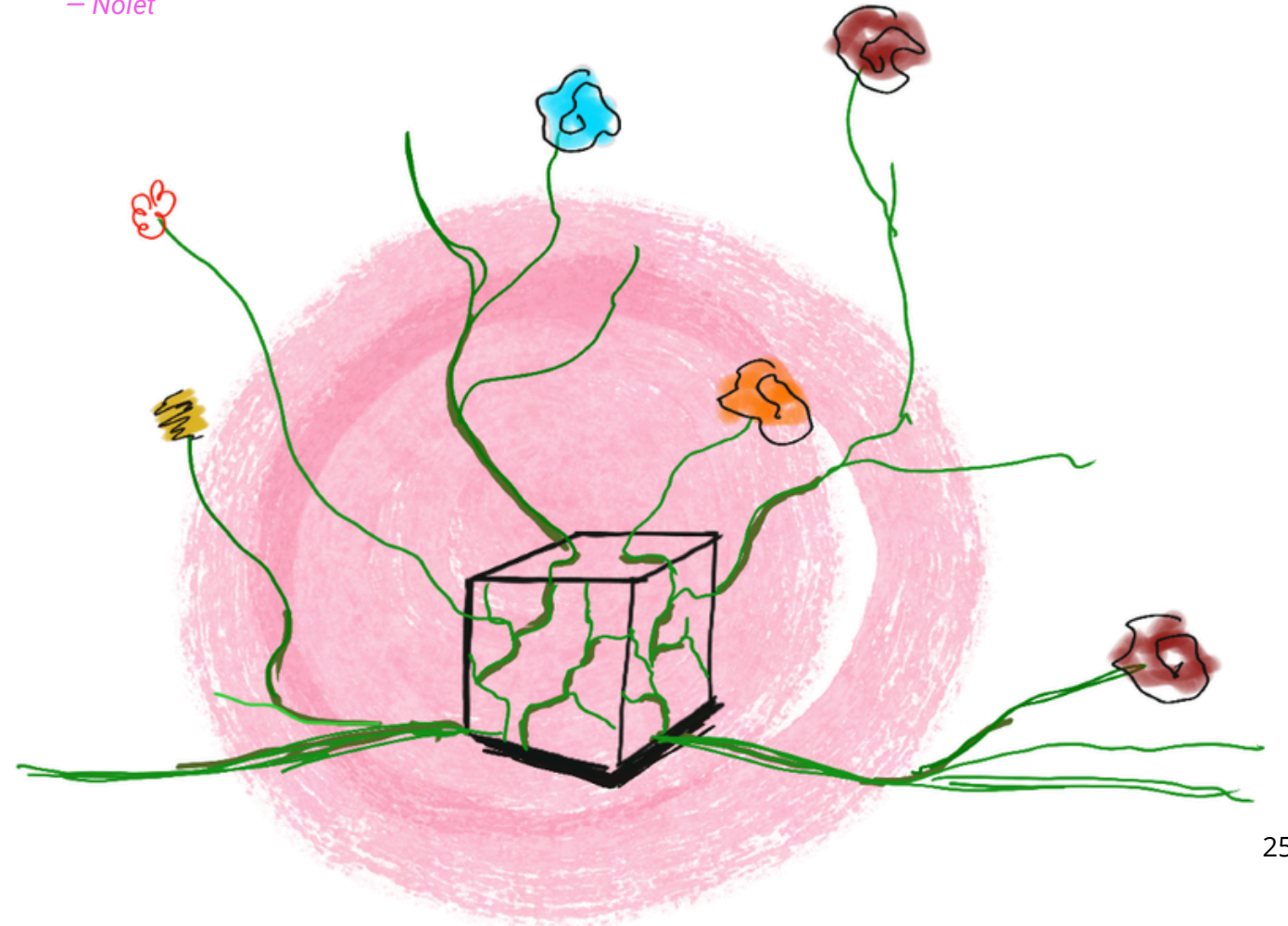
— Scanwic

Priority of operational tasks

Due to their very busy planning of different operational activities, such as launching new products and managing limited editions, branding is not the main priority of clients. At the same time, the team is not growing. This means that there is limited internal capacity. Because of this, branding and brand activation are not always the highest priority. Even if the client sees opportunities to do more with the brand, there is simply not enough time to focus on it. As a result, brand activation depends on the time and space available within the organisation.

"There is a lot happening in our markets, and we are constantly busy with that. We have more products now, which requires more time. We recently introduced a new blend and even a limited edition. Meanwhile, the team isn't growing. So there's definitely more we could do, but we simply don't have extra capacity."

— Nolet



Findings

The client interviews revealed several factors that influence whether brand identities are successfully brought to life after delivery. Although clients often value and invest in a professionally designed brand identity, practical constraints and operational priorities can affect how consistently the brand is applied over time. Figure 21 illustrates how the level of living the brand identity may change after the client receives ownership of the brand.

The figure illustrates how the brand identity is initially strongly applied and lived when it is first delivered and introduced within the organisation. During this phase, the brand receives considerable attention and is actively implemented in communication and design.

However, over time the focus on living the brand gradually decreases. As operational priorities and daily activities take precedence, the consistent engagement with the brand identity can weaken. This results in a flatter or less distinctive brand activation. The figure therefore highlights how, without continued guidance or structured activation, the level at which the brand identity is actively lived within the organisation can flatten over time.

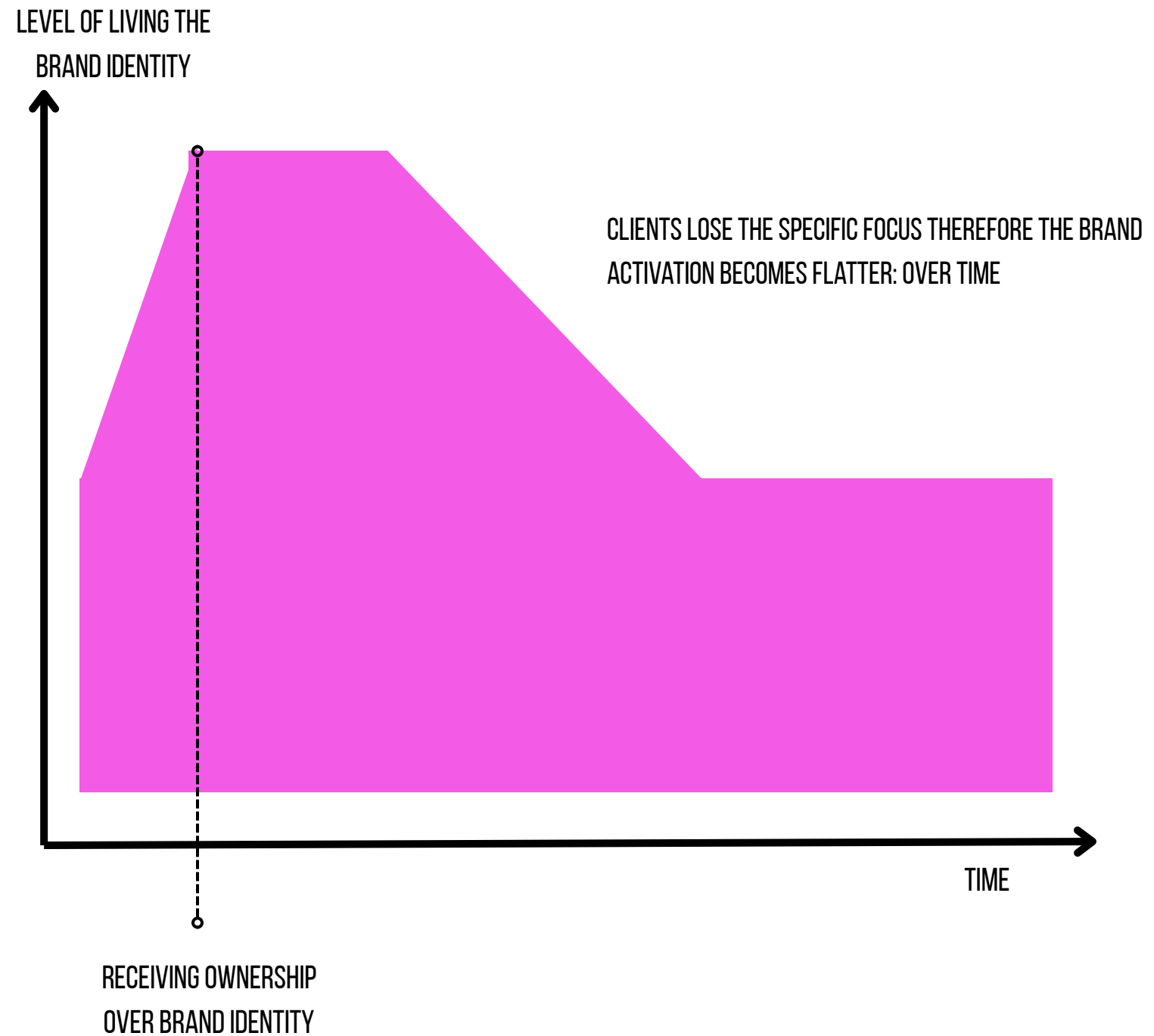


Figure 21: Illustration of how the level of living the brand identity can decline over time after the client receives ownership of the brand identity.

2.3.3 INTERVIEW TEAM OFFFF

This section presents insights from interviews with members of the OFFFF team. The interviews explore how the agency currently approaches follow-up after delivering a brand identity and how team members experience the process of bringing the brand identity to life. The findings reveal several challenges related to responsibility, follow-up, and the agency's involvement after delivery.

HOW DOES THE TEAM OFFFF FOLLOW UP ON THE BRANDING TRAJECTORY

Not being updated on the client's situation

After the branding trajectory has ended, OFFFF is not always kept informed about what is happening within the client's organisation. Changes such as new priorities, internal team changes, or new competitors in the market may occur without OFFFF knowing about them.

As a result, OFFFF's understanding of the client's situation can slowly become outdated. This makes it more difficult for the agency to stay aligned with the client's current needs and challenges.

"So suddenly it becomes a bit dead. Because your focus shifts to the next project, it quickly starts to fade. I think there is still a lot of potential there to improve that – to actively stay involved with the client together." - Designer OFFFF

Generating income

OFFFF tends to not focus on follow-up activities, but they prioritize on ongoing projects that generate immediate revenue.

Follow-up after delivery does not automatically lead to new business, making it a lower priority within day-to-day operations.

"At the end of the day, money still needs to be made." - Creative strategist OFFFF

Activation outsourced to different parties

This category highlights how the activation of a brand identity is often outsourced to other parties after the branding trajectory. While the agency delivers the brand identity, the implementation is frequently handled by the client or other external actors. This shows how agencies may lose involvement in the later stages of bringing the brand identity to life.

"Very often, we complete a branding project, but the final implementation is not handled by us. Clients prefer to do it themselves, especially after already spending a significant amount of money." - Designer OFFFF

Diffused responsibility

After delivery, it is often unclear within the team of OFFFF who is responsible for following up with the client after the branding trajectory. Within OFFFF, it is not clearly defined if the agency should step in or leave decisions to the client, nor how this follow-up should be approached.

"Personally, I don't think I ever really did anything with it, because it wasn't really my role. We probably should have done something with it. Every time it came up, I thought, 'We really should act on this.' But then it would get pushed aside again, and nothing would happen. Still, I genuinely believe in its importance."

A grey area emerges in which diffused responsibility occurs: is OFFFF going to see the client again? And who is responsible for maintaining contact?

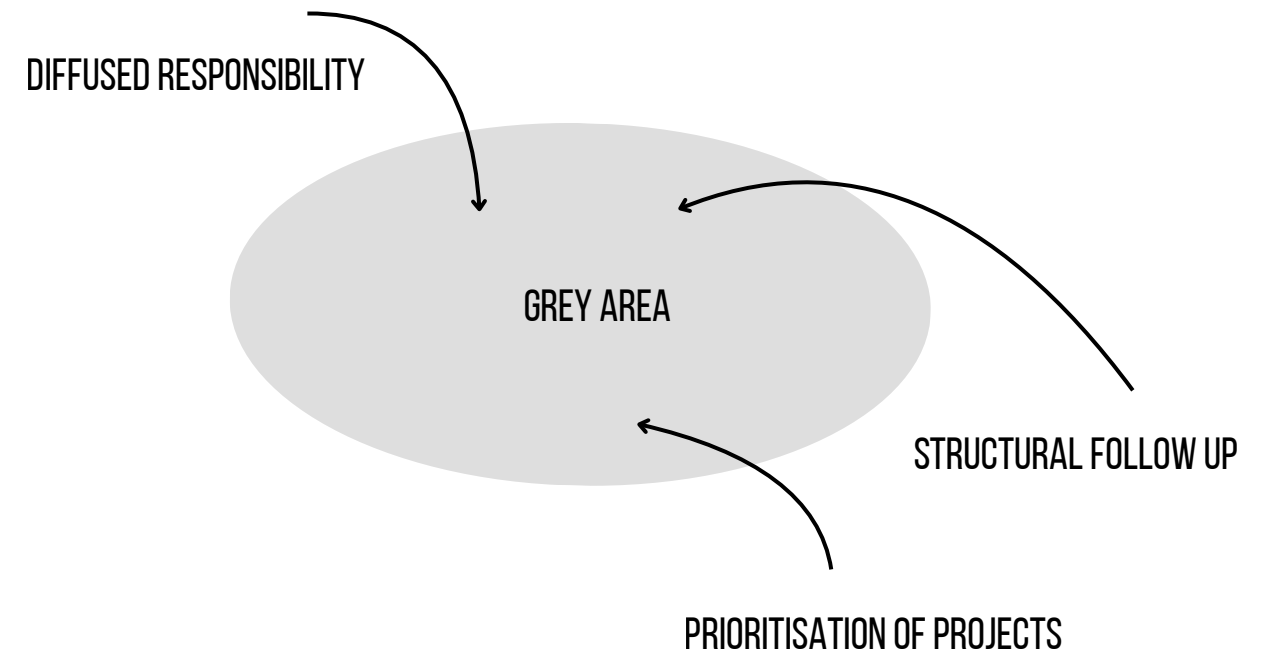


Figure 22: Emerging grey area in responsibility for follow-up after the delivery of a brand identity.

Figure 22 illustrates how a grey area can emerge after the delivery of a brand identity.

A "grey area" is a metaphor for situations, topics, or issues that are unclear, ambiguous, or not strictly defined. Several factors contribute to this situation. First, responsibility for activating the brand is often diffused, as implementation may be carried out by the client or outsourced to other parties. Second, structural follow-up from the agency is not always embedded in the workflow. Finally, agencies tend to prioritise new projects, as these generate direct revenue.

Together, these dynamics create uncertainty about whether OFFFF will work with the client again and who is responsible for maintaining the relationship. As a result, the transition from delivering a brand identity to actively supporting its implementation is not always clearly defined.

VIEW ON CLIENTS LIVING THE BRAND

Pessimistic view on activation

When involvement decreases after delivery, designers can become more cautious or sceptical about brand activation. They often expect that the brand identity will not be applied fully or consistently, which lowers their confidence in how successfully it will be implemented.

When brand activation is outsourced to different external parties, each party may interpret the brand in its own way. As a result, small adjustments or personal “twists” are introduced during implementation. Over time, this can lead to brand expressions that no longer fully align with the original brand identity developed by OFFFF.

“If there isn’t a good designer internally, it simply won’t work. They won’t be able to implement it properly. In that case, you can have a clear brand guide, but it still won’t be executed well.” - Designer OFFFF

Professional expertise

For OFFFF, everything that is shared externally needs to meet a professional standard, because it reflects the agency’s own identity and credibility. This applies not only to the design itself, but also to the way projects are handled and how clients are supported.

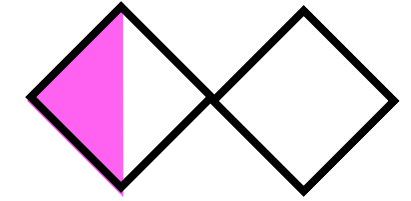
Because of this, OFFFF prefers to take action only when there is a clear and well-structured approach in place. In the case of aftercare, follow-up is currently limited, since there is no fixed professional structure to support it yet.

“It is also related to professionalisation. From our side, there is a certain nuance in that, because we approach it with a critical perspective.” - Designer OFFFF

Findings

The interviews show that after delivering a brand identity, OFFFF’s involvement in the client’s branding trajectory often becomes unclear. Responsibilities for activating the brand are frequently distributed between the client, external parties, and the agency, which can create a grey area in follow-up. As a result, the transition from delivering a brand identity to actively supporting its activation is not always clearly defined.





2.4 OFFFF'S PROJECT APPROACH

HOW DO STRATEGISTS, DESIGNERS AND CLIENTS COLLABORATE DURING THE BRANDING TRAJECTORY?

After conducting several interviews with OFFFF and its clients, and observing how they collaborate, the dynamics between the agency and its clients can be identified. Within the team of OFFFF, both designers and creative strategists are involved in the process of creating a new brand identity for clients. This chapter examines how these different roles interact with each other and with the client during the branding trajectory.

Good branding is rarely accidental; it requires strategic insight, design expertise, and a creative eye. Employing a branding agency can represent a valuable long-term investment, as such agencies bring together diverse skills that support every phase of the branding process – from research and positioning to naming, identity design, and internal or external brand launch (Neumeier, 2005). Beverland (2016) notes these agencies often employ people from different professional backgrounds, enabling them to offer fresh, outsider perspectives that internal teams may overlook. OFFFF exemplifies this multidisciplinary character.

The team of OFFFF combines designers and creative strategists who work collaboratively to translate strategic insights into distinctive visual and verbal identities. This blend of analytical and creative expertise allows them to bridge the gap between brand strategy and brand expression. This way they are able to translate the essence of a client company into a distinctive and coherent visual identity that communicates its core values and personality across all touchpoints. The project dynamics between OFFFF's creative strategists, designers, and the client influence how knowledge from different areas of expertise is shared and how this ultimately affects the results that can be achieved in the project.

2.4.1 KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION

Knowledge integration refers to the ability of a project organisation to turn knowledge into action. Combining knowledge from people with different areas of expertise can be challenging. However, integrating this specialist knowledge is important for effective collaboration and for applying knowledge in practice. Therefore, project teams need the capability to bring together expertise from different fields and use it to achieve a shared outcome (Dietrich et al., 2010). To explain how collaboration influences project outcomes, Dietrich et al. (2010) describe a model in which the quality of collaboration affects the ability of a project team to integrate knowledge. Figure 23 presents this model.

This also occurs in the projects of OFFFF. By bringing together experts from different disciplines, the agency is able to create new brand identities. Within their projects, they combine the expertise of designers (experts in visual creation), creative strategists (experts in developing brand strategy), and the client (who has expert knowledge of the organisation and its operations). This blend of analytical and creative expertise helps bridge the gap between brand strategy and brand expression.

By combining strategic thinking with creative execution, OFFFF is able to translate the essence of a client organisation into a distinctive and coherent visual identity that communicates its core values and personality across different touchpoints.

2.4.2 CREATIVE STRATEGISTS

Creative strategists guide the client through the entire branding trajectory at OFFFF. They host the workshops in which, together with the client, they identify the organisation's core values and vision. Throughout this process, the strategist is also the primary point of contact, maintaining most of the communication with the client.

After the workshops, the strategists translate the insights into several moodboards that outline potential design directions for the brand.

2.4.3 DESIGNERS

Designers work with the determined strategic foundations defined during the workshops with the client. This allows them to understand the client's perspective firsthand and anticipate how these values should translate into the visual and experiential aspects of the brand. They are experts in translating strategy into visual designs in order to create the brand identity. Throughout the trajectory, designers also maintain regular contact with the client, addressing questions from both sides and ensuring that the creative development stays aligned with the client's needs and expectations.

"We were there with four people – the bar and hospitality manager, the owner, the former programmer, and myself. So you get input from four very different perspectives, which led to interesting discussions.

The designer took all that input and developed three different visual directions. From there, we had to choose and refine, and step by step we moved closer together. As I said, everyone values different things, and each perspective highlights something else."

– Marketing Manager, Colorado Charlie

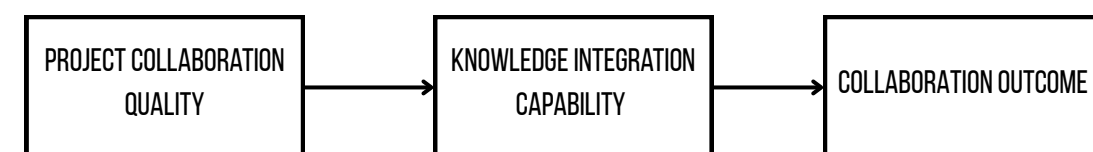


Figure 23: knowledge integration in projects model (Dietrich et al., 2010).

2.4.4 CLIENTS OFFFF

During the trajectory, the client plays an active role in shaping the direction of the project. Through workshops and concept presentations, strategic choices are discussed and refined. When visual directions are presented, the client selects one of several proposed mood boards, which determines the creative route for the designers. In practice, the client is mainly in contact with the creative strategist, who translates organisational goals into strategic brand decisions. During the visual development phase, designers provide updates and present design outcomes, while strategic communication remains primarily led by the strategist.

The client contributes essential organisational knowledge, including insights into internal workflows, company culture, business objectives, and customer perspectives. This knowledge forms the foundation on which the brand identity is built. At the same time, the client's involvement influences the level of ownership and activation later on. Their understanding, commitment, and internal alignment during the trajectory affect whether the brand identity is successfully brought to life.

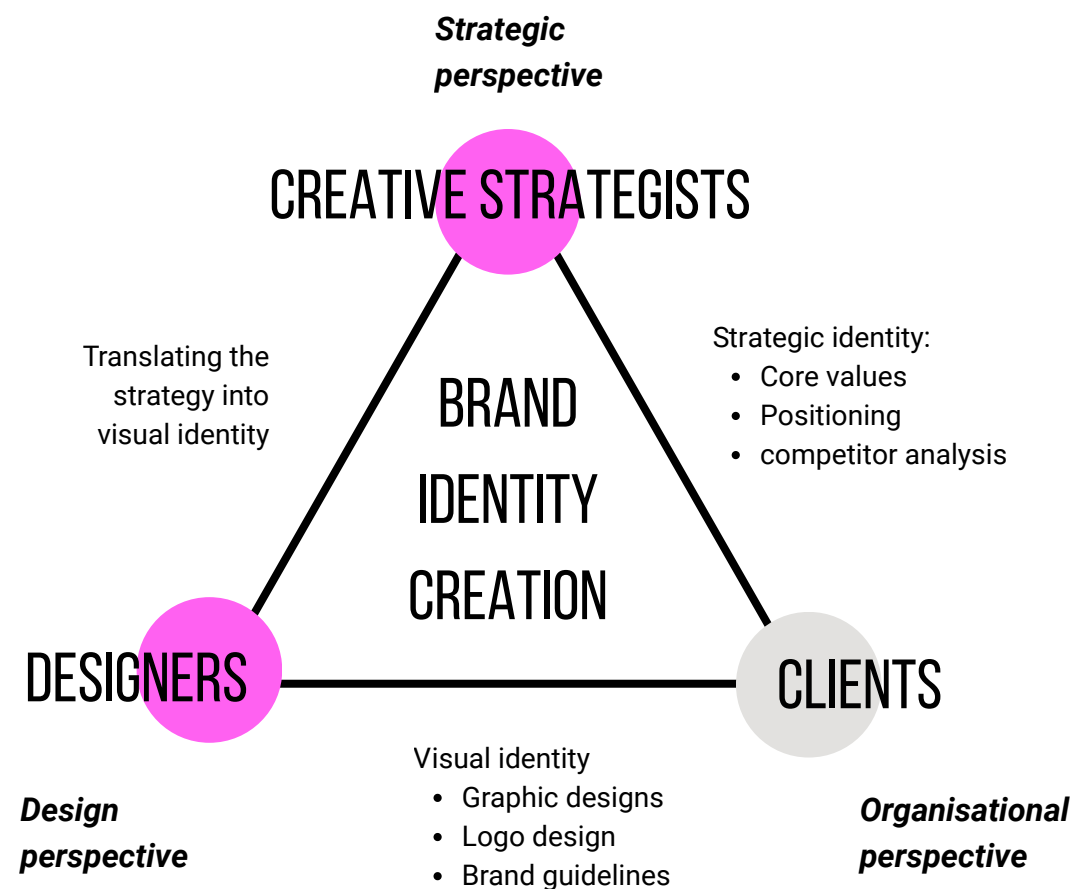


Figure 24: Findings synergized in interpretive model

2.4.5 TEAM DYNAMICS

HOW DO STRATEGISTS, DESIGNERS AND CLIENTS CONTRIBUTE TO BRAND IDENTITY CREATION?

This section showed how brand identity creation at OFFFF emerges through the collaboration between creative strategists, designers, and the client. Each party contributes a different perspective: strategic, creative, and organisational. The integration of these perspectives allows strategic insights to be translated into a coherent visual brand identity.

Figure 24 presents an interpretive model of brand identity creation, showing how creative strategists, designers, and clients contribute to the development of a brand identity.

The model shows three main roles involved in the branding trajectory: creative strategists, designers, and clients. Each role contributes a different perspective to the process. Creative strategists provide the strategic perspective by defining elements such as core values, positioning, and competitor analysis. Designers contribute the design perspective by translating the strategy into visual expressions, including graphic designs, logos, and brand guidelines. Clients contribute the organisational perspective by providing insights into the organisation, its goals, and its internal context.

The model highlights that brand identity creation is the result of integrating strategic, creative, and organisational knowledge. Effective collaboration between strategists, designers, and clients allows strategic insights to be translated into a coherent visual identity that reflects the organisation's values and positioning.

2.4.6 WORKFLOW ANALYSIS

HOW CAN OFFFF REMAIN INVOLVED IN BRINGING THE NEW BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE WHILE THE CLIENT HAS OWNERSHIP OVER THE BRAND IDENTITY

The previous section described the dynamics between creative strategists, designers, and clients during the branding trajectory. While this highlighted how different perspectives contribute to the creation of a brand identity, it does not yet explain how these interactions unfold in practice. This section therefore analyses the workflow of OFFFF by mapping the key stages of the branding process and the roles involved. By examining how strategy is translated into design and how projects progress through different phases, this chapter provides insight into how OFFFF operates throughout the branding trajectory.

OFFFF operates in a project-based workflow. Multiple projects are often handled simultaneously, with one designer taking primary responsibility for the project while collaborating closely with the strategist.

To better understand how OFFFF approaches branding projects, the agency's workflow is compared with established theoretical models. The branding process described by Wheeler (2021) is used as a reference framework, as it provides a structured overview of the stages involved in developing and implementing a brand.

Figure 25 visualizes the workflow of OFFFF and the roles involved. The icons used in the model are explained in the accompanying legend.

The model maps the main stages of the process, starting with research and translating strategic insights into design directions. This is followed by aligning the design direction with the client and developing the visual brand identity. After the delivery of the brand guide, additional activities may occur, such as creating brand touchpoints or managing brand assets.

The workflow illustrates how strategic insights are gradually translated into visual brand expressions through collaboration between the strategist, designer, and client. At the same time, the model highlights a grey area after the delivery of the brand guide. While OFFFF follows a structured process until the brand identity is delivered, what happens afterwards is less clearly organised.

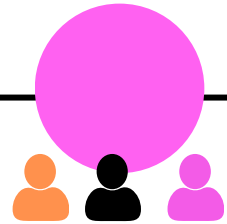
Continued involvement often depends on whether the client reaches out again, rather than being part of a predefined activation process. From the side of OFFFF, there is currently no structural moment to check in with the client to explore whether additional support or services could be valuable.

As a result, the transition from creating a brand identity to actively contributing to bringing the brand to life is not structurally embedded in OFFFF's workflow. This suggests opportunities for OFFFF to play a more active and structural role after delivery by offering additional services such as touchpoint creation and brand asset management, while staying informed about the client's evolving situation.

THESE FINDINGS REVEAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OFFFF TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE AND STRUCTURAL ROLE AFTER DELIVERY BY SUPPORTING CLIENTS IN BRINGING THE BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE THROUGH SERVICES SUCH AS ADDITIONAL TOUCHPOINT CREATION AND BY STAYING INFORMED ABOUT THE CLIENT'S BRAND ASSET MANAGEMENT.

START
BRANDING
TRAJECTORY

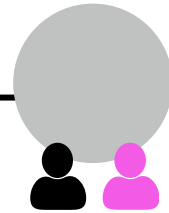
CONDUCTING RESEARCH



OFFFF road workshop:

- Competitor analysis
- Clarifying brand values
- Clarify vision of the client (archetypes)

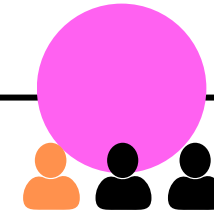
TRANSLATING STRATEGY TO DESIGN



Creating visual design directions for

- Creation of 3 moodboards showing different design directions
- Validating creations within team of OFFFF

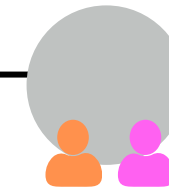
CLARIFYING DIRECTION



Concept directions presentation

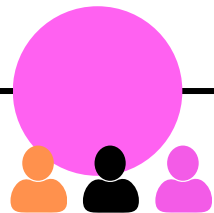
- Presenting design direction to client
- Choosing 1 direction in agreement with the client

CREATION OF VISUAL DESIGNS



- Designers design visual brand identity
- Validating with client (calls/mailling)

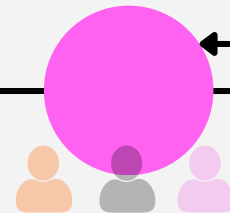
DESIGNING IDENTITY



Delivery brand guide

- Creation of brand identity in brand guide format
- Validating with client

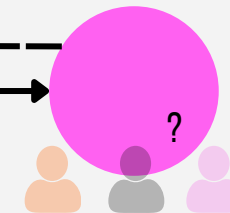
CREATING TOUCHPOINTS



Creation of additional touchpoints:

- Creation of templates designs (optional)
- Taking care of photography (optional)
- Website development (optional)

MANAGING ASSETS



Aftercare

- non-structural check in by agency
- Client-initiated requests for additional services

GREY AREA: WILL WE SEE THE CLIENT AGAIN AND WHEN ?

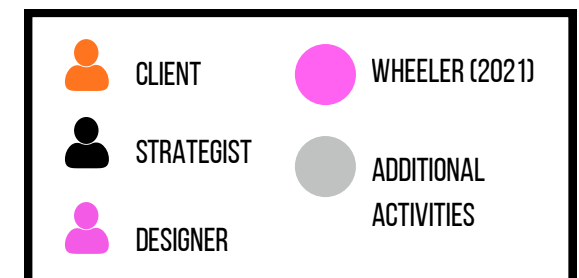


Figure 25: workflow OFFFF

2.5 BRANDING THEORY

HOW IS BRANDING ACTIVATED?

The conducted interviews showed that actively living the brand often becomes less of a priority after the delivery of a new brand identity. This raises the question of what insights can be found in the literature on how brands are brought to life and whether guidance exists on the most effective way to achieve this. Therefore, this chapter explores the theoretical foundations of brand activation and brand building.

2.5.1 HIERARCHICAL BRAND ACTIVATION

Branding is the art of aligning what you want people to think of your brand what people actually do think about (Beverland, 2018).

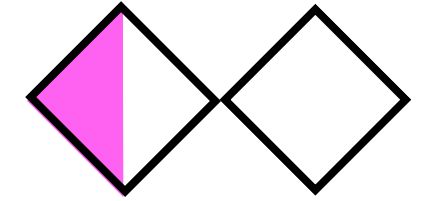
According to Kapferer (2005) this is done through the sender, who sends messages and the receiver, the one that receives the messages as shown in figure 26.

Senders send the messages to the receiver based on their brand identity and other sources of inspiration. These messages are sent through signals transmitted, also called brand touchpoints Wheeler (2021).

A brand must first define what it wants to communicate before it can influence how it is perceived. Brand activation operationalises this principle by ensuring that identity is consistently expressed across touchpoints. Effective brand activation reduces these risks by grounding all expressions in a clear and realistic brand identity. When organisations activate their brand based on who they truly are, they can communicate more consistently and credibly.

Brand activation connects identity and image. It translates the intended brand identity into concrete and perceivable signals. Through brand activation, strategic choices become visible in practice.

The resulting brand image cannot be directly controlled by the brand, but emerges from how receivers interpret these activated signals (Kapferer, 2005).



2.5.2 DYNAMIC BRAND ACTIVATION

However, this is not the only approach to brand activation. According to Holt's cultural branding model (2004), brands gain meaning by responding to tensions in society. When people experience a gap between dominant social ideals and their own reality, they look for brands that help them express who they are in a changing cultural context. Consumers often see themselves as self-made or self-reliant and therefore choose brands that reflect these values. Rather than viewing brand identity as a fixed construct located solely on the sender's side, as described by Kapferer (2005), cultural branding emphasises that brand meaning develops in interaction with broader cultural contexts. The brand identity can develop also along the way. Consumers will often frame their identities in terms of being self-made and choose brands that reflect this identity (Beverland, 2018, p145).

As mentioned by Beverland (2018), a clearly defined brand identity can provide a competitive advantage by enabling a brand to occupy a distinct position in the marketplace. According to Holt (2004), iconic brands remain successful by continuously adapting, rather than by reinforcing a fixed position (Beverland, 2018). Building on the more dynamic approach to branding. The framework of Mintzberg (1987) explains that good strategy is not only planned in advance, but also develops through trial and error and adaptation to unexpected events, which he calls a "realised strategy." Applied to branding, this means that a planned brand position cannot stay fixed forever and may need to change as circumstances evolve.

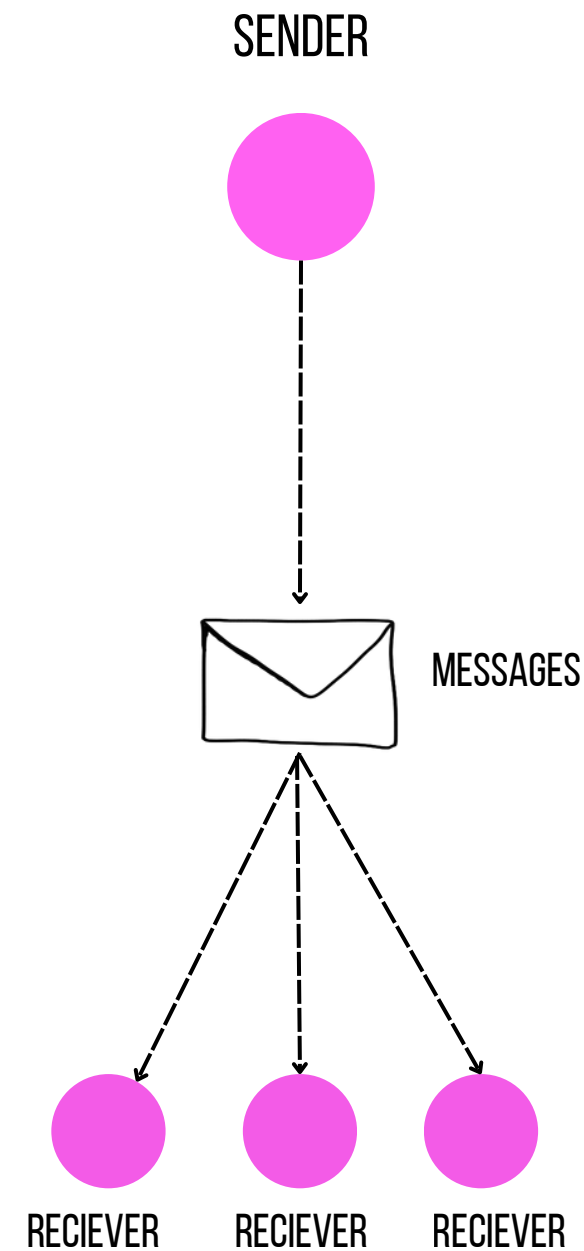


Figure 26: Hierarchical brand activation

Some parts of a strategy may need to be dropped, while unexpected opportunities may emerge over time that require change or create space for brand innovation (Mintzberg, 1987).

Managing a top-down brand position with bottom-up changes in brand meaning is similar to what Mintzberg calls a “realised strategy.” In branding, this results in a realised brand position that develops over time rather than being fully planned in advance (Beverland, 2018).

To understand what really happens after the delivery of a brand identity, it is not enough to look at activation as something that was planned during the branding process. In reality, strategy does not unfold exactly as designed. It develops over time, through adaptation, unexpected events, and everyday decisions. Beverland (2018) refers to this as the realised strategy: the strategy that actually takes shape in practice.

Brand activation can be understood in the same way. What is planned during the branding trajectory is only the starting point. Once the brand identity is handed over, activation becomes an evolving process shaped by the organisation itself.

Whether markets are contracting or expanding they are always changing and this change creates opportunities for any organization, whether a big multi-national or a small start-up, to think creatively about how they might go about their business more effectively (Bilton & Cummings, 2010).

Figure 27 illustrates a strategy framework based on Mintzberg (1987), showing how brand activation develops over time through the interaction of intended, deliberate, and emergent actions.

This figure shows that brand activation often starts with an intended strategy: the initial plan developed during the branding process. During implementation, parts of this strategy may be revised or dropped, resulting in a deliberate strategy that guides the activation process. At the same time, unexpected events, trial and error, or new opportunities may lead to emergent actions that were not originally planned.

As a result of this interaction between deliberate and emergent actions, the realised brand activation can differ from the original plan. This illustrates that brand activation is not a fixed process but develops dynamically over time as organisations adapt to new insights, feedback, and changing circumstances.

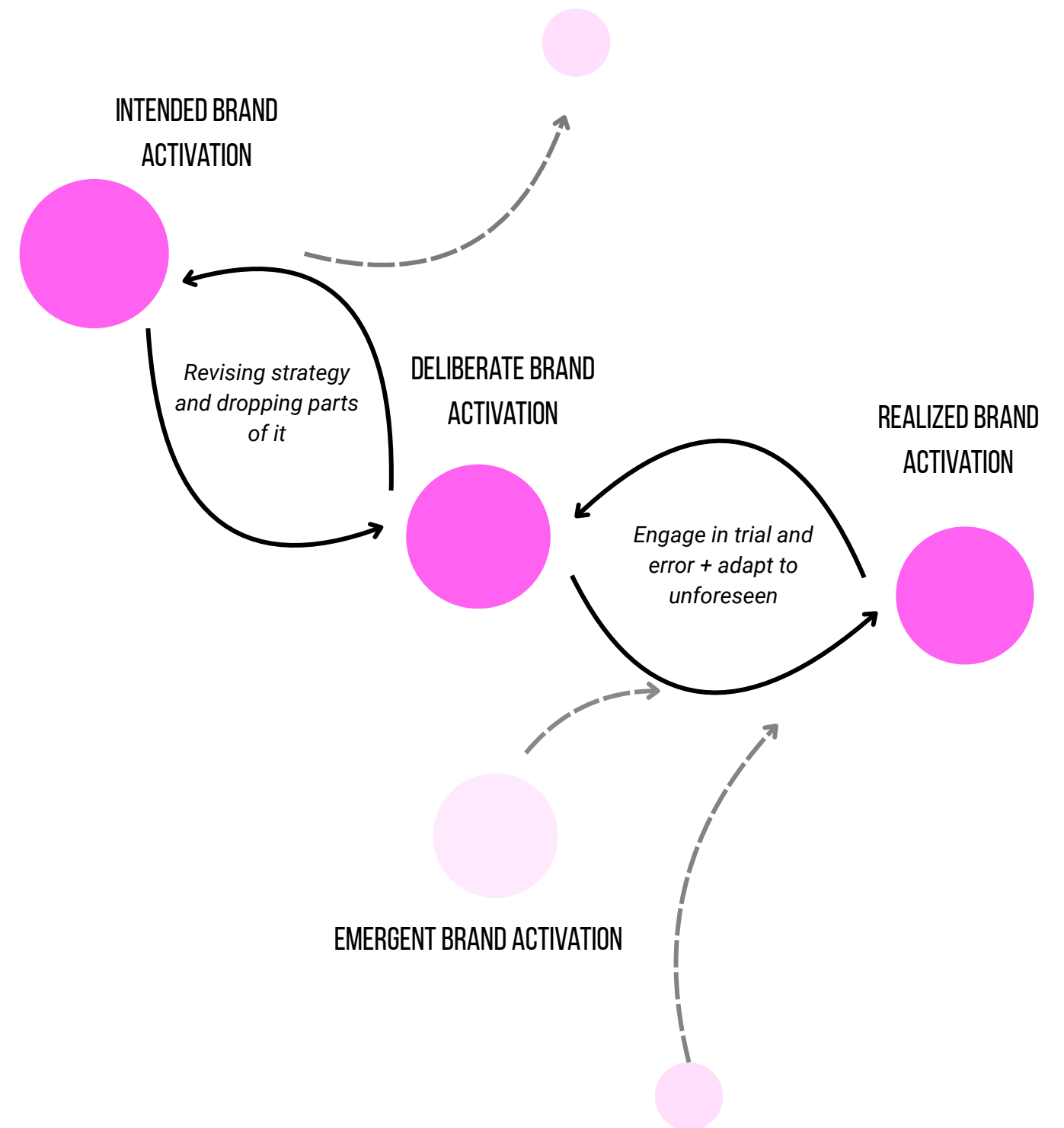


Figure 27: Strategy framework (Mintzberg , 1987)

2.5.4 EXAMPLES DYNAMIC APPROACH

To further elaborate on Beverland's argument that consumers are more likely to feel attracted to brands, the example of the creator economy is discussed. In addition, Holt's concept of cultural branding is further illustrated through an example of a recurring tension in society that brands often respond to.

Creator economy

Today, the creator economy refers to the system in which creators operate, including digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, as well as the professionals who support them (Peres et al., 2024).

From a branding perspective, this means that brand meaning is not shaped by the brand owner alone, but is continuously influenced by multiple stakeholders. Brand identity is therefore negotiated rather than fully controlled. An example is Dutch influencer Monica Geuze and her beauty brand Sophia Mae. She has a large follower base on Instagram of 1.5 million followers. The brand's visibility and credibility are closely linked to her personal identity and online presence. Consumers buy not only the products themselves, but also what the brand represents through her personality and lifestyle. This illustrates how, in the creator economy, brand meaning is co-created through the interaction between a creator and their audience.



Figure 28: Brand Sophia Mae by Monica Geuze

Cultural branding

Cultural branding means that brands gain meaning by responding to what is happening in society. When people feel a gap between what society says is ideal and what they actually experience in real life, they look for brands that help them express who they are. According to Holt (2004), strong and iconic brands stay relevant by adapting their cultural meaning over time. Instead of repeating the same message, they respond to new social developments, subcultures, and changing beliefs. An example of cultural brand activation is retailer Gall&Gall responding to cultural moments such as Dry January.

During this period, many people choose not to drink alcohol as part of a broader focus on health and self-discipline. Gall&Gall anticipates this yearly trend by offering non-alcoholic alternatives to its customers.

Dry January has become a recurring social ritual linked to themes such as self-control, health, and starting fresh. By aligning with this cultural moment, brands can support consumers in expressing these values. In this way, brands connect their products to a broader social context that people already recognise and relate to.

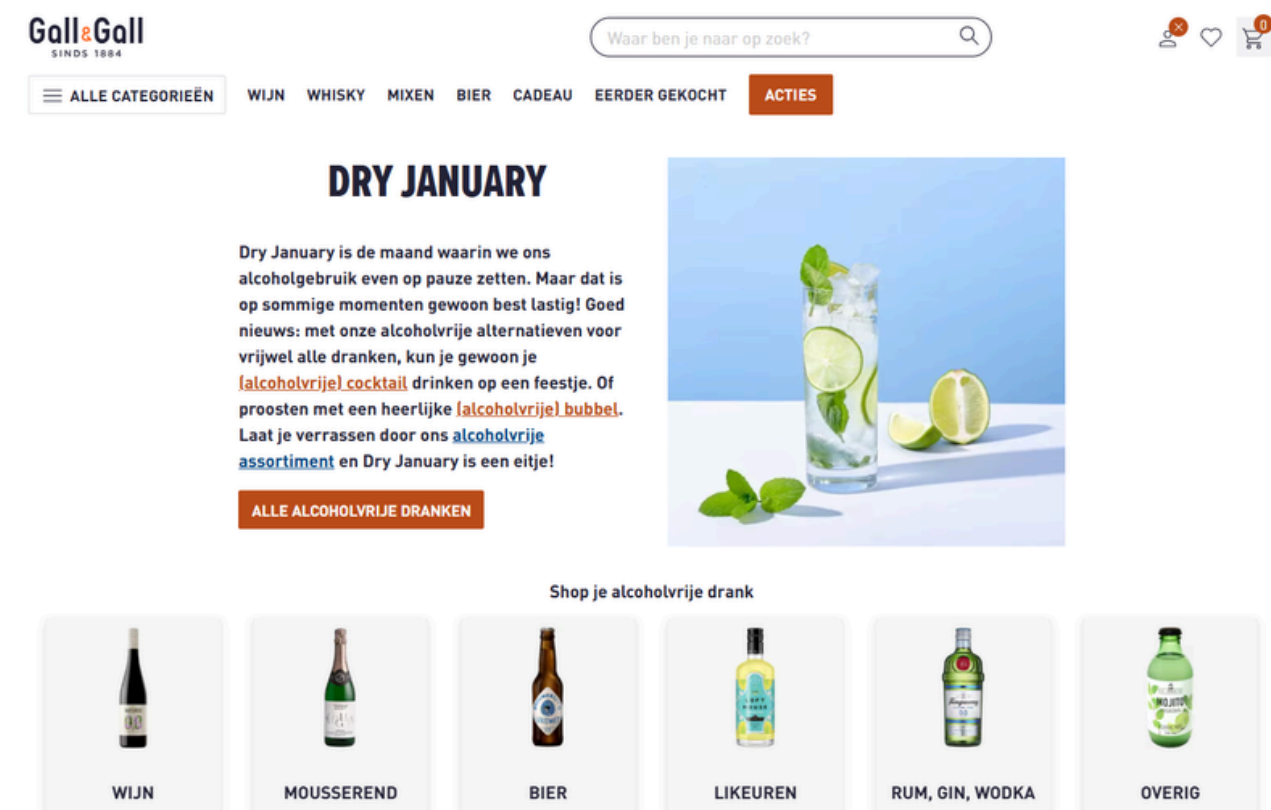


Figure 29: Cultural branding of Gal&Gal

2.5.5 BRAND BUILDING

To bring brand identity to life, the brand identity should not be treated as a one-off deliverable, but as a continuous and iterative process that requires ongoing attention (Beverland, 2018). A branding project must be effectively managed across all phases, including activation and tracking, to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Figure 30 illustrates a brand building model based on Beverland (2018), showing how brand identity is implemented and developed through different phases within an organisation.

The model consists of three main phases: internal rollout, external rollout, and tracking. First, the brand identity is introduced internally so that employees understand and apply the brand in their daily work. After this internal alignment, the brand is communicated externally through touchpoints such as marketing, communication, and customer interactions. The final phase focuses on tracking how the brand performs and how it is perceived over time.

The model highlights that bringing a brand identity to life does not end with the delivery of a brand guide. Instead, brand building requires continuous implementation and monitoring. The feedback loops in the model indicate that insights from tracking can influence both internal and external brand activation, making brand building an iterative and ongoing process.

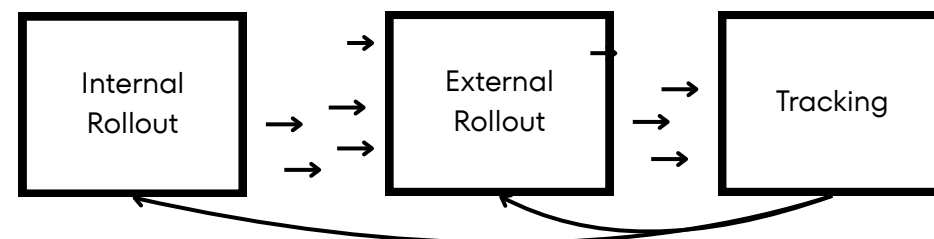


Figure 30: Brand building model (Beverland, 2018)

2.5.6 CONCLUSION

Kapferer (2005) states that how a brand is perceived by receivers depends on how it is expressed by the sender. When relating this to the context of OFFFF, this means that if OFFFF's client executes the brand identity exactly as OFFFF intended, the consumers of the client's brand will also perceive the brand in this way.

On the other hand, Holt's model suggests that what makes a brand strong is its ability to respond to the "tensions in society". Holt illustrates this with the concept of cultural branding. This dynamic way of bringing a brand to life aligns with Beverland's view, which states that consumers are more attracted to brands whose identity aligns with their own identity.

Beverland (2018) states that bringing a brand identity to life should not be treated as a one-off deliverable, but as a continuous and iterative process that requires ongoing attention. When the process of bringing a brand identity to life is approached as a strategy, as described in Mintzberg's strategy framework (1987), it becomes clear that strategies rarely unfold exactly as initially planned. Emerging factors often arise, and certain elements of the strategy may be abandoned because, in practice, they prove not to work or fit the situation.

When applying this perspective to how brand identities are brought to life, it can be argued that how OFFFF initially plans for the client to implement the brand identity will rarely occur exactly in that way. Interviews show that clients also face emerging factors that influence how they bring the brand identity to life.

THEREFORE, THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT, BRINGING A BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE WILL BE APPROACHED AS A DYNAMIC STRATEGY, INFLUENCED BY EMERGING CONTEXT FACTORS. THIS REQUIRES KEEPING TRACK OF ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS IN ORDER FOR OFFFF TO MAINTAIN A STRUCTURAL ROLE IN BRINGING THE BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE.

KEY FINDINGS DISCOVER PHASE

1. COMPANY ANALYSIS

- Branding agencies provide valuable expertise through their nuanced perspective and critical view
- There is a lot of competition in the branding service market
- Competitors offering services at lower costs
- Playful workshop approach aligns well with OFFFF's tone of voice

2. EXPLORATIVE INTERVIEWS

- Internal branding forms the foundation for effective external branding
- Living the brand within the organisation is important
- Living brands are able to adapt and evolve
- Rise of design tools make everyone a designer

3. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

- Clients want to stay ahead of competitors
- Clients want fast transitions from strategy to execution
- OFFFF highlights branding as a continuum, but is often seen by clients as something that can be approached sporadic
- Branding is not the main priority of clients, due to pressure of daily operations
- Brand activation gradually flattens over time when the brand identity is lived less within the organisation
- Taking ownership on bringing the brand to life is need to achieve a living brand

4. OFFFF'S PROJECT APPROACH

- Knowledge integration within project dynamics strengthens the overall outcome of the project
- In many cases there is a lack of follow-up after the trajectory
- Uncertainty emerges about the status of the collaboration between OFFFF and the client after delivery

5. BRANDING THEORY

- Emerging factors influence how the brand is lived
- There is a need for anticipation on changing circumstances
- Tracking internal and external rollout of the brand is crucial for brand building

CONCLUSION DISCOVER PHASE

Based on the insights from the discover phase, it can be concluded that taking ownership of living the brand identity consists of three key elements: continuous engagement, the internal and external rollout of the brand, and acting upon emerging opportunities.

Continuous engagement refers to the extent to which people within the organisation feel connected to the brand identity, understand what it stands for, and actively work with it in their daily activities.

The internal and external rollout of the brand identity concerns how the brand is communicated and expressed, both within the organisation and towards the outside world. Internally, this relates to how the brand is discussed and applied within the organisation. Externally, it refers to how the brand is communicated through touch points such as communication, design, and customer interactions.

Acting upon emerging opportunities refers to the organisation's ability to respond to new opportunities or obstacles that arise over time. This means recognising when the brand can be activated through new initiatives, but also being aware of challenges that may affect how the brand identity is applied.

**TAKING OWNERSHIP IN LIVING THE BRAND IDENTITY =
CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT + INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ROLLOUT + ACTING
UPON EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES**

3. DEFINE

In the define phase, it is explored how the findings from the discovery phase can be addressed. The discovery phase revealed that OFFFF currently does not have a structural role after the delivery of a brand identity in the client's process of bringing the brand identity to life, due to various influencing factors. However, the team does express a desire to remain involved after delivery.

Figure 31 illustrates the process of the define phase. The mapping session aims to clarify what role OFFFF would like to take when remaining involved with the client. Subsequently, a Value Proposition Canvas is used to explore the value this could create for OFFFF's clients. The findings are then synthesised into a design brief, which also defines the design principles that guide the next diamond of the Double Diamond process.

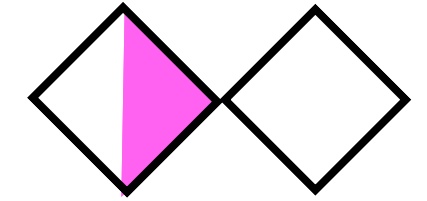
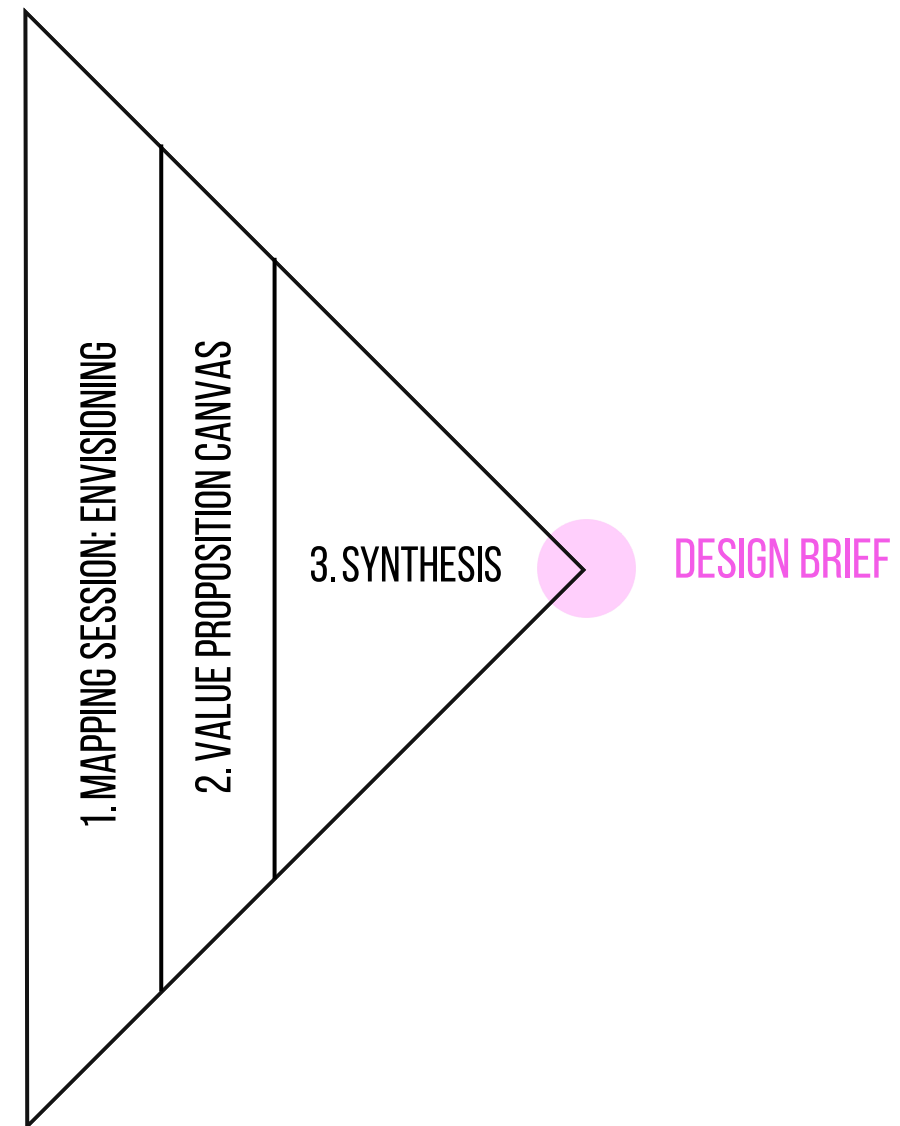
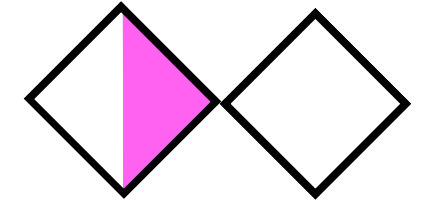


Figure 31: The define phase



3.1 MAPPING SESSION

HOW DOES OFFFF ENVISION ITS ROLE IN BRINGING BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE?

Insights from the discovery phase show that there is currently no structural aftercare for clients after the delivery of the brand identity, while the OFFFF team does express a desire to remain involved after delivery. The question therefore arises how OFFFF envisions this role of supporting clients after the delivery of the brand identity.

In the first part of the mapping session (Figure 32), designers and strategists were presented with four dilemmas, each representing a different perspective on ownership and responsibility within OFFFF's branding projects. Participants were asked to select the statement they felt most aligned with without discussing it with each other. After everyone had made their choice, the statements were discussed together.

Figure 33 shows the dilemmas that were presented during the mapping session. The highlighted areas indicate the statements that participants voted for.

The presented dilemmas were an effective conversation starter. It gave the opportunity to start the conversation and reflect with each other on each choice without being judged.

At first, designers and strategists had different views on how involved the agency should remain after delivery. As some aligned with the option of "staying involved after delivery," whereas some related more to the view that "the client should take full ownership after delivery." However, after discussing the statements together, it became clear that the whole team shares a professional desire to stay involved in supporting the client in taking ownership.

This highlights the importance of reflecting as a team on what the agency wants to stand for and clarifying who is responsible for supporting the client after delivery, preventing responsibilities from becoming diffused.

Additionally, it was mentioned that, as a creative branding agency, OFFFF prioritizes delivering high-quality design work and maintaining creative variety in its projects. Therefore, any form of client support needs to fit within a workflow in which multiple projects are handled simultaneously. They want to support the client in bringing the brand identity to life but do not envision it as their main responsibility.

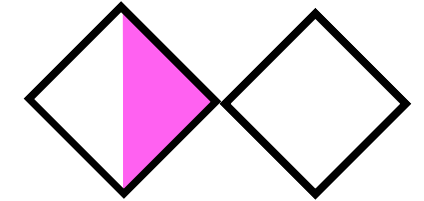
OFFFF ENVISIONS ITS ROLE AS SUPPORTING THE CLIENT IN BRINGING THE BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE, RATHER THAN OWNING THIS PROCESS.



Figure 32: Mapping session with team OFFFF

<p>Delivering quality design work is main responsibility ←</p> <p>Supporting the client in taking ownership ←</p> <p>Need for client understand and connect with the brand identity ←</p>	<p><i>Our main responsibility is that clients use the brand guide in the right manner.</i></p>	<p><i>Our main responsibility is to deliver high quality design work.</i></p>
	<p><i>We should stay involved after delivery to make sure the brand guide is used correctly</i></p>	<p><i>Once the brand guide is delivered it's up to the client to take full ownership and reach out to OFFFF when help is needed</i></p>
	<p><i>A delivered brand identity is successful when the client understands and connects with it through its meaning and values"</i></p>	<p><i>A brand identity is successful when it is consistently executed even if the client role remains limited</i></p>
	<p><i>I prefer creativity and variety in my job (different clients, new challenges).</i></p>	<p><i>I prefer long-term brand involvement in my job (same client, recurring brand touchpoints).</i></p>

Figure 33: presented dilemma's



3.2 VALUE PROPOSITION

HOW OFFFF CAN CREATE VALUE FOR THEIR CLIENTS BY SUPPORTING THEM IN BRINGING THE BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE?

This section explores how OFFFF can create additional value for its clients by supporting them in taking ownership of bringing the brand identity to life.

As part of the mapping session with the OFFFF team, a second activity was conducted in which the Value Proposition Canvas (Osterwalder, 2026) was used to further explore opportunities for supporting clients after the delivery of a brand identity (Appendix E). While the first part of the session focused on discussing dilemmas related to OFFFF's role after delivery, the second part focused on identifying client needs and potential value creation.

The Value Proposition Canvas, as shown in Figure 34, helps to identify how OFFFF's services can address the needs, pains, and gains of its clients. By mapping these elements together with the OFFFF team, client needs related to brand activation were explored.

Based on this analysis, several opportunity areas emerge for OFFFF to create additional value for clients. Figure 34 shows that an interesting gain creator is facilitating a shared sense of purpose, while an interesting pain reliever is supporting the implementation. This helps clients gain clearer direction in bringing the brand identity to life and encourages them to feel a greater sense of ownership. These opportunity areas form the starting point for the concept development in the next chapter.

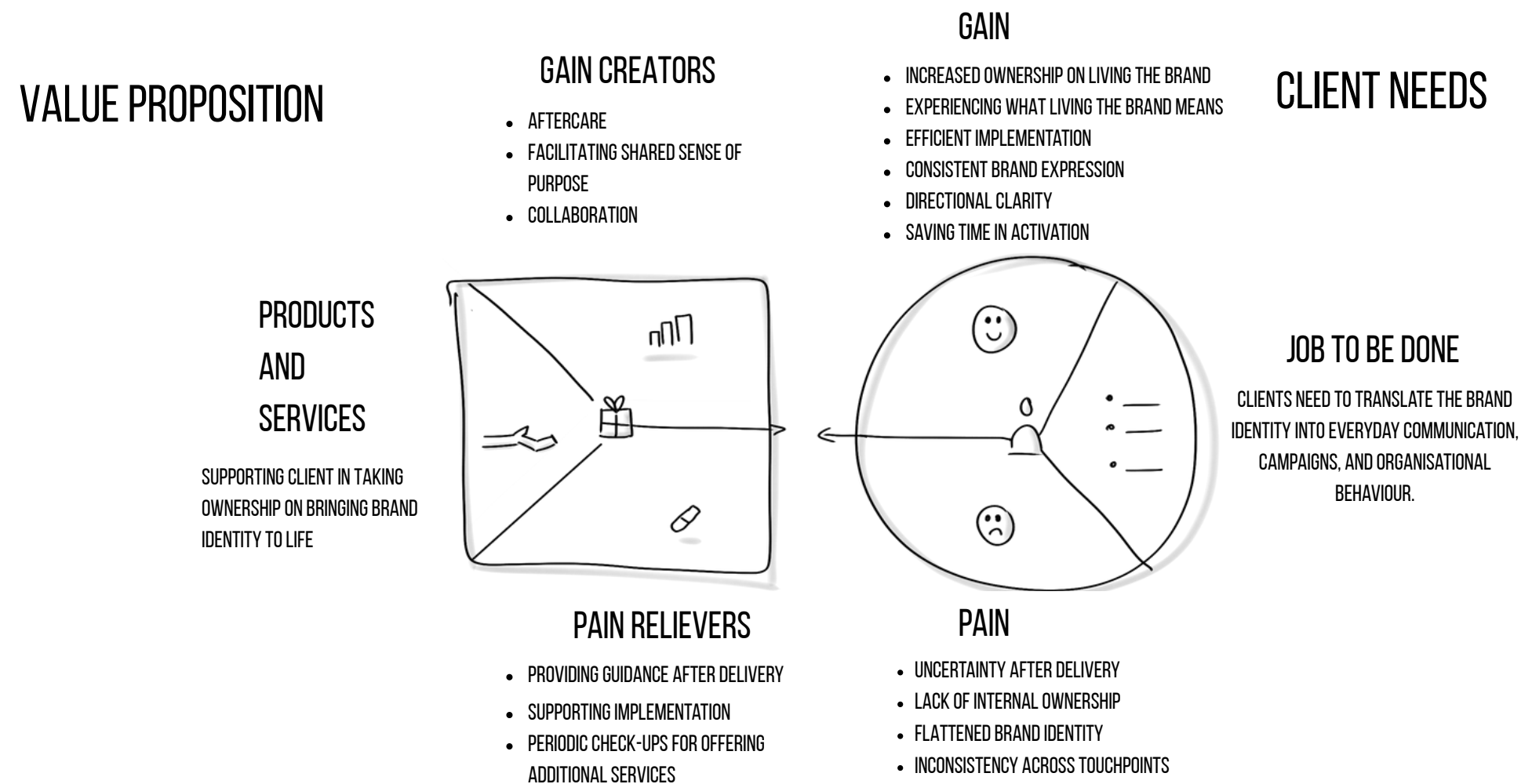


Figure 34: Value proposition canvas containing insights of brainstorm session with OFFFF

SUPPORTING CLIENTS IN TAKING OWNERSHIP OF LIVING THE BRAND CAN CREATE VALUE FOR OFFFF'S CLIENTS BY PROVIDING CLEARER GUIDANCE, STRENGTHENING OWNERSHIP, AND SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRAND IDENTITY.

3.3 SYNTHESIS

HOW CAN OFFFF SUPPORT THEIR CLIENTS IN DEVELOPING A STRONGER SENSE OF OWNERSHIP IN BRINGING NEW BRAND IDENTITIES TO LIFE?

The iceberg metaphor illustrates that only a small part of branding is visible. Above the surface are the tangible elements of a brand, such as the visual identity and other brand expressions.

Below the surface lies a much larger, invisible part. This includes internal factors within the client's organisation, such as the acceptance of the new brand, internal alignment, and decision-making processes. External influences, such as market developments and competitors, also play a role. Together, these underlying factors shape how the brand identity is actually lived and expressed over time.

If OFFFF aims to support its clients in developing a stronger sense of ownership in bringing the brand identity to life, it is important for the agency to engage more closely with the client and the context in which they operate.

Therefore, OFFFF should look beyond how the brand identity is externally activated and also pay attention to what happens within the organisation. By understanding the internal context of the client, OFFFF can better support the process of bringing the brand identity to life.

3.3.1 PROBLEM

After the delivery of the brand guide, it is often unclear for OFFFF whether the client has truly taken ownership of living the brand identity. Insights from the discovery phase show that taking ownership of living the brand identity consists of three key elements: continuous engagement with the brand identity, the internal and external rollout of the brand, and acting upon emerging opportunities. Once the brand guide is delivered, the collaboration often becomes less structured, making it uncertain whether and how the brand identity is actively brought to life within the client's organisation.

As one designer from OFFFF described:

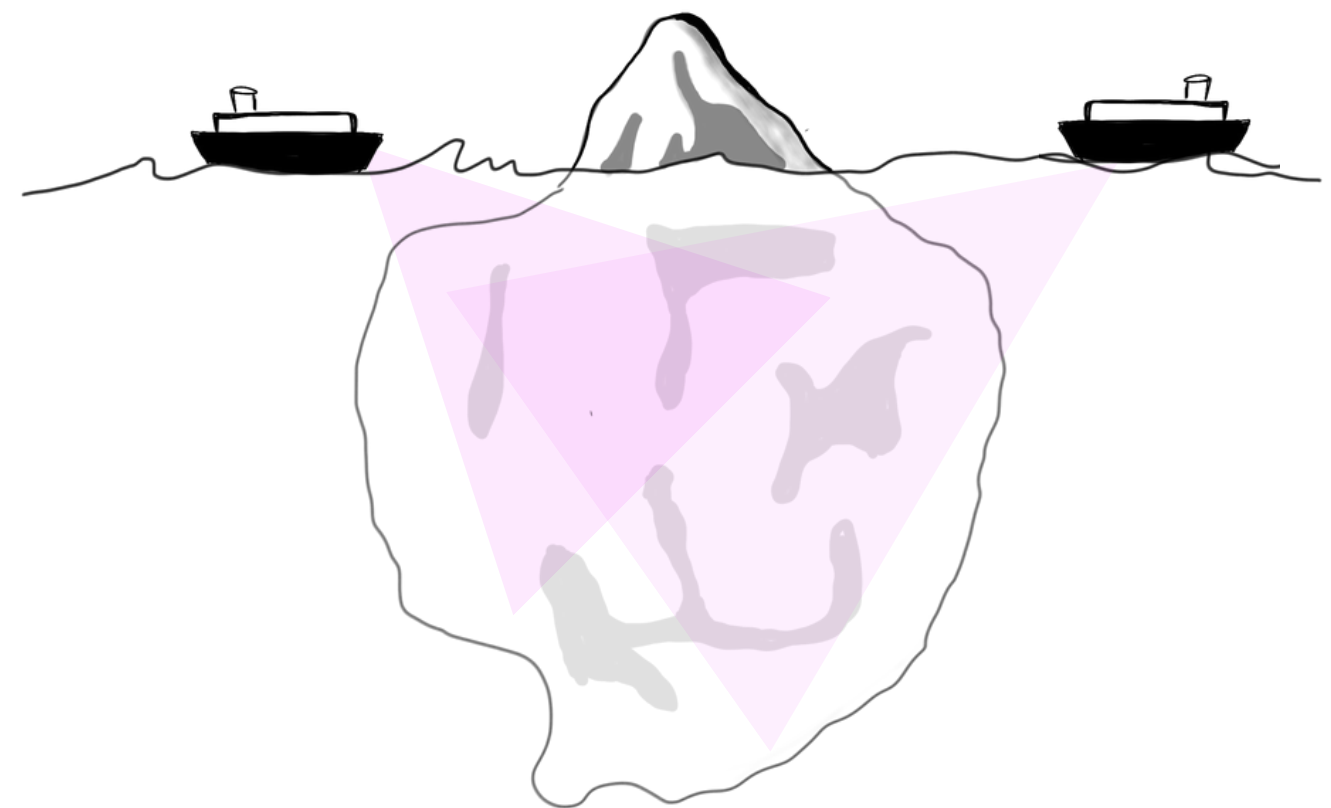
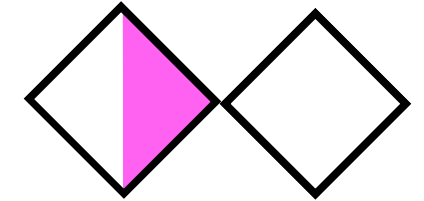
"Sometimes you're not really sure whether this is the end of the collaboration. Whether it's really finished or not. There often isn't a very clear, hard line."

– Designer, OFFFF

This uncertainty makes it difficult for OFFFF to know whether the client understands how the brand identity should be applied in practice and how the agency could support this process.

3.3.2 SOLUTION

The proposed solution is a strategy that enables OFFFF to support clients in taking ownership on bringing their brand identity to life by helping them explore the less visible aspects of the brand. This is achieved by guiding clients in understanding how their brand connects to behaviour, decision-making, and daily practices, and by creating moments in which clients actively reflect on and experience what the brand stands for and how it can be translated into concrete actions within their organisation. In this way, OFFFF can stay involved in a supportive role while the client takes ownership of living the brand.



3.3.3 FROM FINDINGS TO DESIGN BRIEF

This section shows how the findings from this research are translated into a design brief. Figure 35 illustrates how the insights from the first diamond of the Double Diamond approach are synthesised into a design brief. The design brief marks the beginning of the design phase, from which the final design will eventually emerge.

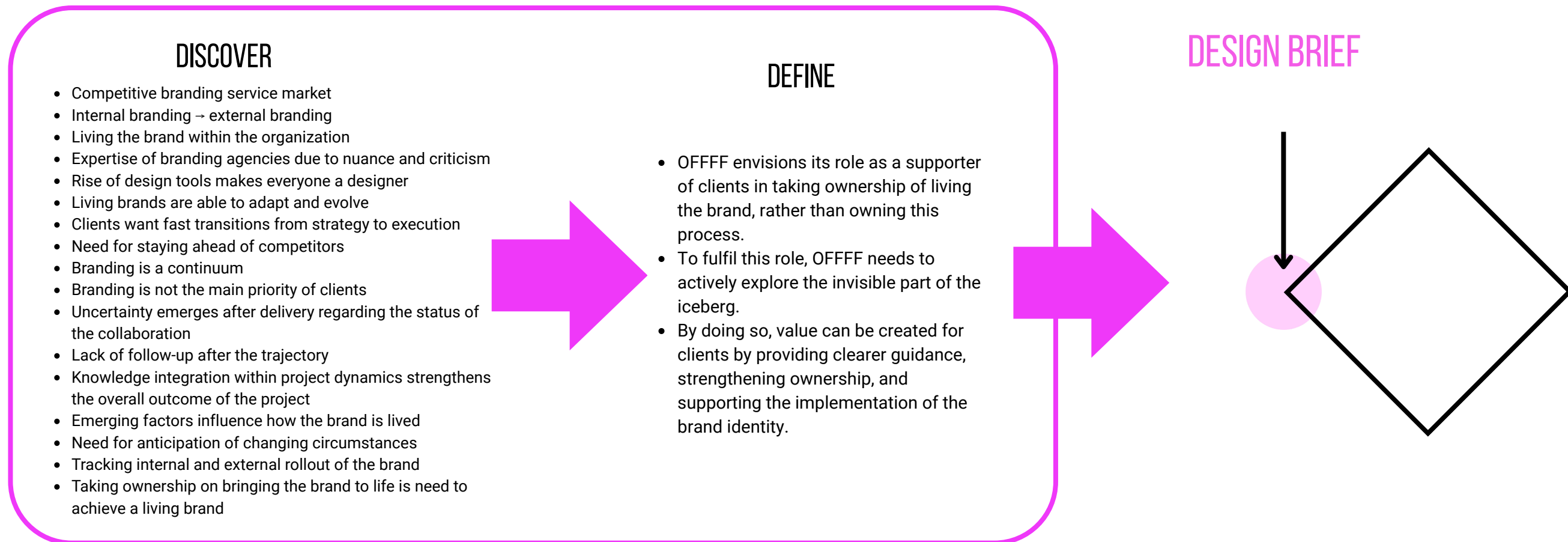


Figure 35: Synthesis findings to design brief

DESIGN BRIEF

DESIGN GOAL

To design an intervention that fits within OFFFF's daily workflow, enabling them to support clients in taking ownership of bringing the brand identity to life by addressing internal organisational factors that influence brand activation. The intervention should help clients understand what it means to live the brand within their organisation, translate the brand identity into practical actions, and ensure consistent implementation after delivery.

PRODUCT/SERVICES

A strategy consisting of practical interventions that enable OFFFF to support clients in bringing the brand identity to life.

TARGET USERS

OFFFF team members who are involved in a branding project with a client and are responsible for using the strategy to support the client after the delivery of the brand identity.

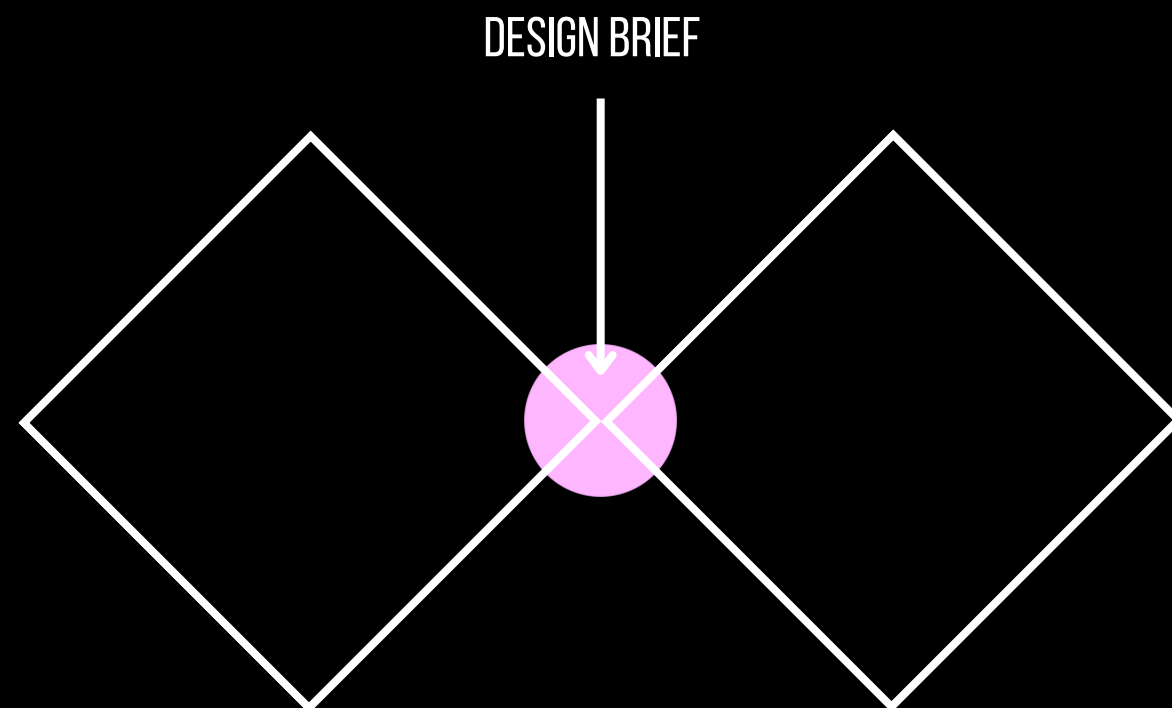


Figure 36: Design brief after first diamond

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following design principles serve as guidelines for designing interventions in the development phase. These principles are based on the research conducted during the discovery phase.

1. STIMULATE INTERNAL BRAND ACTIVATION

The intervention should help clients understand what the branding stands for and how it can be lived within their organisation (Beverland, 2018; Interview Flatland).

2. CREATE A STRUCTURAL APPROACH FOR FOLLOW UP

The intervention should let OFFFF support their clients in bringing the brand identity to life in a structured way after the brand guide is delivered (Wheeler, 2021; Interview Goweekly).

3. ENCOURAGE KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION

The intervention should help combine the agency's branding knowledge with the client's knowledge of their organisational context (Dietrich et al., 2010).

4. REDUCE DIFFUSED RESPONSIBILITY

The intervention should clarify roles and responsibilities in bringing the brand identity to life (insight OFFFF interviews).

5. RESPOND TO EMERGING FACTORS

The intervention should allow OFFFF to respond to changing organisational and contextual factors occurring after the delivery of the brand guide (Mintzberg, 1987).

6. TRACK INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ROLL OUT

The intervention should allow OFFFF to keep track of their clients' internal and external rollout of living the brand identity (Beverland, 2018).

4. DEVELOP

Based on the define phase, a design brief was formulated with the goal of developing a strategy that enables OFFFF to support clients in taking ownership of bringing the brand identity to life.

Figure 37 shows the steps that were undertaken during this phase. To understand how client ownership can be strengthened, relevant literature was reviewed. Subsequently, a brainstorming session was conducted with a peer to determine the direction and form the design could take. During the ideation phase, an initial concept of the design was developed. This concept was then validated and iterated upon.

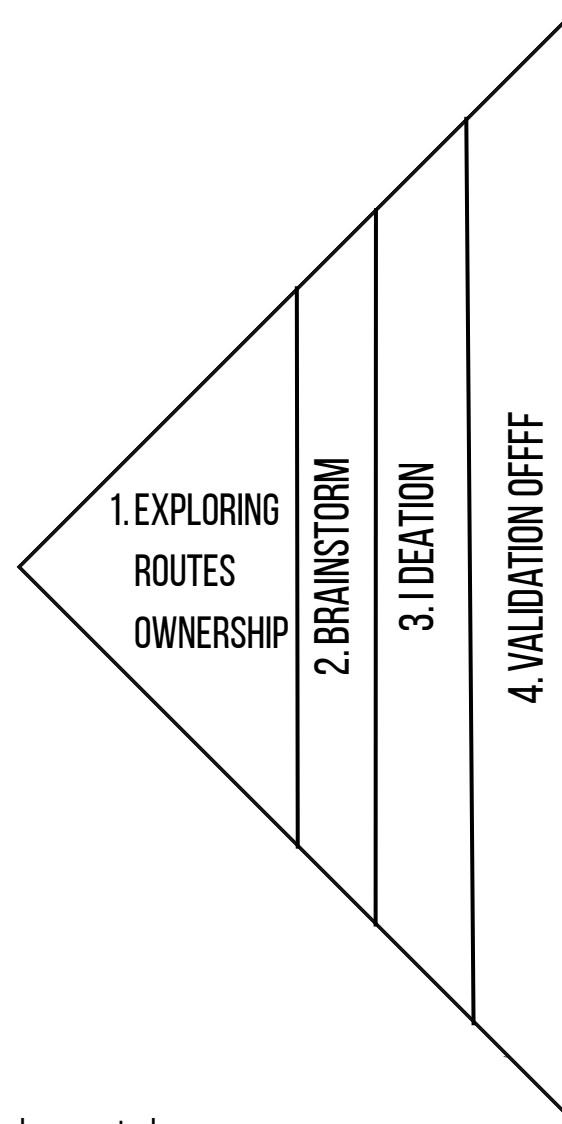
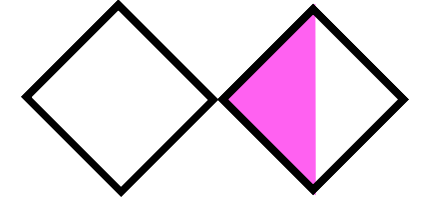


Figure 37: Development phase



4.1 EXPLORING OWNERSHIP

HOW CAN MORE OWNERSHIP ON BRINGING BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE BE ACHIEVED?

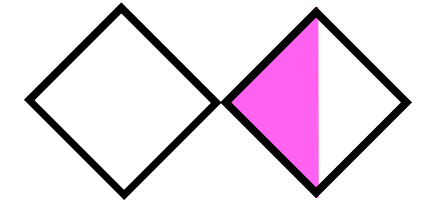
This section explores how clients can gain more ownership over bringing the brand identity to life, based on insights from literature.

Based on these insights, an intervention can be designed that enables OFFFF to support clients in developing greater ownership in activating the brand identity.

4.1.1 PROJECT OWNERSHIP

Calabretta and Gemser (2018) explain that strong ownership of a project not only supports decision-making during the project, but more importantly ensures a sustainable impact after the project is completed. A strategic outcome, such as a business opportunity, innovation portfolio, or product or service system, should be understood as a continuum. Once implemented, it needs to be nurtured, developed, and exploited over time. This requires ownership within the organisation. A strong sense of ownership gives organisational stakeholders the focus and drive to complete the project, despite its complexity.

Figure 38 illustrates the model developed by Calabretta and Gemser (2018), which explains how the level of ownership within a project can be understood through the relationship between vision and ownership. The model presents two axes. The vertical axis represents the strength of ownership, ranging from weak ownership to strong ownership. The horizontal axis represents the level of alignment in vision, ranging from a diffused vision to a shared vision. Several factors influence where a project is positioned within this model. Ownership is influenced by factors such as available budget, mandate, and decision-making authority. The clarity of the vision depends on whether a clear direction exists, whether it aligns with organisational goals, and whether it is shared among stakeholders.



The model suggests that strong project ownership is most likely to emerge when stakeholders share a clear and aligned vision and have the authority and resources to act on it. When either ownership or vision is weak, the project may lack direction or commitment. In the context of brand activation, this highlights the importance of creating a shared vision and involving stakeholders in decision-making to strengthen ownership and ensure that the brand identity is actively brought to life within the organisation.

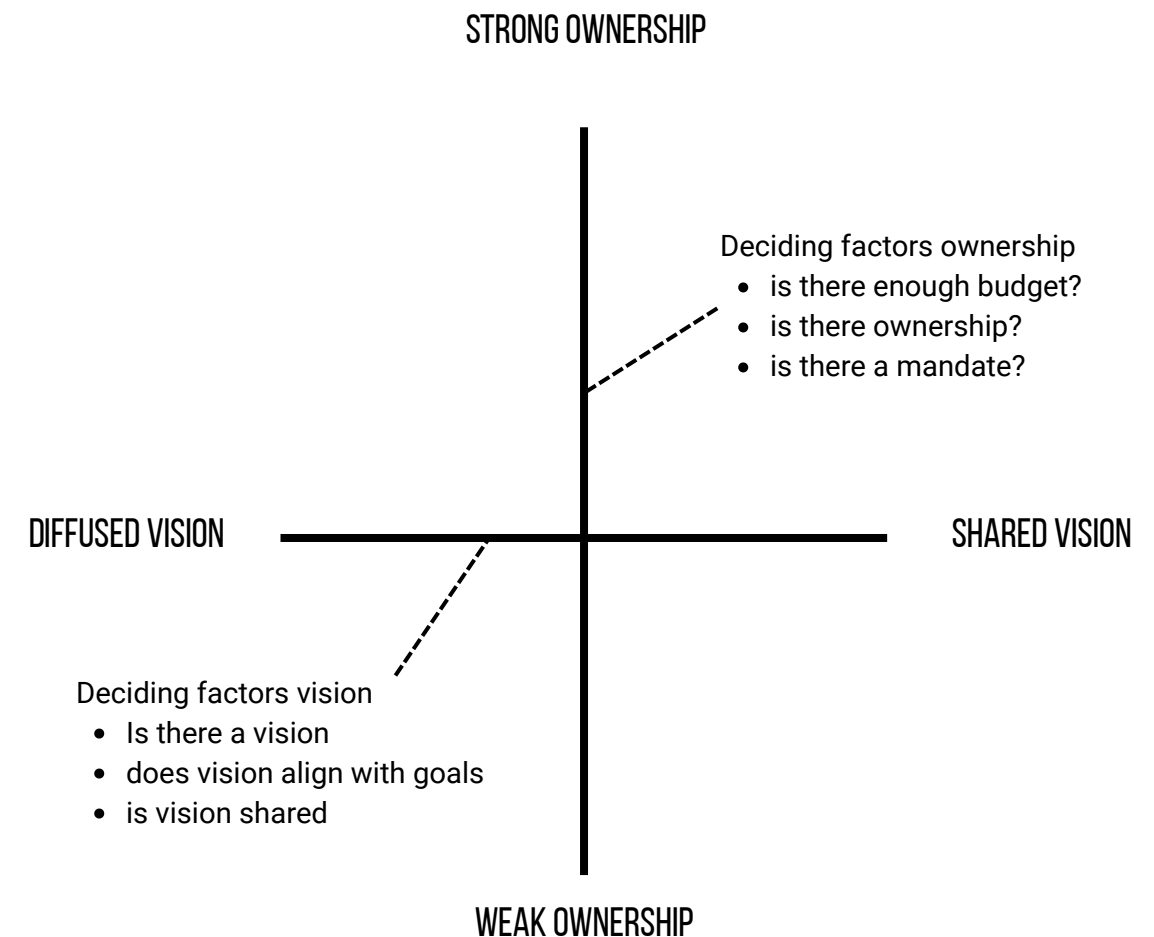


Figure 38: Project ownership matrix by Calabretta and Gemser (2018)

4.1.2 ROUTES TO PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP

Psychological ownership is strongly connected to the amount of control people feel they have over something. When individuals have more autonomy in their work, they experience a greater sense of control, which increases the likelihood that they will feel ownership. Conversely, when their control is limited, it becomes harder for them to develop that feeling of ownership, as they do not experience the work or outcome as truly “theirs” (Pierce et al., 2001).

Figure 39 illustrates the main routes through which psychological ownership can emerge, based on the work of Pierce et al. (2001). The model identifies three factors that contribute to the development of psychological ownership: control of the target, intimate knowledge of the target, and investment of the self.

Control refers to the degree to which individuals can influence or shape the target. Intimate knowledge refers to the understanding individuals develop through interaction and experience. When individuals have the opportunity to associate with a target, they gain a better understanding of it, which can lead to a stronger sense of ownership. Increasing intimate knowledge can therefore be stimulated by making information more accessible and less costly to acquire (Pierce et al., 2001).

Investment of the self refers to the personal effort, time, ideas, skills, or energy that individuals contribute. The more individuals invest themselves in a target, the stronger their psychological ownership becomes. When people perceive their contributions as meaningful and relevant, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership (Reyes, 2025).

Together, these factors explain how individuals develop ownership toward a target. When people gain knowledge about a project, have the opportunity to influence it, and invest their own ideas or effort, they are more likely to feel responsible for it. In the context of brand activation, this suggests that involving stakeholders in the process can strengthen their psychological ownership of the brand identity, making them more likely to actively bring the brand to life in practice.

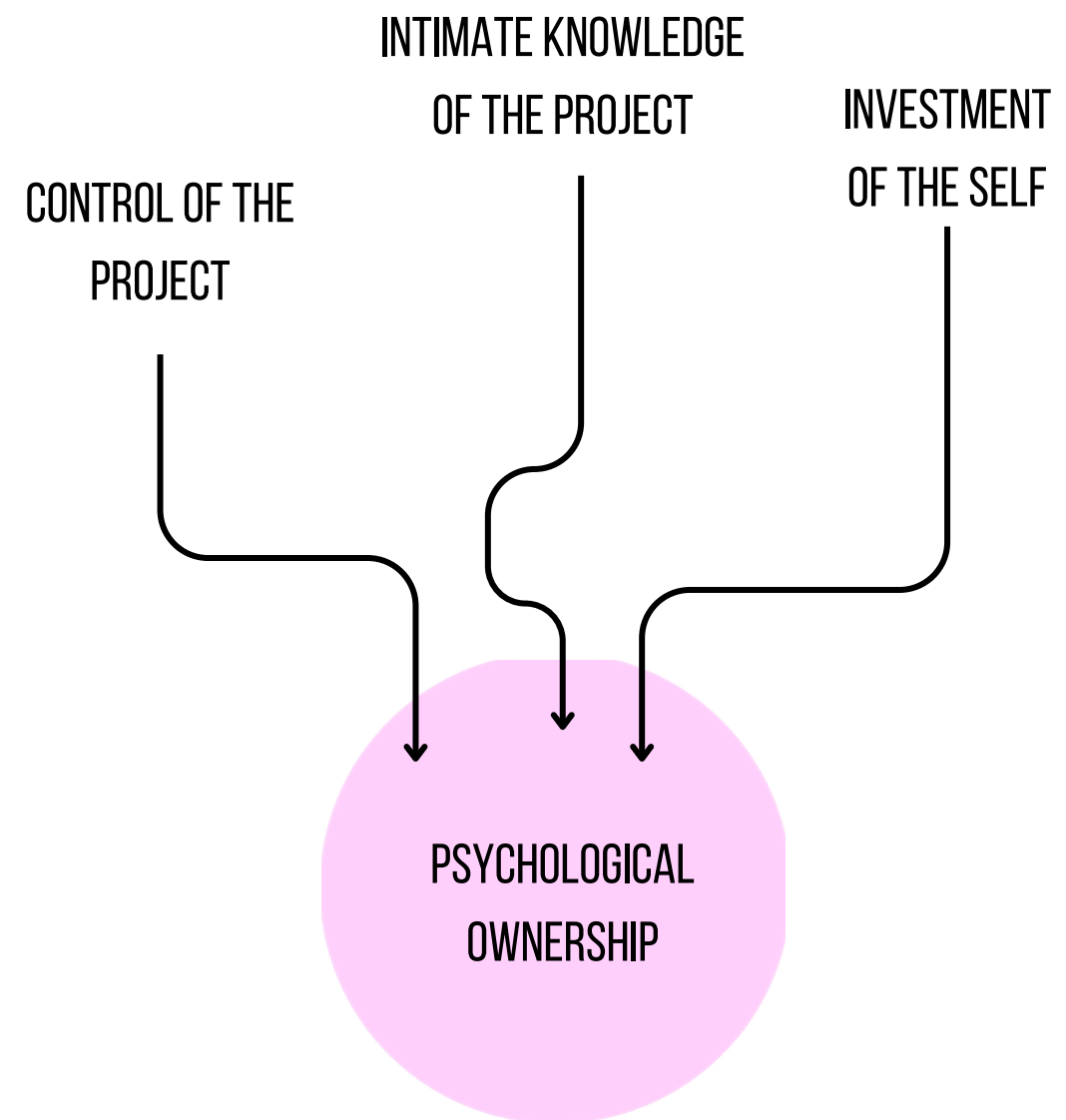


Figure 39: Routes to psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2001)

WHAT IS NEEDED TO INCREASE OWNERSHIP OVER BRINGING BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE?

If OFFFF wants to support its clients in taking ownership of bringing the brand identity to life, it is important to understand which conditions stimulate this sense of ownership. Literature on project ownership and psychological ownership suggests that people are more likely to actively contribute when they feel personally involved, share a common vision, and understand what is expected from them. Based on these insights, three rules of thumb were identified that can help stimulate ownership in activating a brand identity.

SENSE OF INVESTMENT OF THE SELF

Ownership over activating a brand identity increases when stakeholders feel personally involved in the process. Psychological ownership theory suggests that people develop a stronger sense of responsibility when they invest their own time, ideas, and effort into a project. When both the agency and the client actively contribute to shaping how the brand identity will be applied in practice, they are more likely to feel responsible for the outcome. This sense of involvement encourages stakeholders to take initiative in translating the brand identity into daily practices, communication, and touchpoints.

SHARED VISION

A shared vision helps the agency and the client work towards the same strategic direction. While the agency develops the strategic foundation of the brand identity, its successful activation depends on how well the client understands and embraces this vision. When both parties share the same understanding of what the brand stands for and how it should be expressed, it becomes easier to make consistent decisions and align internal stakeholders. Creating a shared vision therefore supports ownership by ensuring that both the agency and the client feel responsible for bringing the brand identity to life.

EXPECTATION SETTING

Clear expectations help define roles, responsibilities, and desired outcomes in the branding trajectory. Without clear goals, the activation of the brand identity may become fragmented or lose priority after the initial project phase. Establishing expectations early helps both parties understand what success looks like and how progress can be evaluated. This clarity supports ownership by ensuring that stakeholders know how they can contribute to activating the brand identity over time.

INSIGHTS

SUPPORTING OWNERSHIP ON BRINGING BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE

- Define how everyone involved contributes to bringing the brand identity to life (investment of the self)
- Create a shared vision on how to bring the brand identity to life (shared vision)
- Set clear goals and be aligned on how these can be achieved (expectation setting)

4.2 CONCEPT BRAINSTORM

WHAT SHOULD THE DESIGN LOOK LIKE?

After analysing the concept of psychological ownership, the design focus shifted towards creating a shared vision between OFFFF and the client, as this can strengthen the sense of ownership in bringing the brand identity to life.

During a brainstorm session with a fellow student (Figure 40) we reflected on what the design intervention should achieve and how it could take form. From this discussion it was concluded that the final structured moment in which OFFFF and their client come together should shift in focus. Rather than centering on the delivery of the brand identity—where the brand guide currently functions as the main deliverable—this moment should support organisations in exploring how the brand identity can be brought to life in practice.

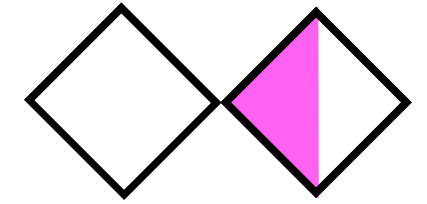
Insight: What should the design do / be (design form)

The design should provide:

- Guidelines and tools that help OFFFF and their clients create a shared vision on how the brand identity can be brought to life.
- Workshop templates that visualise different perspectives and help identify opportunities and obstacles in achieving this shared vision.
- Templates that support expectation setting, helping OFFFF and the client clarify roles, responsibilities, and goals for activating the brand identity.

To bring these insights into practice, a playbook was proposed as a design solution. A playbook can combine guidelines, tools, and workshop templates into a structured and actionable approach. In this way, it helps OFFFF facilitate conversations with their clients about how the brand identity can be brought to life within their organisation.

Rather than focusing solely on delivering a brand guide, the playbook supports a mentoring moment in which OFFFF and the client jointly explore perspectives, set expectations, and create a shared vision for activating the brand identity. By structuring these activities into a clear process, the playbook provides OFFFF with a practical method to support their clients in developing ownership over bringing the brand identity to life.



THE DELIVERY MOMENT OF THE BRAND GUIDE SHOULD SHIFT FROM A HANDOVER MOMENT TOWARDS A MENTORING MOMENT, IN WHICH THE AGENCY AND CLIENT DEVELOP A VISION ON HOW THE BRAND IDENTITY CAN BE BROUGHT TO LIFE IN PRACTICE.

BY COMBINING TEMPLATES, ACTION STEPS, AND GUIDELINES, THE PLAYBOOK PROVIDES OFFFF WITH A STRUCTURED AND ACTIONABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORT CLIENTS IN TAKING OWNERSHIP OF THE BRAND IDENTITY.

WHAT SHOULD THE DESIGN DO/ BE

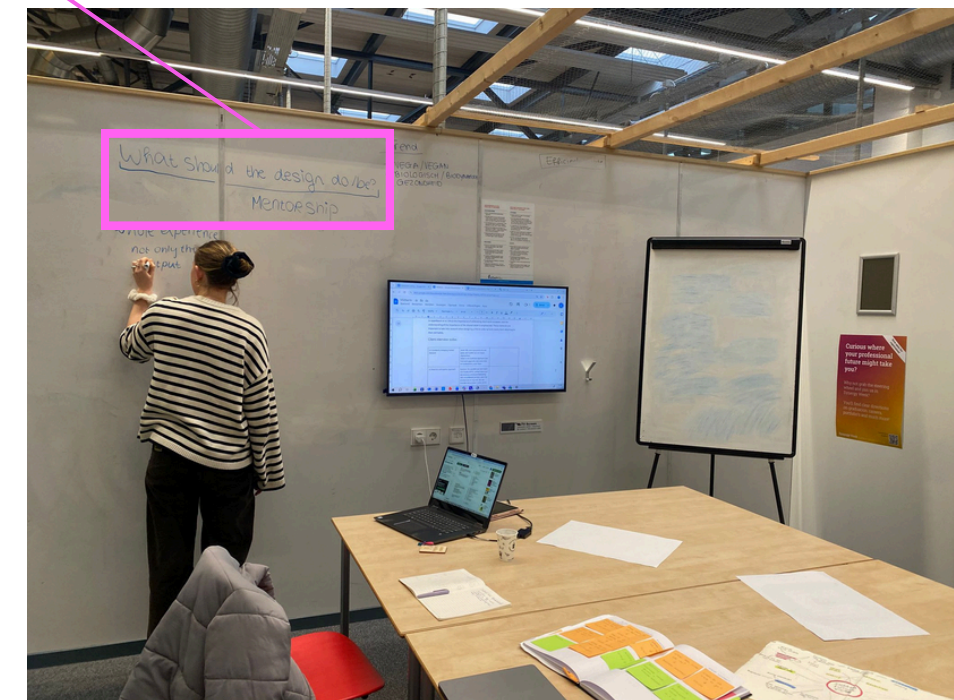


Figure 40: brainstorm with peer

4.3 IDEATION

During the ideation phase, the strategy and supporting tools are iteratively developed. The strategy is validated with OFFFF during a validation session. Based on the feedback from this session, several iterations are made, resulting in the final strategy presented in the delivery phase.

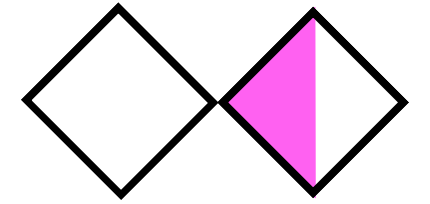
Based on these insights, the concept was further refined by aligning it with the workflow of OFFFF. This resulted in a structured approach that allows OFFFF to remain involved after the delivery of the brand guide, while supporting clients in bringing their brand identity to life.

4.3.1 DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

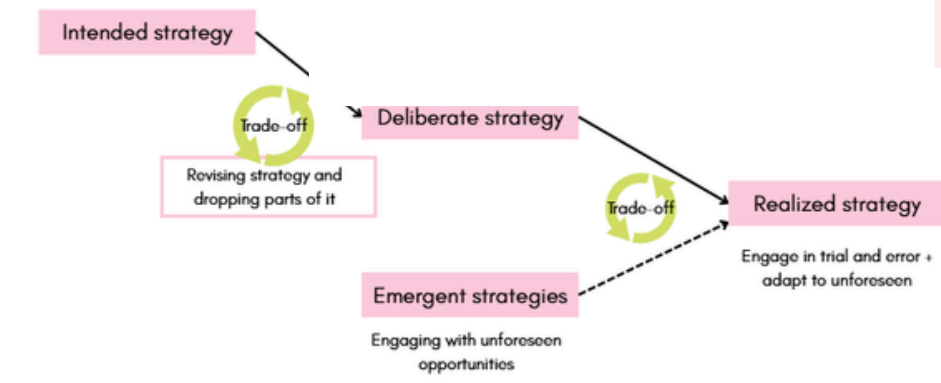
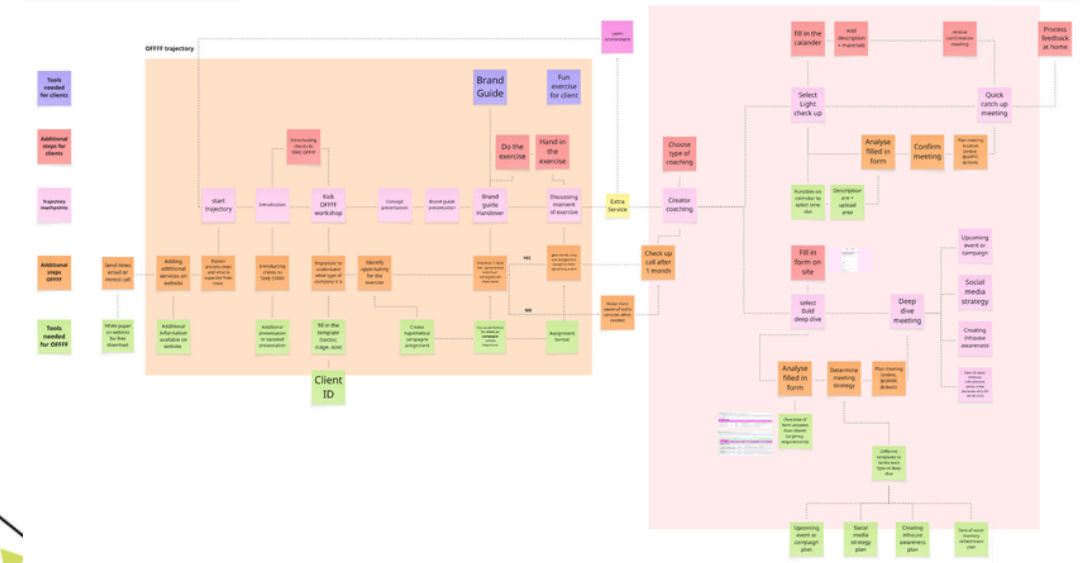
The first step of the ideation phase was to explore whether the branding trajectory could continue after the delivery of the brand identity. Figure 41 illustrates the development of the strategy during the ideation phase.

Several possible directions were explored. For example, OFFFF could support clients by reviewing the content they create based on the new brand identity, discussing whether the visual and strategic choices still align with the intended brand vision. Another possibility was to map together with the client which upcoming events, campaigns, or moments are important for the brand, and where the expertise of OFFFF could add value.

Mapping these possibilities helped to explore how OFFFF could remain involved in a meaningful way without taking ownership away from the client. These ideas were then connected to insights from the literature review. The model of Mintzberg was used to better understand how strategies develop over time and how organisations respond to emerging opportunities. This perspective helped to shape the idea that supporting clients should not be a fixed plan, but rather a strategy that allows space for reflection and adaptation.



1. EXPLORING ADDITIONAL SERVICE POSSIBILITIES



2. CONNECTING TO EXISTING THEORY FRAMEWORK

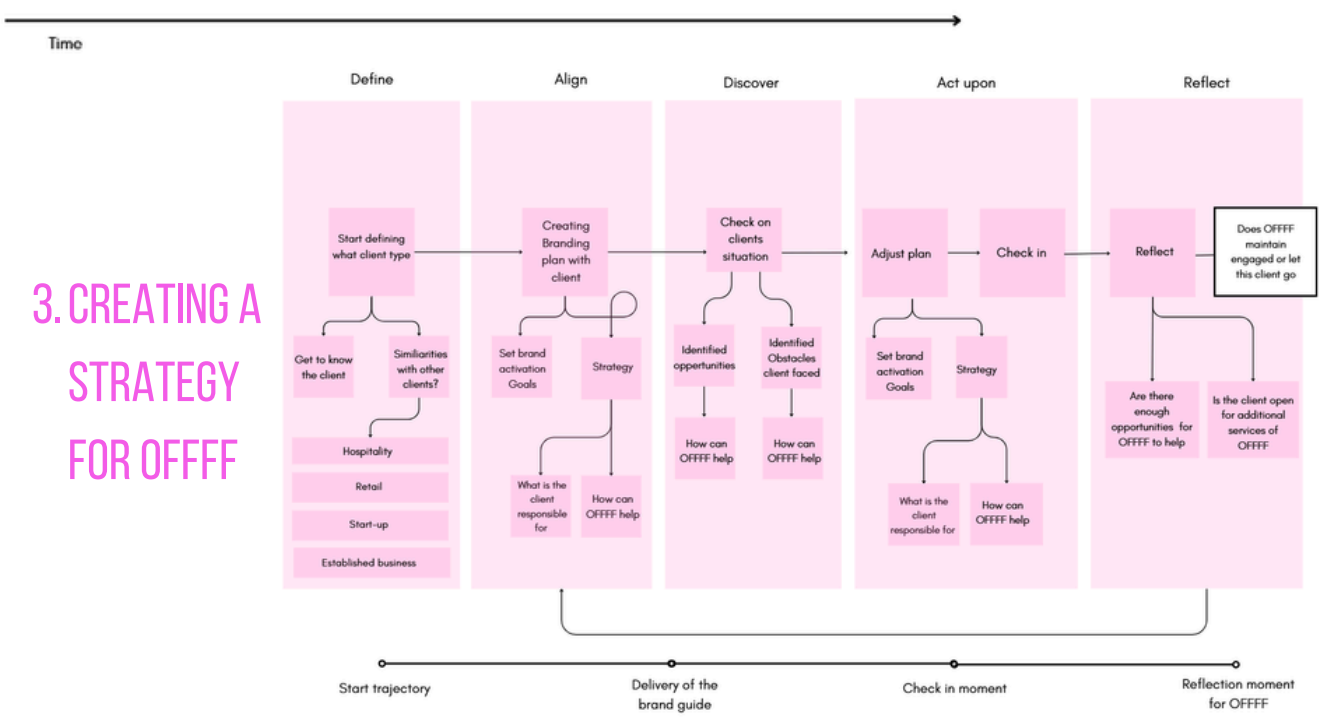


Figure 41: Process of strategy development

4.3.2 DEVELOPING STRATEGY TOOLS

A strategy was developed to help OFFFF realise the shared vision created with the client on how the brand identity can be brought to life. To support this process, several templates were designed that help OFFFF and the client build a shared understanding of how the brand identity can be translated into practice and how the client can take ownership of this process. These templates clarify what OFFFF and the client can expect from each other and how they aim to achieve their shared goals.

The shared vision template (Figure 42) helps OFFFF and the client align on what has been achieved, identify obstacles, and define roles and next steps.

The activation checklist (Figure 43) supports follow-up moments by helping OFFFF and the client reflect on the current situation of the organisation, identify changes or emerging opportunities, and assess how the brand identity is being applied in practice.

In addition, the pages explaining the phases provide guidance on the purpose of each phase within the strategy and clarify what is expected from OFFFF during these moments (Figure 44). Together, these tools help translate the strategy into concrete actions and support OFFFF in guiding clients in bringing their brand identity to life.

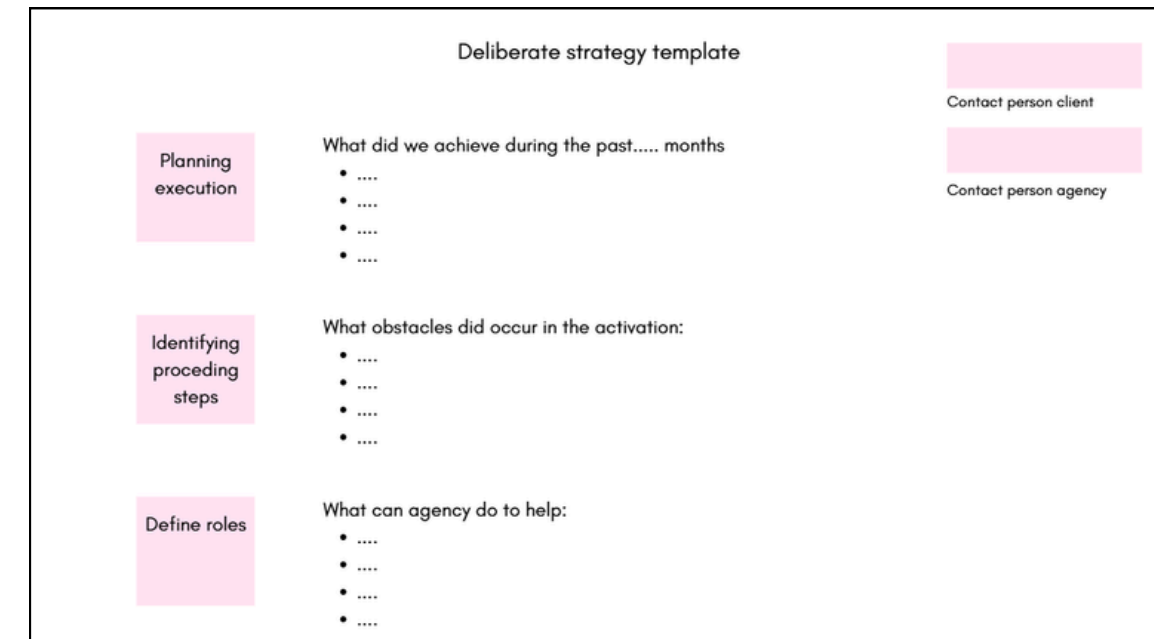


Figure 42: Template used to create a shared vision between OFFFF and its client.

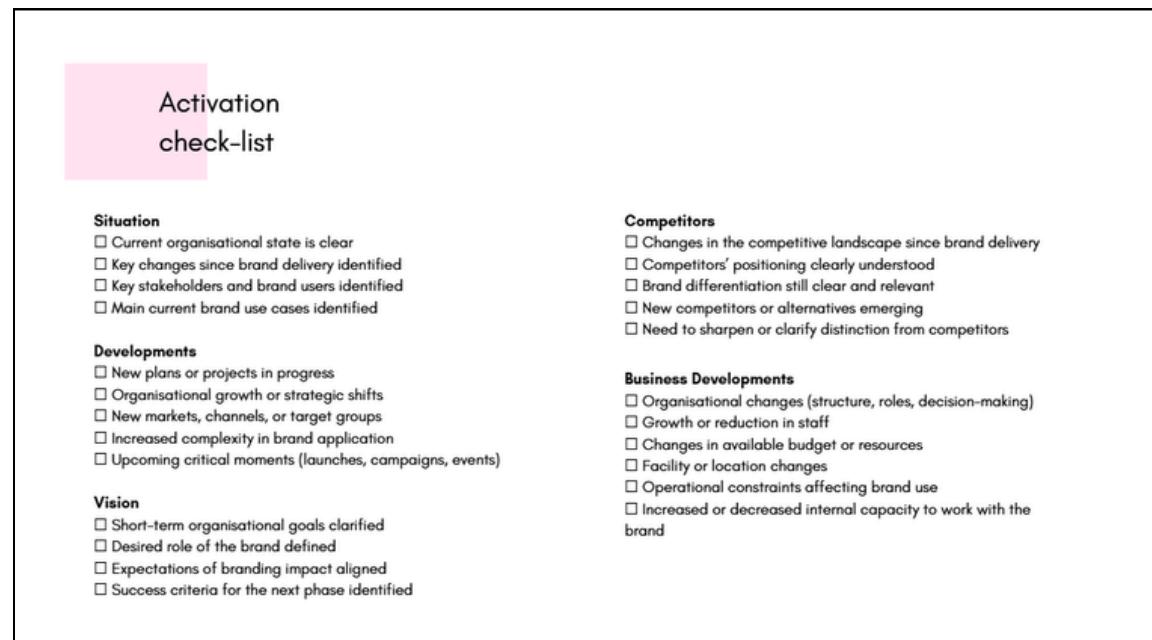


Figure 43: Activation check list to support check ups from OFFFF on client

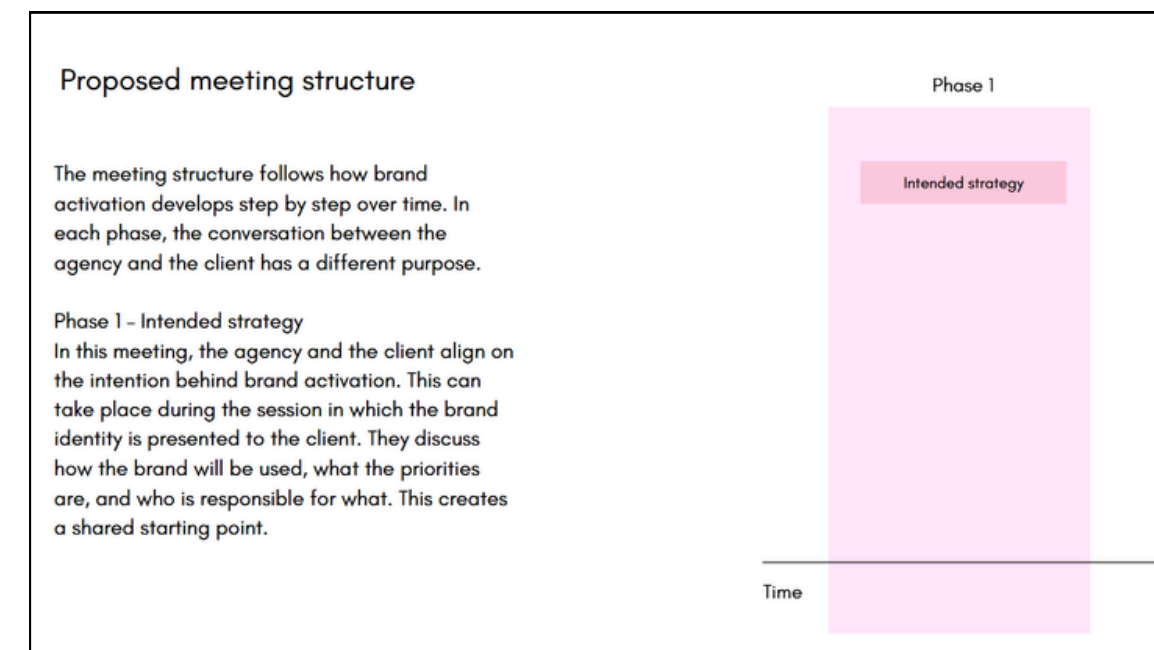
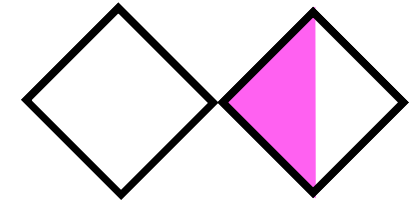


Figure 44: Pages explaining the purpose of the different phases for OFFFF.

4.4 VALIDATION OFFFF



VALIDATING THE FIRST CONCEPT OF THE STRATEGY PLAYBOOK

To validate the first concept of the strategy playbook, a validation session was conducted with a creative strategist from OFFFF. During this session, the initial playbook concept and the proposed interventions were presented and discussed. The goal of this validation was to evaluate whether the concept aligned with the way OFFFF works with clients in practice and whether the proposed tools would be useful within their daily workflow.

As shown in Figure 45, the validation was conducted using a simple validation setup. The different elements of the concept were presented on an iPad, while observations, comments, and feedback from the creative strategist were written down on sticky notes during the conversation. This approach made it possible to capture immediate reactions and reflections while discussing the concept. During the session, the creative strategist was asked to reflect on the clarity, usefulness, and practicality of the proposed strategy and playbook. Particular attention was given to whether the tools would support OFFFF in guiding clients after the delivery of the brand guide.

The feedback revealed that the concept aligned well with OFFFF's ambition to remain involved with clients after delivery, but that several improvements were needed to make the playbook more practical and engaging. In particular, the feedback indicated that the concept should focus less on theoretical explanation and more on tangible interventions that can be applied during client interactions.

Based on the observations and comments collected during the validation session, several design implications were identified. These insights informed the next iteration of the playbook and helped refine the strategy into a more practical and applicable tool for OFFFF.

Figure 46 illustrates how the feedback collected during the validation session was translated into design implications for the next iteration of the playbook.

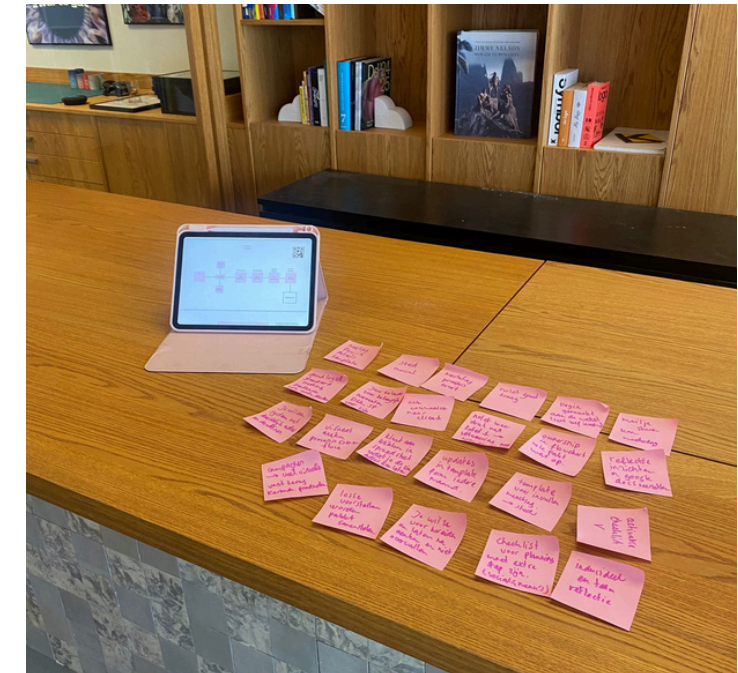
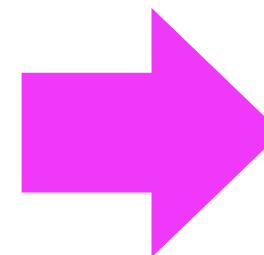


Figure 45: Validation setup

KEY FEEDBACK FROM VALIDATION SESSION

- Communicate the value of bringing the brand identity to life more clearly to the client.
- Use a tone of voice that is more playful and in line with how OFFFF communicates with its clients.
- Provide clearer roles within the team, clarifying who is responsible for what.
- Introduce more structure in the playbook.
- Include more attention to internal branding within the client organisation.
- Explore ways to involve the client more actively in understanding why bringing the brand identity to life is important and how they can experience this.
- Reduce the amount of text and theoretical explanations to make the playbook more practical and usable in the daily workflow of OFFFF.
- Focus less on explaining the structure and more on the interventions themselves.



DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Based on this feedback, several improvements were identified for the next iteration of the playbook:

- Make the value of bringing the brand identity to life more tangible for clients.
- Reduce theoretical explanations and focus more on visual, playful, and interactive elements.
- Include tools that support internal brand activation within the client organisation.
- Design the playbook in a way that supports the tone of voice of OFFFF

Figure 46: Validation setup

5.DELIVER

In the delivery phase (Figure 47), the TAKE OFFFF strategy is delivered. This is done by first refining the scope of the playbook. Whereas the playbook initially focused on documenting the entire strategy, it now focuses on interventions that can be applied during the delivery moment of the brand guide, allowing the client to experience the brand identity. The strategy itself is presented in a roadmap, highlighting the different phases of the strategy.

In addition to the playbook, a card deck and a reflection matrix are developed to support OFFFF in realising the strategy. Finally, the strategy is validated through reflection on the design principles formulated in the design brief.

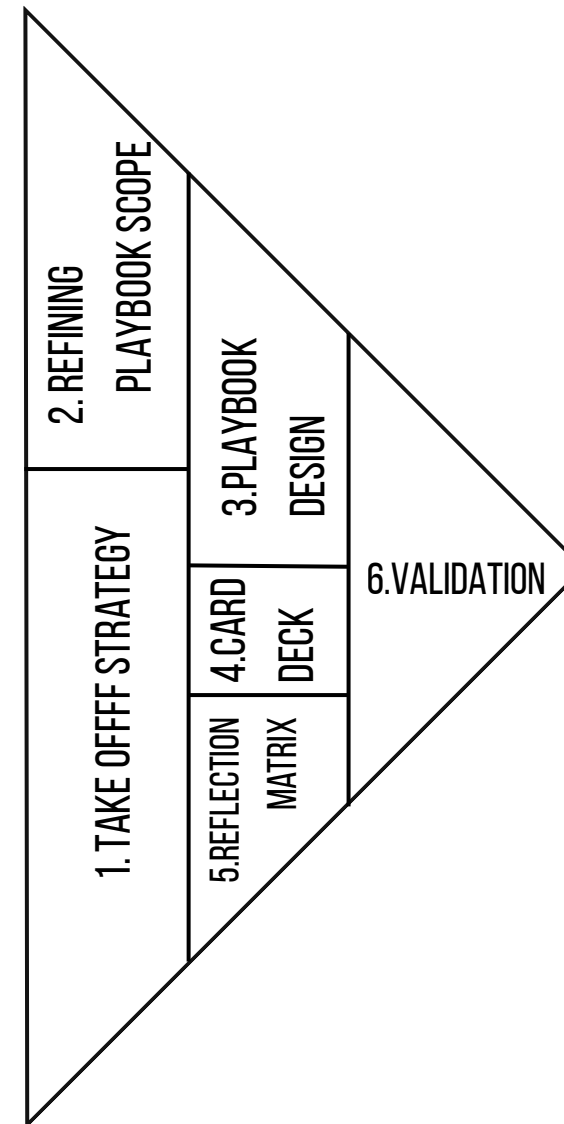
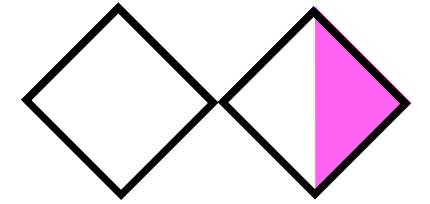


Figure 47: Deliver phase

5.1 FINAL DESIGN: THE TAKE OFFFF STRATEGY



The final design is a strategy for OFFFF to remain structurally involved in the process of supporting their clients in bringing the brand identity to life.

The model (Figure 48) shows how the strategy can be used to create a shared vision between OFFFF and the client. After the delivery of the brand guide, OFFFF can check in on the client's situation and evaluate how the brand identity is being implemented. Based on these insights, the plan can be adjusted to address new opportunities or obstacles that the client may encounter. Through this process of checking in, adapting the plan, and reflecting on progress, OFFFF can decide whether to remain involved with the client or step back from the collaboration.

The model highlights that bringing a brand identity to life is not a one-time delivery but an ongoing process that requires reflection and adaptation. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect at certain moments to determine whether OFFFF wants to maintain engaged with the client or shifts its priority to other projects.

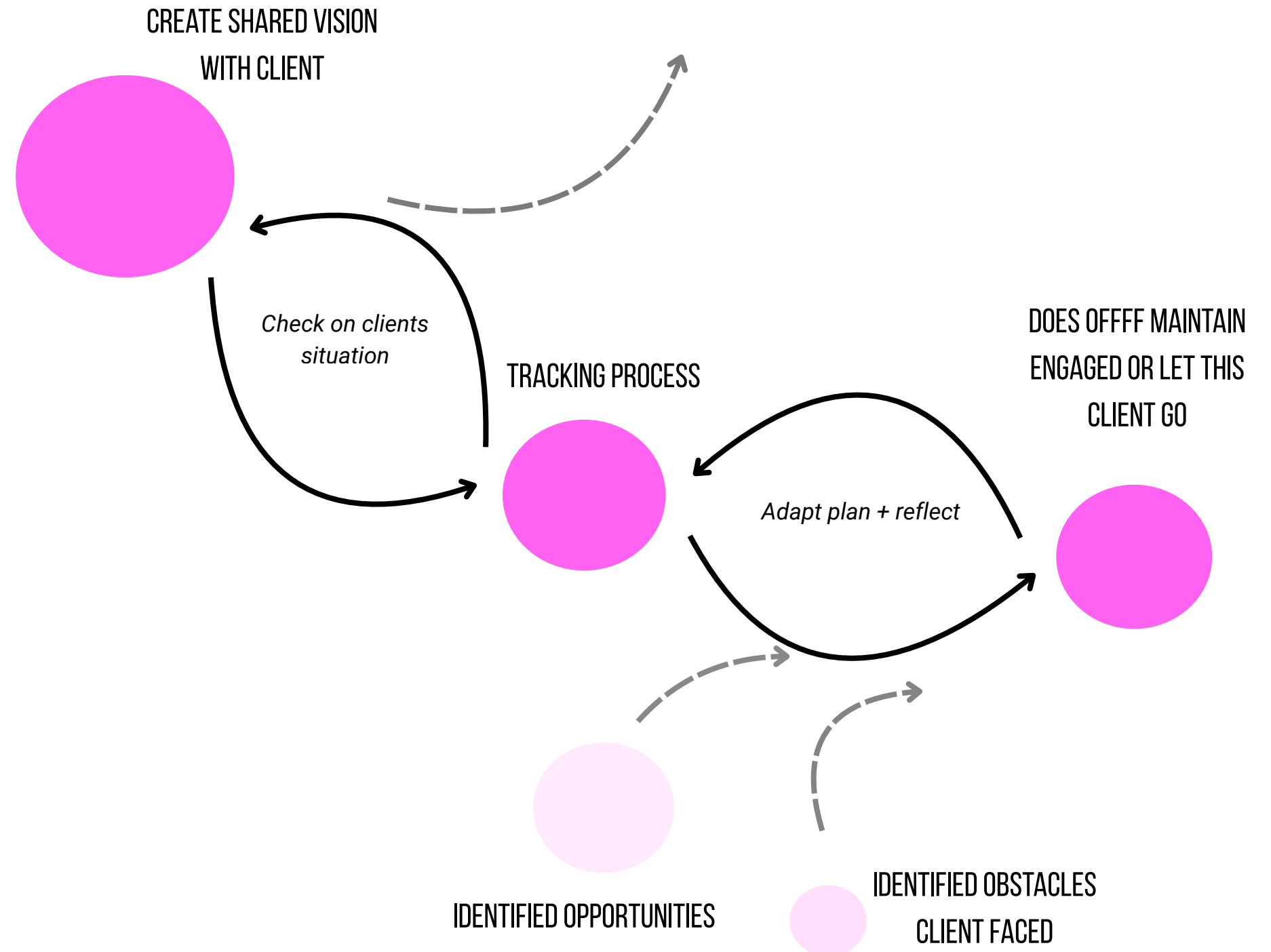


Figure 48: Designed strategy for OFFFF

5.1.1 STRATEGY ROADMAP

The strategic roadmap for OFFFF provides an overview of the steps in the strategy and when they should be undertaken. The roadmap also illustrates the value that OFFFF and their clients can achieve when this strategy is implemented.

As shown in Figure 49, the strategy starts at the moment OFFFF delivers the brand guide. This is also the moment when the interventions from the playbook can be applied to create a shared vision with the client on how the brand identity can be brought to life.

The next stage in the roadmap is the check-in moment, during which emerging factors within the client's context are explored so that OFFFF can respond to new opportunities. To support this process, a card deck was designed to help OFFFF identify potential opportunities and explore new business possibilities together with the client.

The final stage of the roadmap is the reflection moment. During this phase, OFFFF evaluates whether there is further potential to continue activating the brand identity together with the client, or whether it is more appropriate to conclude the collaboration and focus on other projects.

The long-term vision of this strategy is to move towards structural, long-term relationships with clients, in which both OFFFF and the client experience that the brand identity is continuously brought to life in practice.

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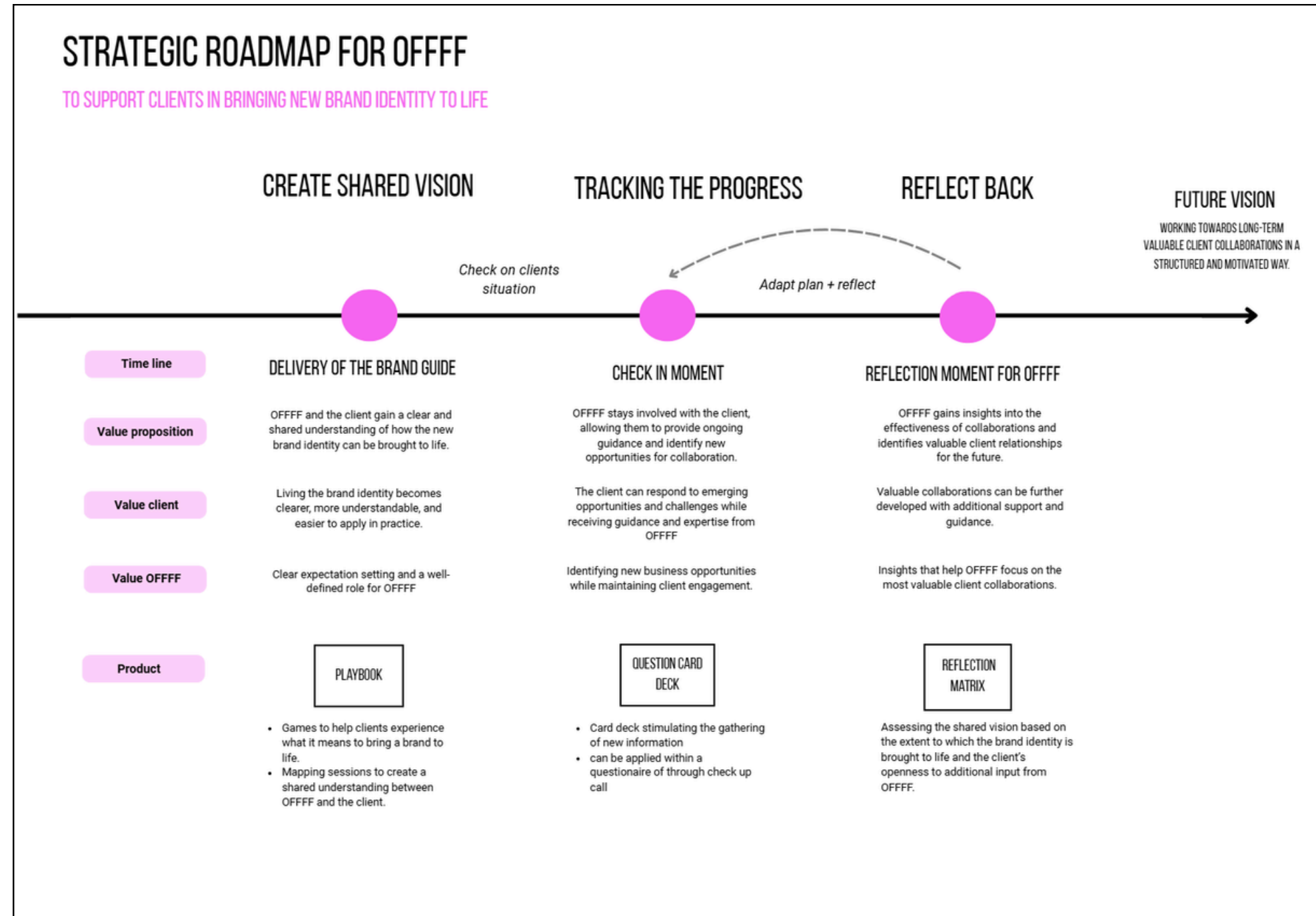


Figure 49: Strategic roadmap for OFFFF

STRATEGIC ROADMAP FOR OFFFF

TO SUPPORT CLIENTS IN BRINGING NEW BRAND IDENTITY TO LIFE

CREATE SHARED VISION

TRACKING THE PROGRESS

REFLECT BACK

FUTURE VISION

WORKING TOWARDS LONG-TERM VALUABLE CLIENT COLLABORATIONS IN A STRUCTURED AND MOTIVATED WAY.

Check on clients situation

Adapt plan + reflect

Time line

DELIVERY OF THE BRAND GUIDE

CHECK IN MOMENT

REFLECTION MOMENT FOR OFFFF

Value proposition

OFFFF and the client gain a clear and shared understanding of how the new brand identity can be brought to life.

OFFFF stays involved with the client, allowing them to provide ongoing guidance and identify new opportunities for collaboration.

OFFFF gains insights into the effectiveness of collaborations and identifies valuable client relationships for the future.

Value client

Living the brand identity becomes clearer, more understandable, and easier to apply in practice.

The client can respond to emerging opportunities and challenges while receiving guidance and expertise from OFFFF

Valuable collaborations can be further developed with additional support and guidance.

Value OFFFF

Clear expectation setting and a well-defined role for OFFFF

Identifying new business opportunities while maintaining client engagement.

Insights that help OFFFF focus on the most valuable client collaborations.

Product

PLAYBOOK

QUESTION CARD DECK

REFLECTION MATRIX

- Games to help clients experience what it means to bring a brand to life.
- Mapping sessions to create a shared understanding between OFFFF and the client.

- Card deck stimulating the gathering of new information
- can be applied within a questionnaire of through check up call

Assessing the shared vision based on the extent to which the brand identity is brought to life and the client's openness to additional input from OFFFF.

5.1.2 INTERVENTIONS

Based on the insights gathered during the research, a strategy was developed to help OFFFF remain engaged with clients after the delivery of a brand identity. The strategy focuses on creating a shared vision between OFFFF and the client in order to strengthen ownership in bringing the brand identity to life.

To support this strategy, the TAKE OFFFF playbook and a assessment matrix were developed.

TAKE OFFFF PLAYBOOK

The TAKE OFFFF playbook (Figure 50) contains a set of templates and games that OFFFF can use at the moment the brand guide is presented to the client, in order to create a shared vision together on how the brand identity can be brought to life.

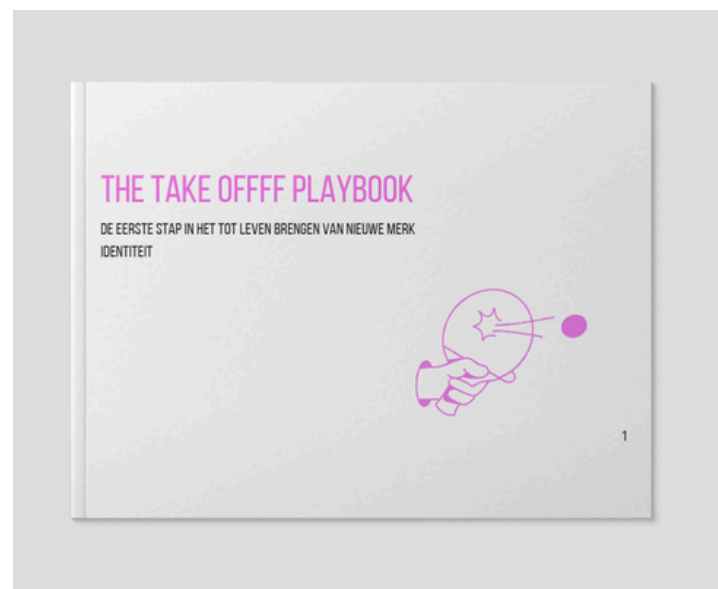


Figure 50: Take OFFFF playbook

CARD DECK

The card (Figure 51) deck is designed to help identify emerging factors and translate them into business opportunities that can be addressed during the check-in moment. This provides OFFFF with guidance during these check-in sessions and helps them make clients aware of the areas in which OFFFF can support them.



Figure 51: Card deck

REFLECTION MATRIX

The reflection matrix (Figure 52) is used in the reflection phase of the strategy, during which OFFFF looks back on the collaboration with the client. In this phase, OFFFF evaluates whether it is valuable to continue investing in supporting the client in taking ownership of bringing the brand identity to life, or whether it is more appropriate to shift their focus to other projects.

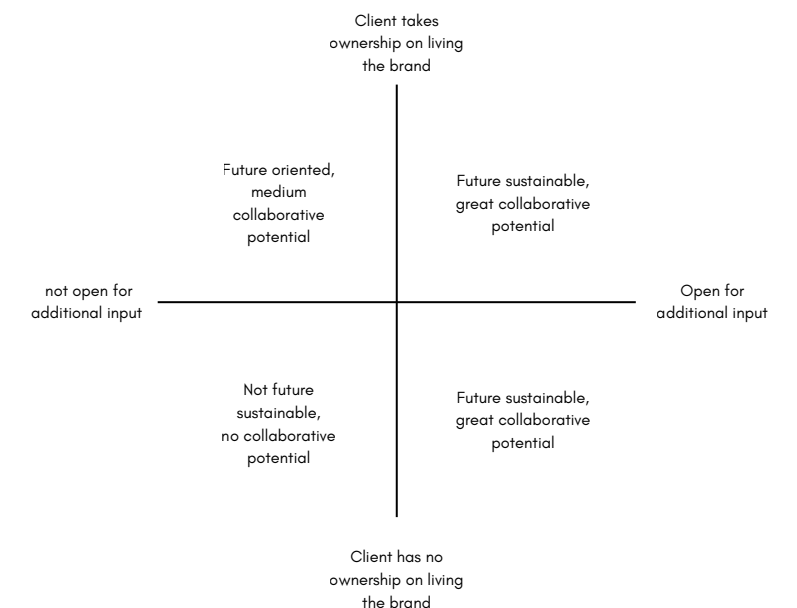


Figure 52: Reflection matrix

5.2 PLAYBOOK SCOPE

REFINING THE SCOPE OF THE PLAYBOOK

Initially, the playbook aimed to make the entire strategy actionable, providing OFFFF with a comprehensive approach to support their clients in bringing the brand identity to life. However, validation sessions with OFFFF revealed that this scope was too broad. Instead, the playbook should focus on actionable interventions that OFFFF can use at specific moments in their collaboration with clients.

As identified during the peer brainstorm session, the moment of delivering the brand identity could be a valuable opportunity for such an intervention. Rather than functioning purely as a delivery moment—where the brand guide is handed over—the moment could shift towards a mentoring moment, in which OFFFF and the client jointly explore how the brand identity can be brought to life in practice.

A designer from OFFFF acknowledges this challenge:

“There isn’t really a clear end moment for us. It’s never like: ‘Yes, the new branding is finished, let’s celebrate it together.’ That moment doesn’t really exist. Instead, the focus quickly shifts to the next project, and the brand slowly fades into the background. I think there is still a lot of potential to do something about that.”

The playbook therefore focuses on interventions that enable OFFFF to facilitate conversations with their clients and create a shared vision on how the brand identity can be brought to life within the organisation.

Figure 53 illustrates how the initial scope of the playbook evolved into the redefined scope.

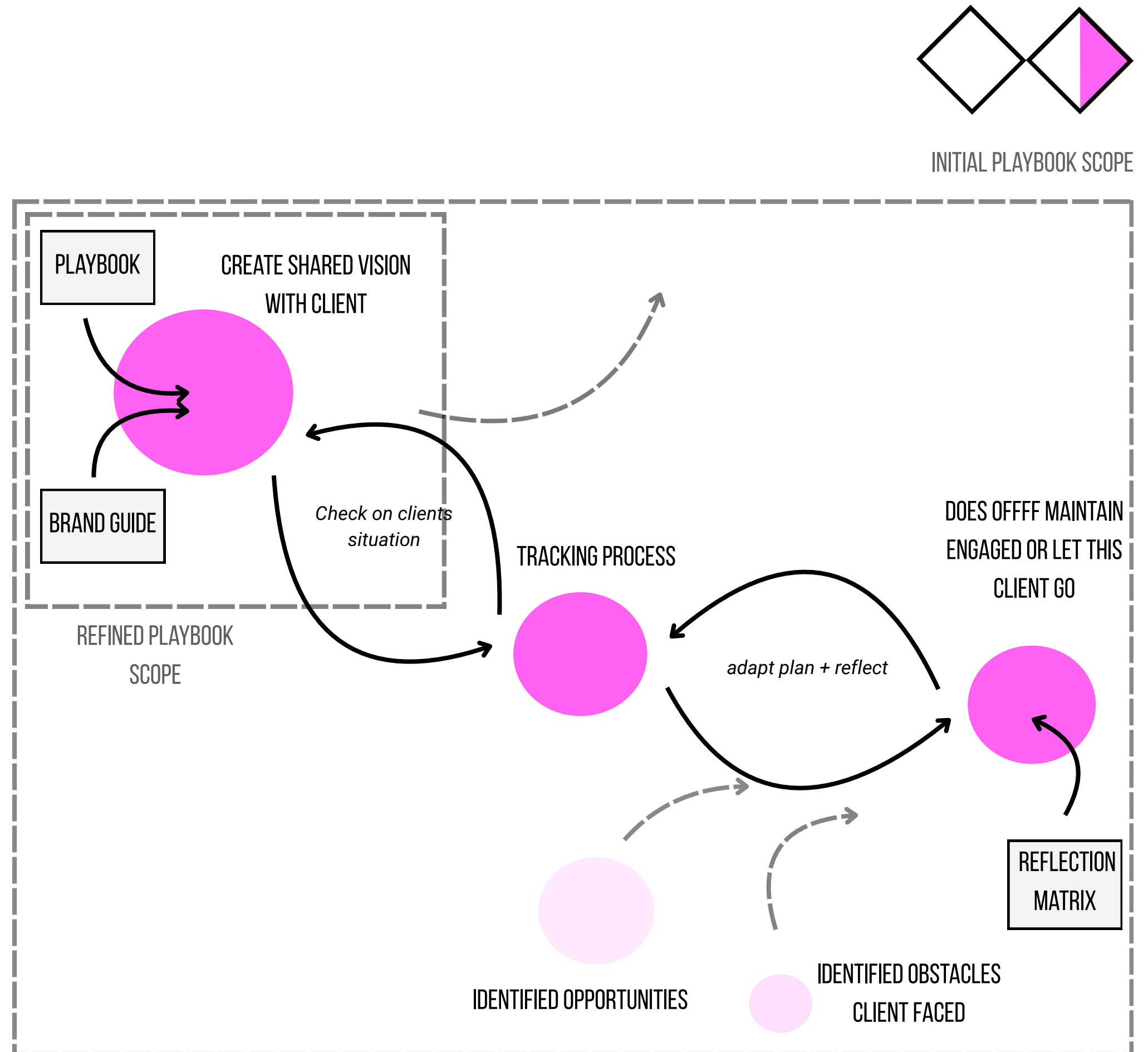
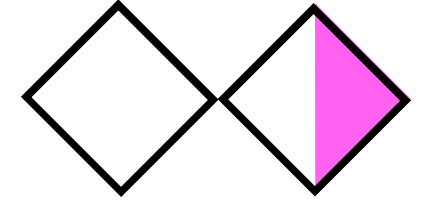


Figure 53: Refined playbook scope



5.3 PLAYBOOK DESIGN

The final playbook contains several tools for OFFFF, including game concepts and workshop templates.

The playbook (Figure 54) is written in Dutch, as the current workshops and presentation materials of OFFFF are also in Dutch. The playbook can be used as a guide for OFFFF during the delivery moment, helping them to create a shared vision together with the client on how the brand identity can be brought to life.

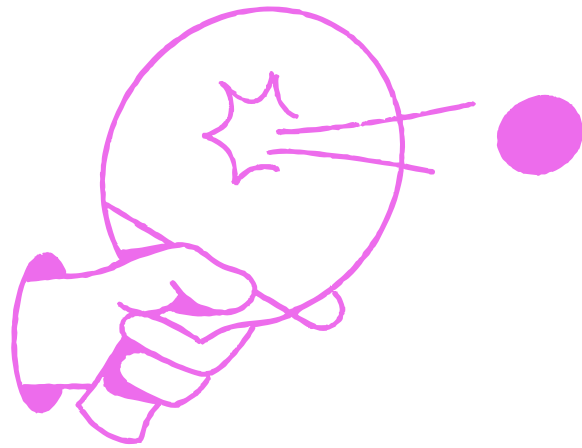


Figure 54: The take OFFFF playbook

Translation: The take OFFFF playbook The first step in bringing the new brand identity to life

5.3.1 GAME CONCEPTS

To help clients better understand how a brand identity can be brought to life, the playbook includes several game-based exercises. These concepts make branding more tangible by encouraging participants to actively explore brand meaning, differentiation, and recognition. Through discussion and interaction, the games support the creation of a shared understanding between OFFFF and the client.



Brand Association Game

During the game, participants choose one of the brands shown on a slide and describe it to the rest of the group without mentioning its name or referring to visual characteristics such as the logo, colours, or typography. The other participants then try to guess which brand is being described.

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that a brand comes to life through what it does, what it stands for, and how people experience it.

By discussing associations and characteristics of different brands, participants explore how brands can be recognised through their behaviour, tone of voice, and values. In this way, the game helps clients reflect on how their own brand identity can be expressed in practice.

The Brand Association Game contributes to creating a shared understanding between OFFFF and the client of what it means to bring a brand identity to life and how this can be done in practice through examples. Figure 55 shows several brands included in the playbook that can be used as examples of brands with a living brand identity. These examples are supported by descriptions of how the brand might be perceived by people.



Figure 55: Brand association game



THE STORES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE IN THE SPA

THE BIRTHDAY GIFT YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO GIVE.

Visual Differentiation Game

To help clients experience the importance of visual recognition in branding, the playbook includes a Memory Game. This exercise demonstrates how a strong visual identity helps a brand to be recognised quickly and remembered more easily.

During the exercise, participants are shown a collage containing different brands. They are given a short amount of time to observe the collage and memorise the brands. Afterwards, the collage is removed and participants are asked to recall or identify as many brands as possible.

The purpose of the game is to illustrate that brands which visually stand out are easier to recognise and remember. When brands look similar to others or do not clearly differentiate themselves, they are more likely to fade into the background. By experiencing this themselves, participants gain a better understanding of the importance of recognisability and differentiation in branding. Within the playbook, this exercise supports discussions between OFFFF and the client about how visual choices contribute to a distinctive and recognisable brand identity.

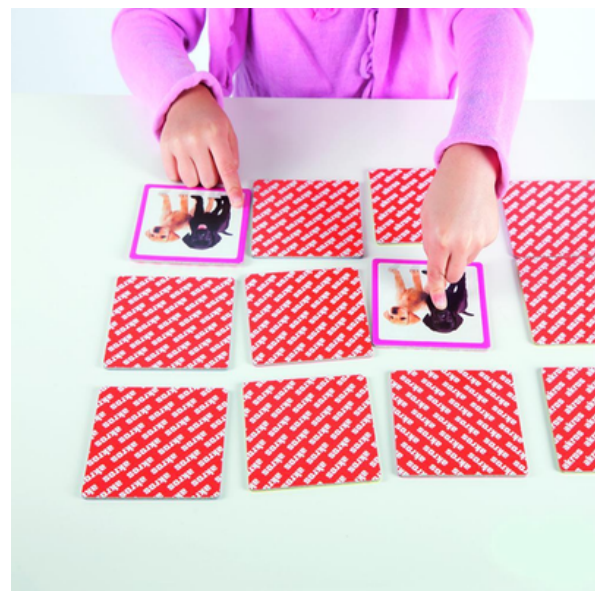
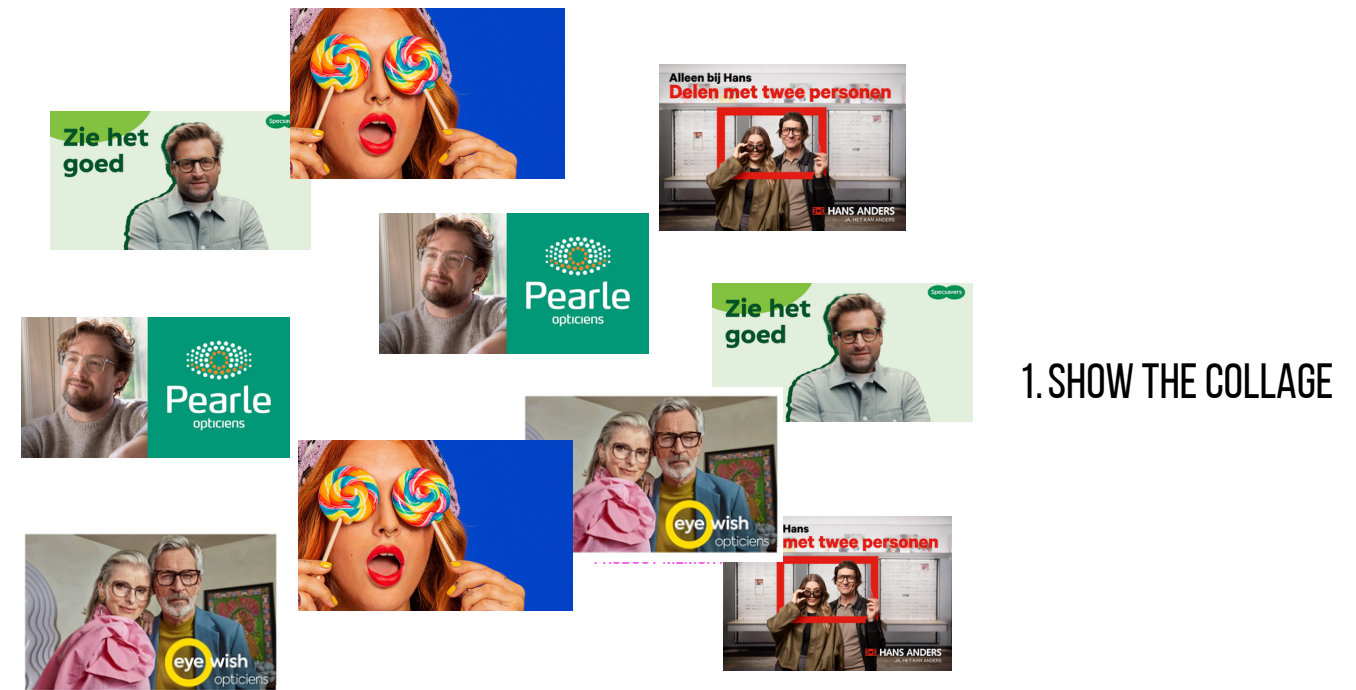


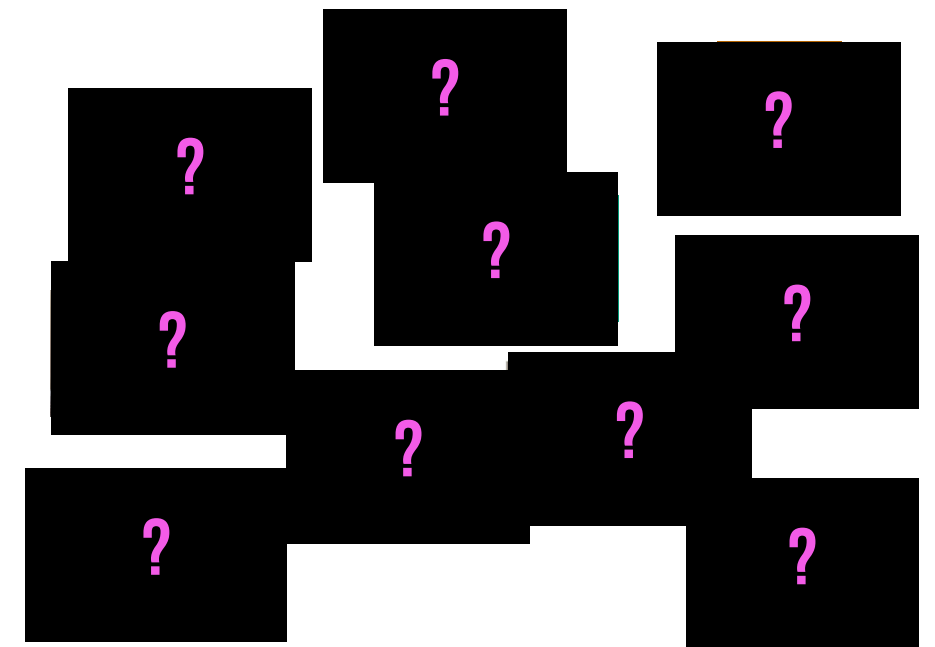
Figure 56: Memory game concept

The game is a variation of the well-known memory game (Figure 56). The visuals used by OFFFF should consist of brands that operate within the same product category, allowing participants to compare the visual appearance of different brands within the same market. After the game, OFFFF can use the exercise as a starting point to discuss visual differentiation with the client. For example, Figure 57 shows brands operating in the optician services category, including the visual identity of Van der Ham, a client of OFFFF.



1. SHOW THE COLLAGE

2. REMEMBER THE IMAGES



3. GUESS WHERE THE FOLLOWING BRANDS ARE LOCATED:

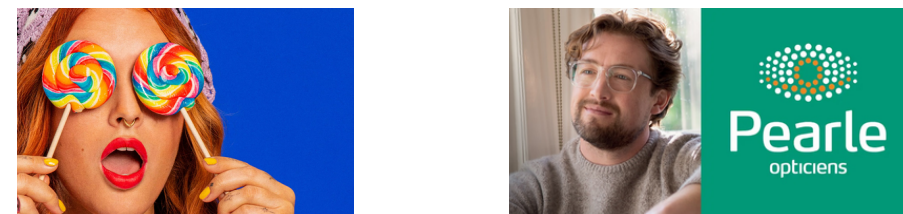


Figure 57: Visual differentiation game

'BRANDS MUST STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD
AND LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION.' -OFFFF



5.3.2 WORKSHOP TEMPLATES

These are the workshop templates that are showed in the playbook. These templates can be used in the handover moment in which OFFFF and their client get together to create a shared vision on how to achieve a living brand.

The iceberg

The Iceberg Metaphor Workshop template (figure 58) helps clients understand that a brand identity consists of both visible and invisible elements. Above the waterline are the visible expressions of the brand, such as social media, websites, or other brand communications. Below the surface, the brand also needs to live within the organisation, for example through employees who understand and embody the brand values in their daily work.

During the workshop, OFFFF and the client use the iceberg metaphor to reflect on how the brand identity can be brought to life in practice. By discussing ideas, ambitions, and expectations, the workshop helps create a shared understanding of how the brand can be expressed both internally and externally.

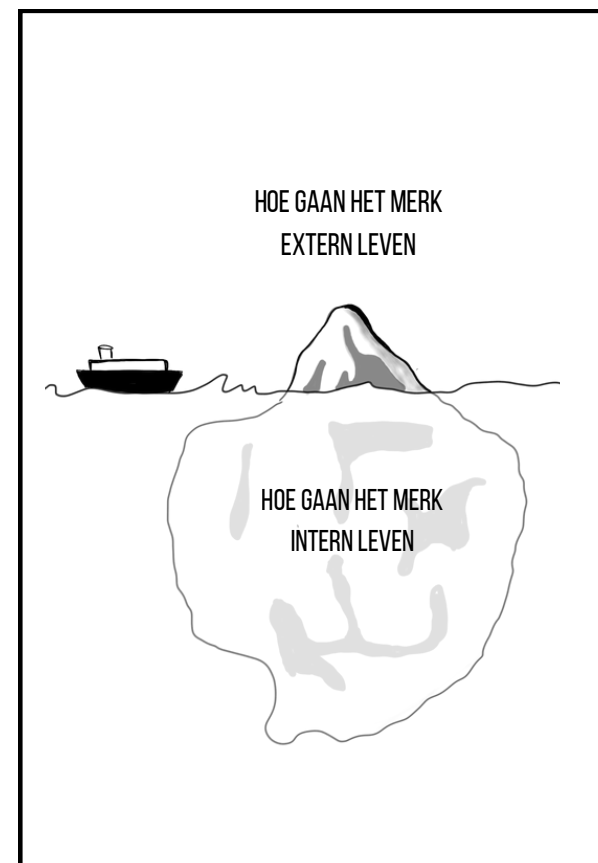


Figure 58: Iceberg workshop template

Discovering the future

To truly bring a brand identity to life, it is important that OFFFF and the client share a common vision of where the brand is heading. During the Brand Vision Workshop, OFFFF and the client jointly define the ideal future vision for the brand (Figure 59). By discussing what the brand stands for and the direction it aims to take, a clear understanding emerges of how the brand identity can be brought to life in practice.

During the session different themes are discussed such as:

- the position of the brand in relation to competitors
- organisational goals that need to be achieved
- business goals, such as revenue growth or expansion to new locations
- upcoming plans, such as events, campaigns, or important deadlines

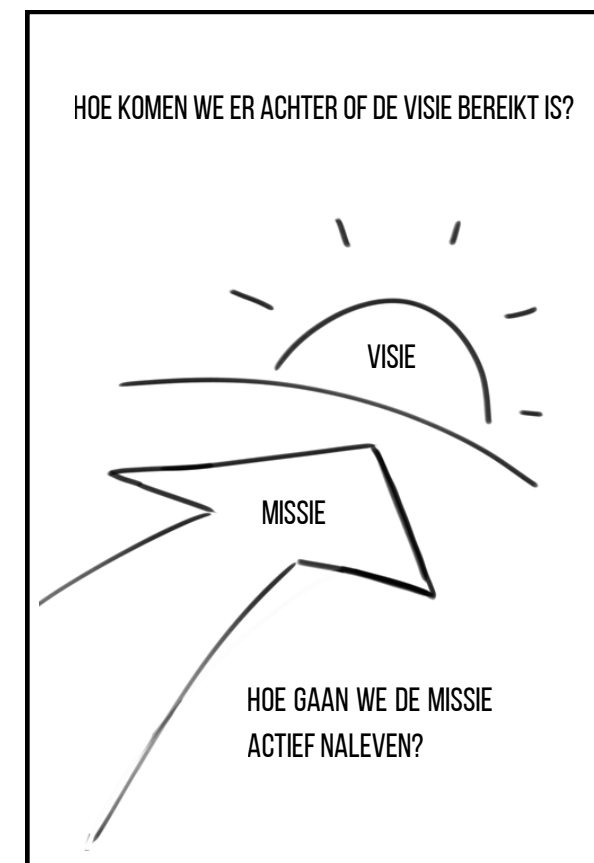


Figure 59: Discovering the future workshop template

Living the brand

This workshop helps OFFFF and the client identify who within the client's organisation should contribute to bringing the brand identity to life. During the session, participants discuss different roles within the organisation and reflect on who needs to understand, feel, and apply the brand identity in their daily work.

By mapping these roles, the workshop increases awareness of how different people within the organisation contribute to activating the brand. As a result, responsibility for bringing the brand identity to life becomes clearer and more widely shared across the organisation. Figure 60 shows the template that can be used during this workshop.

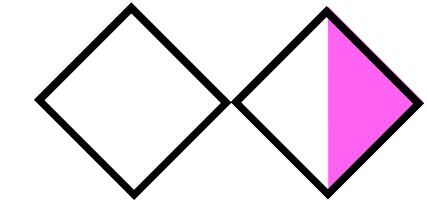


Figure 60: Living the brand template

5.4 CARD DECK

As described in the strategy designed for OFFFF, it is important for OFFFF to stay informed about developments that may occur within the client's context. Changes in the client's environment can influence how the brand identity is activated and implemented over time.

During the check-in moment, the card deck (figure 61) helps OFFFF identify emerging factors that may create new opportunities for collaboration with the client. By reflecting on themes such as competitors, activation planning, internal awareness, and organisational developments, OFFFF and the client can explore whether these changes create new possibilities for brand activation. The card deck therefore provides OFFFF with guidance during these check-in sessions and helps translate contextual developments into potential business opportunities. This approach aligns with the design principle of responding to emerging factors, which emphasises the importance of adapting to contextual changes after the delivery of the brand guide (Mintzberg, 1987).



CHECK-IN QUESTION CARD DECK

FULL SIZE ON NEXT PAGE →

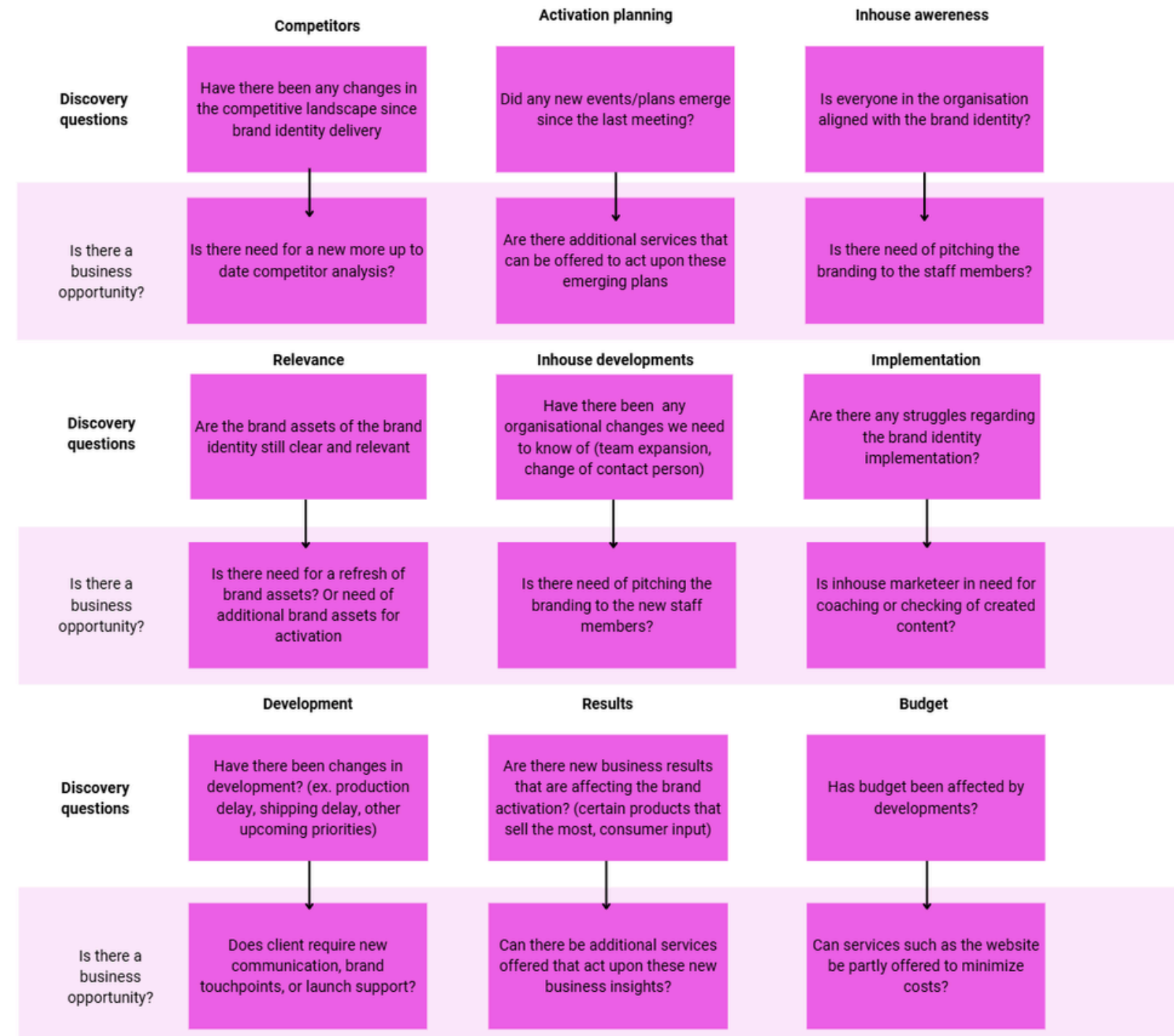
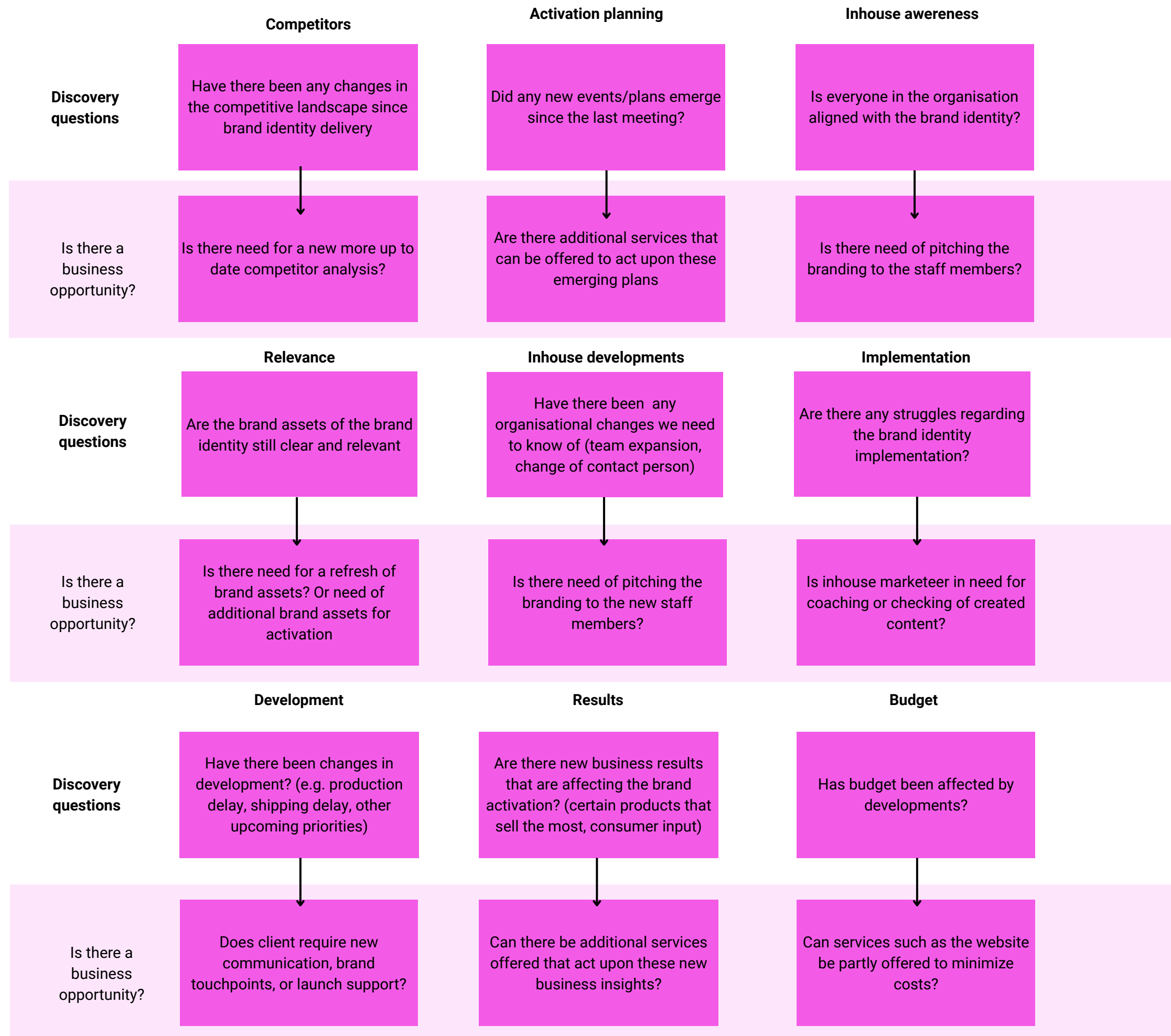
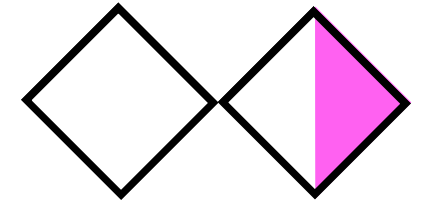


Figure 61: Check-in question card deck

CHECK-IN QUESTION CARD DECK





5.5 REFLECTION MATRIX

HOW CAN OFFFF DETERMINE WHEN EVER A COLLABORATION IS WORTH PURSUING?

To support OFFFF in reflecting on the collaboration after the delivery of a brand identity, a reflection matrix (Figure 58) was developed. The matrix helps OFFFF evaluate whether the brand identity is actively being brought to life and whether the client is open to continued collaboration after delivery. By reflecting on these two dimensions, OFFFF can better determine whether further engagement could support the activation of the brand identity.

The matrix consists of two axes. The vertical axis represents the extent to which the brand is brought to life, ranging from "brand is not brought to life" at the bottom to "brand is brought to life" at the top. The horizontal axis represents the client's openness to additional input after delivery, ranging from "not open for additional input" on the left to "open for additional input" on the right. By positioning a project within this matrix, OFFFF can assess different situations. When the brand is actively brought to life and the client is open to additional input, there is strong potential for continued collaboration. When the brand is brought to life but the client is not open to further input, the collaboration may remain limited but still successful. If the brand is not being brought to life but the client is open to support, OFFFF can intervene and help the client adjust the strategy. Finally, when the brand is not brought to life and the client is not open to additional input, there is limited potential for further collaboration.

The matrix helps OFFFF structure reflection moments after the delivery of the brand identity. By assessing both the implementation of the brand and the client's openness to collaboration, OFFFF can determine whether there is an opportunity to continue supporting the client in bringing the brand identity to life. In this way, the matrix supports the strategy of creating a shared vision and strengthening ownership between OFFFF and its clients.

The level of ownership in living the brand identity can be determined by OFFFF based on the definition derived from the findings of the discovery phase:

**TAKING OWNERSHIP IN LIVING THE BRAND IDENTITY
= CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT + INTERNAL AND
EXTERNAL ROLLOUT + ACTING UPON EMERGING
OPPORTUNITIES**

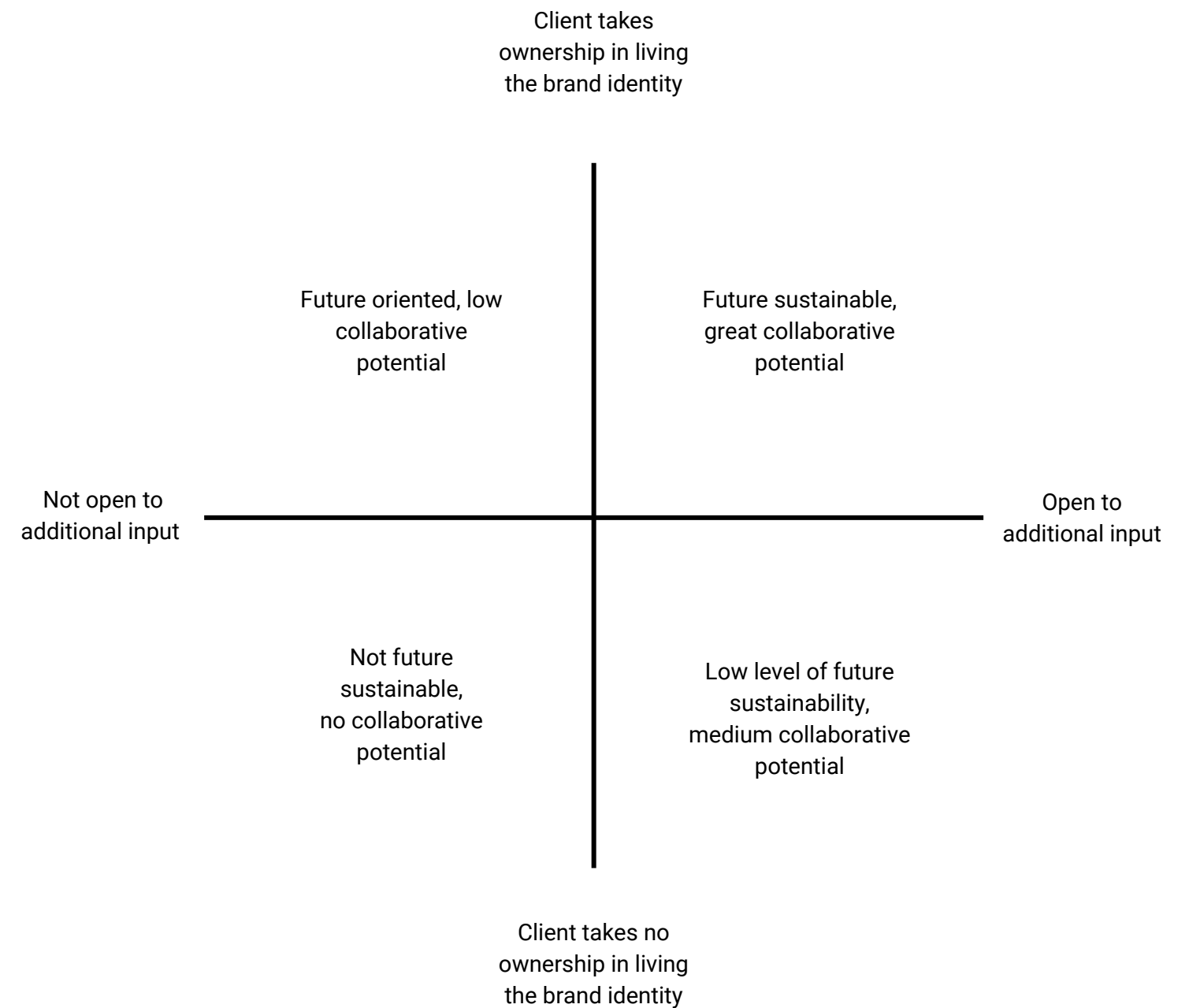
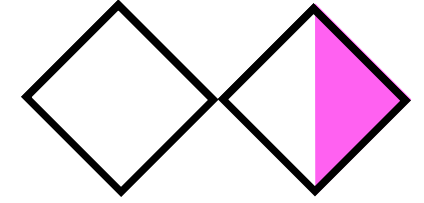


Figure 62: Reflection matrix



5.6 VALIDATION OF THE DESIGN

This chapter presents the validation phase of the project, in which the final design is assessed. The design is validated based on the defined design principles that were formulated in the design brief after synthesising the findings from the first diamond. The extent to which these principles are achieved is rated on a scale from one to five points. The strategy and playbook were discussed with the creative director of OFFFF, from which additional input was gathered and incorporated. The assessment of the design principles is based on the designer's own interpretation.



1. STIMULATE INTERNAL BRAND ACTIVATION

Through the different templates, OFFFF is given the opportunity to explore together with the client how their brand can specifically be brought to life and how this should be expressed within the organisation.



2. CREATE A STRUCTURAL APPROACH FOR FOLLOW UP

The TAKE OFFFF strategy illustrates how a follow-up after delivery could be structured and highlights the value that can be created by implementing such an approach.



3. ENCOURAGE KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION

The playbook presents several interventions that can be used to create a shared vision on bringing the brand to life. By actively discussing these topics together, different opinions and perspectives can be shared.



4. REDUCE DIFFUSED RESPONSIBILITY

The strategy shows where OFFFF can contribute to supporting the client and how this support can be provided. However, it does not yet distinguish between the different roles that OFFFF team members can take on in this process.



5. RESPOND TO EMERGING FACTORS

The question card deck within the strategy provides OFFFF with guidance in identifying emerging factors and understanding how they can respond to them.



6. TRACK INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ROLE OUT

The strategy does not yet actively support tracking the internal and external rollout of the brand identity. The check-in moment is mainly intended to identify new opportunities, but it does not yet include an intervention that enables reflection on the content of the internal and external rollout. The matrix does make it possible to reflect on the overall rollout of the brand identity for OFFFF.

5.6.1 FEASIBLE

CAN IT BE ACHIEVED?

The strategy that was designed can be implemented through the accessible intervention of the playbook. The playbook helps OFFFF take the first step in creating a shared vision with the client on how the brand identity will be brought to life. It can be used during the existing delivery moment in which OFFFF and the client come together.

The playbook offers multiple concepts that OFFFF can use to interact with their clients and encourage them to actively experience what it means to bring a brand to life and how this can be applied to their own brand.

The overall roadmap of the strategy aims to move towards greater ownership of bringing the brand identity to life. OFFFF can adjust the content of the playbook to their preferences and further shape it over time.

The strategy is designed to align with OFFFF's existing workflow, ensuring that the intervention can be integrated into their daily practice. Implementing the playbook at the delivery moment may initially require additional effort from OFFFF, as it involves investing more time in the client during this phase. However, this initial investment is expected to help clients better understand how their brand can be brought to life within their organisation.

5.6.2 VIABLE

DOES THE SOLUTION WILL WORK IN THE LONG RUN?

The designed strategy helps OFFFF play a more structural role in the long run in bringing new brand identities to life with their clients by offering guidance and expertise, even after the delivery of the brand identity.

As a result, clients may become more inclined to act on this understanding, either by re-engaging with OFFFF or by showing openness to additional services, as they recognise the value of living the brand. This also creates an opportunity for OFFFF to explore how clients can be convinced to invest in additional workshops, positioning these as valuable extensions of the initial delivery.

The matrix supports this strategy by encouraging OFFFF to reflect on which collaborations are most valuable and have the greatest potential. By consistently reflecting on their collaborations, OFFFF can develop a clearer understanding of what successful collaborations for bringing brand identities to life look like. In the long run, this enables them to focus on initiating trajectories with clients that match these conditions.

5.6.3 DESIRABLE

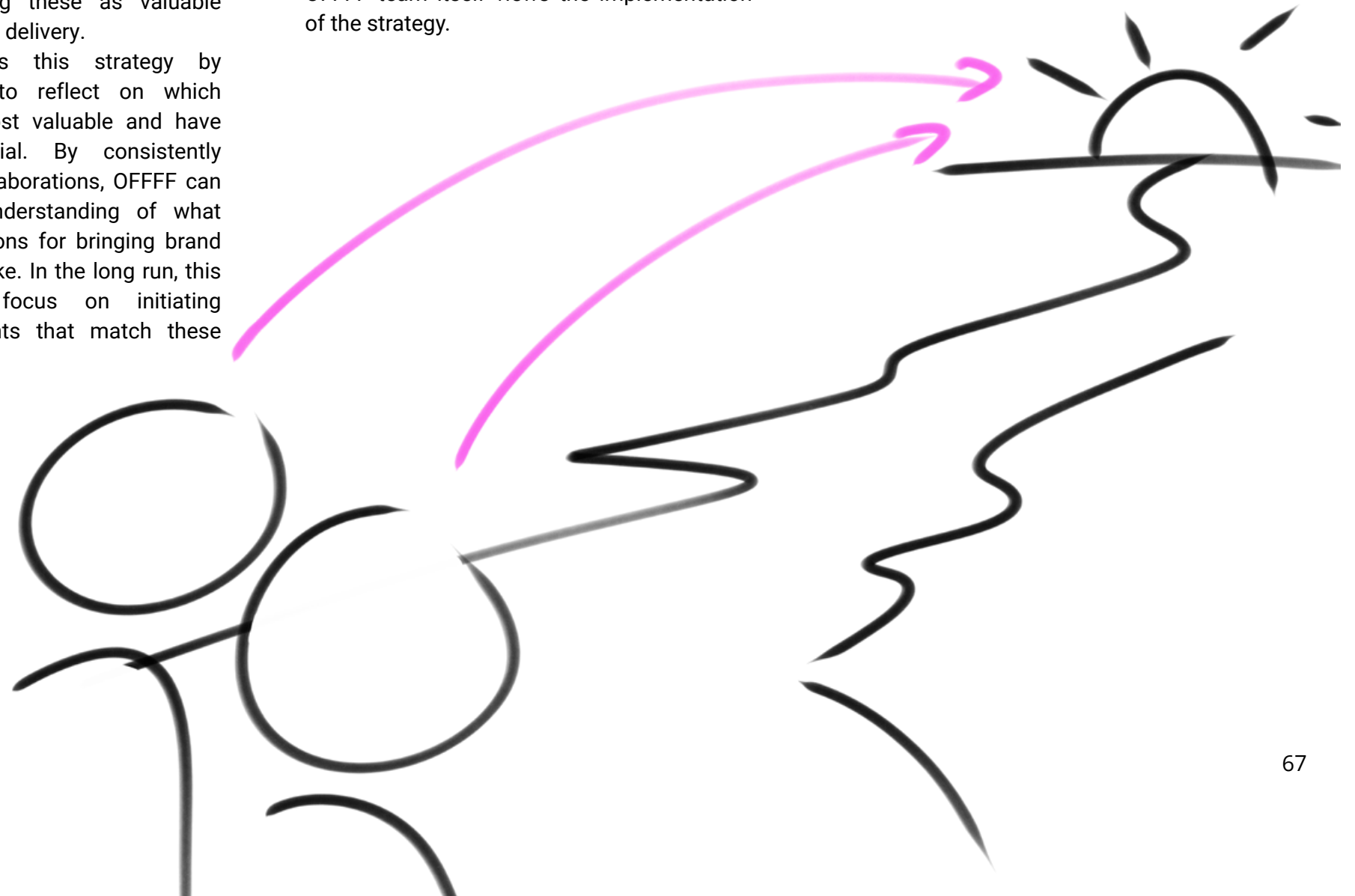
IS THE DESIGN DESIRABLE FOR OFFFF?

The design went through multiple feedback rounds with the OFFFF team to ensure that it aligns with their needs. During these iterations, it became clear that the initial design was still too abstract and theoretical. The final design therefore includes several practical interventions that enable OFFFF to apply the strategy in practice.

These interventions are currently conceptual, meaning that their effectiveness will become clearer over time as they are applied in real projects. This approach aligns with how the OFFFF team itself views the implementation of the strategy.

"The workshop templates are a good start for letting the client to understand. when we tryout these concepts in practice, we will discover what works well and what needs improvement."

– Creative Director, OFFFF



RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPLORING DIFFERENT CLIENT TYPES AND TAILORED INTERVENTIONS

During this research, I noticed that different types of clients of OFFFF often face similar challenges and circumstances. Based on the interviews and analysis, it became clear that clients that operate within similar contexts, often have comparable needs when it comes to bringing their brand identity to life. In this research, I was able to identify several types of clients within OFFFF's portfolio, such as start-ups, established businesses, hospitality sector companies, and retail brands.

Clients within the same category often experience similar factors that influence how they work with their brand identity. For example, start-ups often need to anticipate uncertainties such as production delays, development changes, or fluctuating budgets. Because their organisations are still developing, priorities can change quickly and branding decisions often have to adapt to these circumstances. Businesses in the hospitality sector, on the other hand, frequently need to update their communication and content in order to keep customers engaged. This can include organising events, updating menus, or creating new experiences for customers. Retail brands may face different challenges again, such as keeping their product offering and communication relevant in a competitive market.

Based on these observations, it would be interesting for OFFFF to further explore whether clear patterns can be identified among their clients.

This could allow OFFFF to tailor their support more specifically to different types of clients. In this research project, the strategy and interventions were designed to be applicable to a broad range of clients. However, certain interventions may work better for some types of clients than for others.

Due to time limitations, it was not possible within this research to further test these assumptions. The workshop templates and other interventions developed in this project are currently still conceptual. It would therefore be valuable for OFFFF to test these interventions in practice and further develop them based on their experiences with different types of clients.

Figure 63 shows how, for the different identified client types, different check-in questions may be relevant based on the findings from the interviews conducted in this research.



Figure 63: Questions fit to different types of identified client types with similar needs and circumstances

CONCLUSION

This thesis started with two research questions (RQ) mentioned in chapter 1.3. The first question stated:

RQ1: WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRANDS THAT TRULY ACHIEVE RESULTS FROM THEIR NEW IDENTITY AND BRANDS WHERE IT GRADUALLY LOSES MOMENTUM?

After conducting this research, it can be concluded that the difference between brands that achieve results from their new identity and those that lose momentum lies in whether clients take ownership of living the brand identity. This implies a correlation to the willingness of the client to truly understand what the brand identity represents and to feel connected to it.

Taking ownership of living the brand identity consists of three key elements: continuous engagement, the internal and external rollout of the brand, and acting upon emerging opportunities.

When clients take ownership, they recognise that achieving results from the brand identity starts internally within the organisation, before it can be effectively expressed externally.

To return to a quote from one of OFFFF's clients observed during the research:

"The brand guide does not need to be presented to everyone in the team during the presentation, because I am the only one who is going to use it." - (In-house Marketeer, OFFFF client)

This kind of attitude towards the new brand identity results in the brand identity not being lived within the organisation, causing it to lose momentum as the organisation does not consistently engage with it.

The research shows that, over time, the brand identity increasingly becomes seen as an external tool for brand activation, for example in the creation of content. Branding activities are then often outsourced to cheaper parties, such as in-house marketers with some design experience or freelancers on platforms like Fiverr.

However, if these new parties do not truly live the brand and are not aware of its underlying values, the activation of the brand identity gradually becomes flattened over time.

Therefore, what is needed is for OFFFF to find a way to help clients understand what it means to live their brand. RQ2 elaborates on how this can be achieved.

RQ2: HOW CAN OFFFF, AS AN AGENCY, PLAY A MORE STRUCTURAL AND IMPACTFUL ROLE IN THAT PROCESS?

Since OFFFF wants to support clients in taking ownership of living the brand identity, rather than taking full ownership of this process themselves, OFFFF can play a more structural and meaningful role by supporting clients in understanding what it means to live their brand.

The TAKE OFFFF strategy provides a structure for how to approach the period after delivery. The strategy offers tools that OFFFF can use to deepen the client's understanding of what it means to bring their new brand identity to life and how this can be achieved by stimulating knowledge integration.

Roadmap: Provides an overview of the strategy and what OFFFF aims to achieve.

Playbook: Enables OFFFF to create a shared vision with the client on how their client's new brand identity can be brought to life.

Card deck: Helps OFFFF respond to emerging opportunities and identify new business possibilities within ongoing collaborations.

Reflection matrix: Helps OFFFF reflect on their collaborations and decide whether to remain engaged with the client or shift their priority to other projects.

The designed strategy helps OFFFF work towards a future in which they aim for long-term, valuable client collaborations in a structured and motivated way.

ELABORATING ON PROJECT FIT WITHIN THE IDE DOMAIN

At the beginning of this report (see chapter 1.3.1), the IDE domain was introduced (Figure 64) and the potential fit of this project within that domain was discussed. Through conducting this research, new insights and confirmations regarding this fit were obtained. This section further elaborates on these insights.

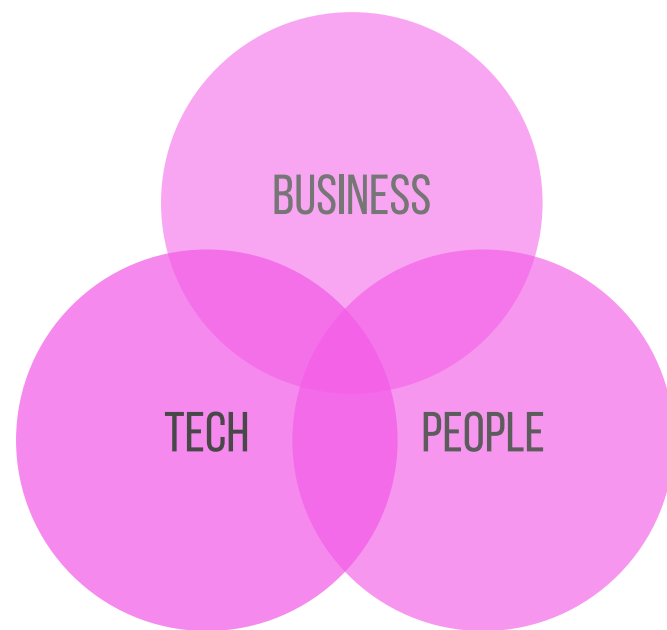


Figure 64: The IDE domain represented through the intersection of technology, people, and business perspectives.

Tech

The rise of technology and AI influences this project. As technological developments accelerate, more tools become available that allow clients to create brand identities themselves. This development affects the business model of branding agencies, not only impacting OFFFF but the entire creative industry.

In one of the first interviews I conducted, a client asked me: “Don’t you think you will be replaced as a designer by AI?” At that moment, I did not really know how to answer that question. However, after completing this project, I have come to realise that the creative industry must learn to balance and anticipate to the rise of technology.

AI does not bring people together by itself, but it can support creative processes by making them more efficient through data processing and automation.

However, I do not believe that the creative industry will simply be replaced by AI if it continues to anticipate to technological developments. Human designers remain necessary to maintain direction within the design process, interpret meaning, and ensure that creative work does not become flattened or generic.

Business

The business perspective plays an important role in this project. Both OFFFF and their clients make decisions based on business considerations. OFFFF often prioritises new or ongoing projects over checking in on finished collaborations, as maintaining a steady flow of work is important for financial stability.

Clients also make decisions from a business perspective, not only based on financial aspects but also on available capacity, such as time, staff, and budget. As a result, branding is not always the main priority within organisations once the initial brand identity has been delivered.

An important aspect within this project is that many of OFFFF’s clients operate in the hospitality and retail sectors. These are dynamic and highly competitive markets in which businesses constantly need to adapt in order to stay relevant.

At the same time, these dynamics are not unique to OFFFF, but can be observed more broadly across creative agencies and their clients. In many creative collaborations, both parties continuously balance creative ambitions with business pressures. Agencies aim to deliver high-quality creative work while also maintaining financial stability through ongoing projects. Clients, on the other hand, must balance investments in branding with other organisational priorities such as operations, staffing, and growth.

People

People are central to this project. The human connection between branding agencies and their clients enables knowledge integration through collaboration and the sharing of perspectives. Not only OFFFF and their clients are involved; the created brand identity ultimately also needs to resonate with the client’s customers.

Within the creative sector, people can make or break collaborations. During the interviews conducted for this research, it was frequently emphasised that the strong dynamic between OFFFF and their clients contributed to the positive experience of the collaboration. This was also often mentioned as a reason why clients returned to OFFFF to start new projects.

This once again highlights that the creative industry is shaped by people and the collaborations between them. Ultimately, it is people within organisations who determine whether a brand identity is truly lived in practice.

PROCESS EVALUATION

WHAT DID I LEARN FROM THIS PROJECT

I look back on this project with a sense of satisfaction. At the start of the project, I formulated my motivation and personal ambitions in my approved project brief (Appendix F), as shown in Figure 65. Reflecting on these ambitions now allows me to evaluate how this project has contributed to my development.

During this project, I had the opportunity to closely observe how a branding studio such as OFFFF operates. It was inspiring to see how they approach branding projects and collaborate with their clients in practice.

I was also given the opportunity to conduct interviews with several of their clients. These interviews provided valuable insights into how clients perceive branding and how they experience the implementation of a new brand identity. Over time, I became more confident in conducting qualitative interviews and learned how to guide conversations in a way that generates meaningful insights.

This project also deepened my understanding of branding and brand identity. At the beginning of the project, I had only limited knowledge of this field.

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 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. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.

(200 words max)

For my graduation project I chose to collaborate with a small design studio because I want to experience what it is like to work in a creative and dynamic environment where ideas can quickly be tested and developed.

I am curious to learn how such an agency operates in practice, balancing creativity with strategy, and how close collaboration with clients shapes the outcomes of a project. Working with clients particularly appeals to me.

During my bachelor, I followed the minor Connected Creativity, which taught me the value of co-creation and dialogue in the design process.

This project offers me the opportunity to build further on that interest by engaging directly with clients and stakeholders, and by exploring how design can support long-term relationships.

Finally, I am especially intrigued by the field of branding. The process of creating and activating a brand identity often feels abstract, and I am motivated to make this process more tangible—both for myself as a designer and for the clients who will bring the brand to life.

Figure 65: Approved project brief

WHAT WOULD I DO DIFFERENTLY IF I COULD DO IT OVER AGAIN?

Looking back on the project, one important lesson I learned is the value of regularly reflecting on the initial research question. During the project, Maarten often asked me: “What was the initial research question you are designing for?” This question helped me realise that at certain moments in the process I had drifted away from the original focus of the project. At the same time, I also learned that exploring different directions is part of the creative design process. However, more frequent reflection on the research question could have helped me maintain a clearer direction throughout the project.

If I had more time, I would have liked to test the workshop templates during an actual brand guide delivery session with a client. This would have provided valuable insights into how the interventions function in practice, which elements work well, and which aspects require further improvement.

Another important insight for me relates to the way I documented and structured my research process. During the project, I spent a significant amount of time writing my findings in Google Docs. However, this did not always help me to better understand the connections between my findings. When I started visualising insights through figures, diagrams, and drawings, the research process became much clearer to me. Visualising the information helped me see relationships between insights and allowed me to make stronger connections within the project. In hindsight, I would therefore have started visualising my findings earlier in the process. Overall, this reflection helped me realise that regularly revisiting the research question and actively visualising insights can significantly support the design process.

LEARNING POINTS

1. Balancing theoretical grounding and practical application is essential for the desirability of the project outcome.
2. Moving too quickly from the analysis phase into the design phase can lead to insufficient grounding of design decisions, resulting in getting stuck and the need to revise the design direction later on.
3. Regular reflection is essential to maintain focus, as returning to the initial research question prevents drifting from the core objective.

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APPENDIX A:

EXAMPLE OF CONDUCTED CODING IN ATLAS.TI

Ja.

RJ
Ruben de Jongh 1:00
En toen zag je dat heel veel services aan projecten waren.
Echt nog OK? Echt een vraagstuk. Er is een huidige service van de overheid bijvoorbeeld.
En dan ga je onderzoek doen en kwalitatief onderzoek. Vaak stond wat kwantitatief erbij.
En dan maak je een een s?
A is journey bijvoorbeeld. Dan ga je Samen met de klant dan brainstorm over hoe wat We kunnen verbeteren aan de service.
En dan leverde we een ideale.
Klantreis op.
Met wat concepten gedetailleerd erbij van hoe je dat, hoe je dat zou moeten implementeren.
En dan was het vaak, oké?
Nou, hier heb je het resultaat succes ermee en dan was het altijd Maar de vraag of er iets gedaan mee gaat worden. Had je daar als coach ook helemaal geen?
Ja invloed meer op, zeker als er geen vervolgproject op zat of zo.

KN
Kirsten Neuteboom 1:56
Ja.

RJ
Ruben de Jongh 1:58
Terwijl vergeleken met 6 jaar geleden en nu.
Zijn we veel vaker wat lange termijn projecten aan het doen en met een combinatie van service, design en UX.

KN
Kirsten Neuteboom 2:11

3:6 En toen zag je dat heel veel servic...

- ◆ acknowledgement of the ...lementation gap problem

3:11 A...

- ◆ align, activate and adopt

3:10 Met wat...

- ◆ lack of activation after delivery

3:1...

- ◆ longterm client relationship
- ◆ shift in work approach agency
- ◆ shift to long term projects

Figure A1: example of conducted coding in Atlas.TI before transferring the codes to Miro board for GTM

APPENDIX B:

EXPLORATIVE INTERVIEW CODING

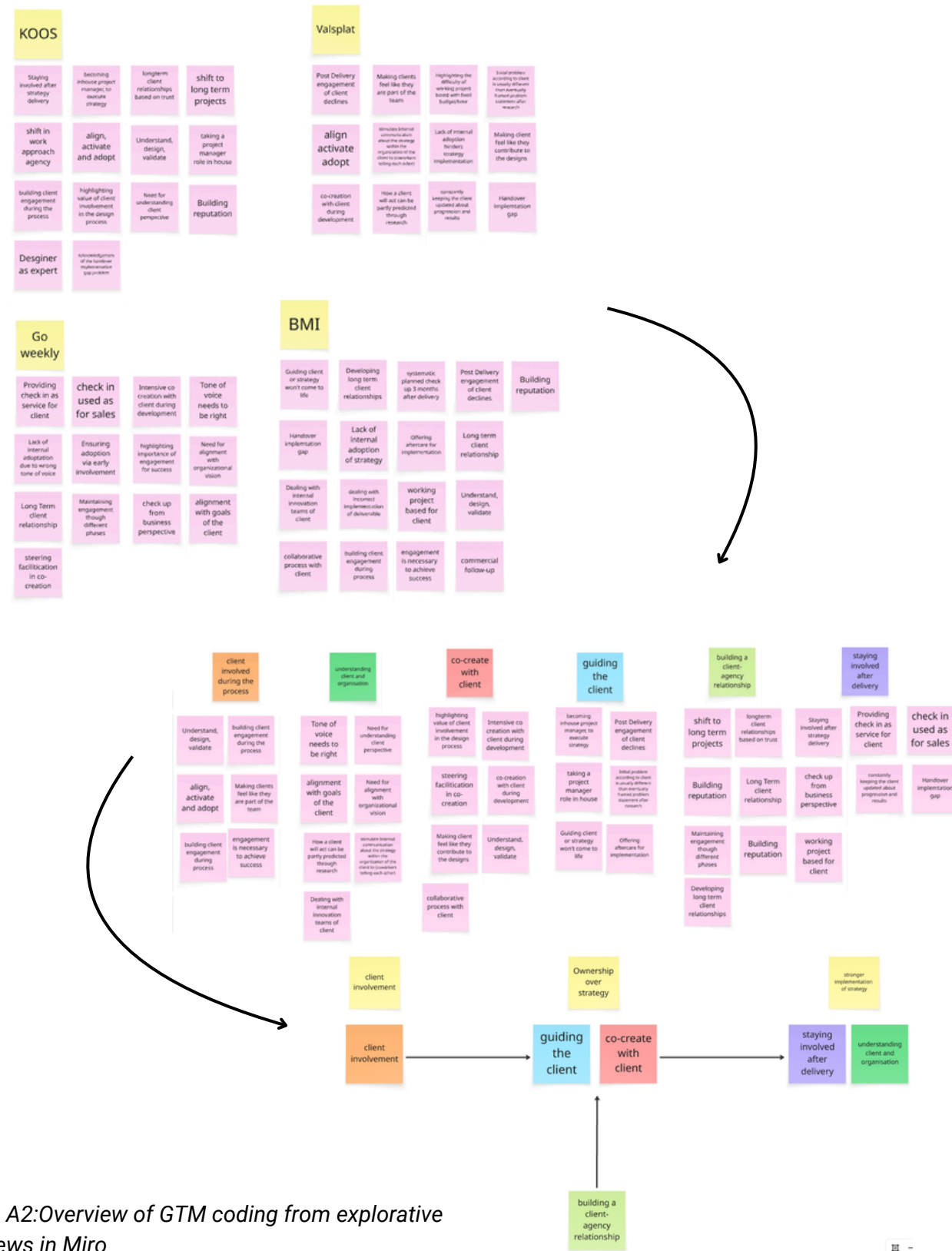


Figure A2: Overview of GTM coding from explorative interviews in Miro

APPENDIX C:

CLIENT INTERVIEW CODING



Figure A3: Overview of GTM coding of client interviews in Miro

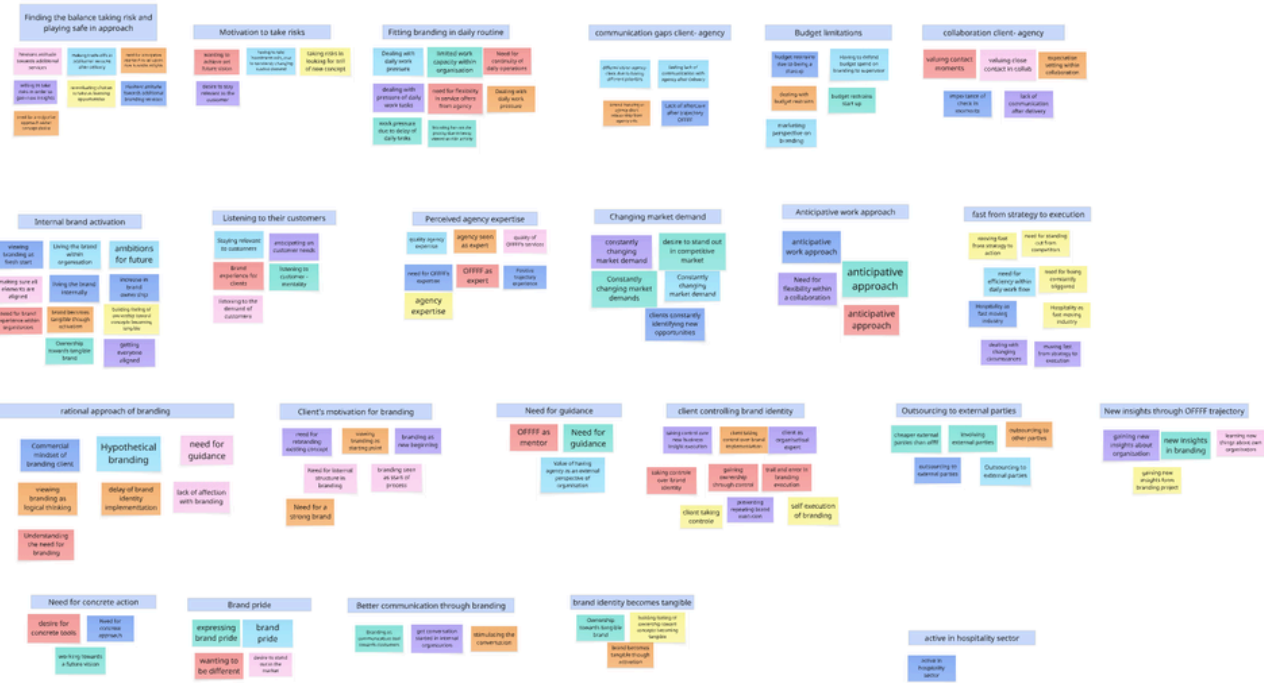


Figure A4: Overview of the conducted categories of client interviews

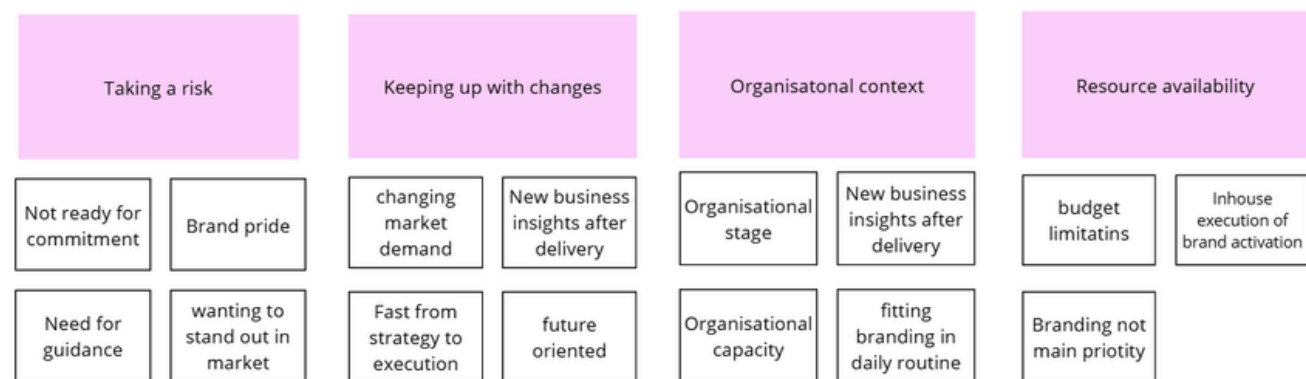


Figure A5: Overview of the concepts

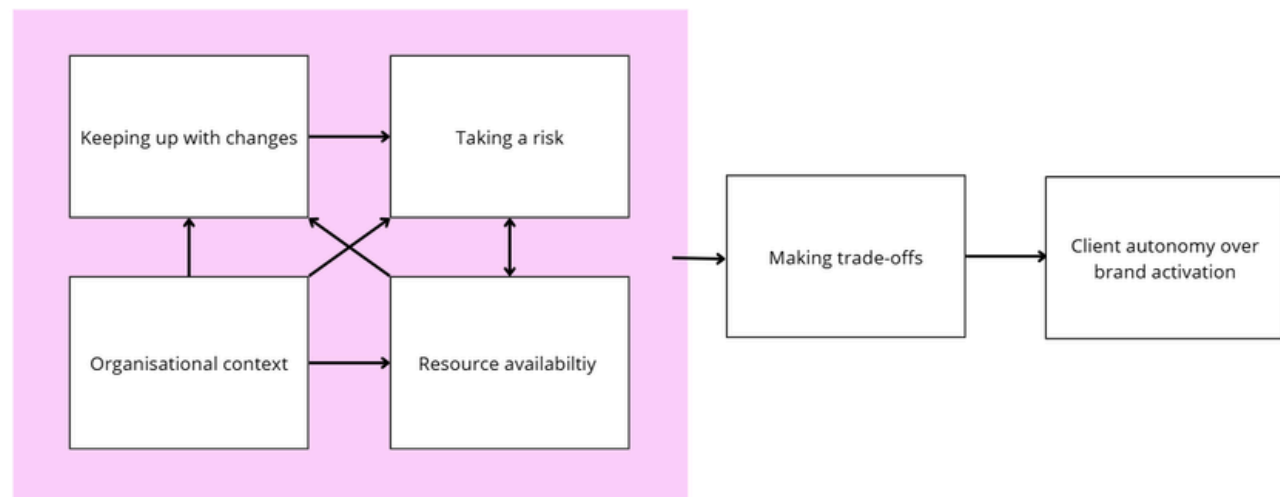


Figure A6: Axial coding of the concepts

APPENDIX D: OFFFF INTERVIEW CODING

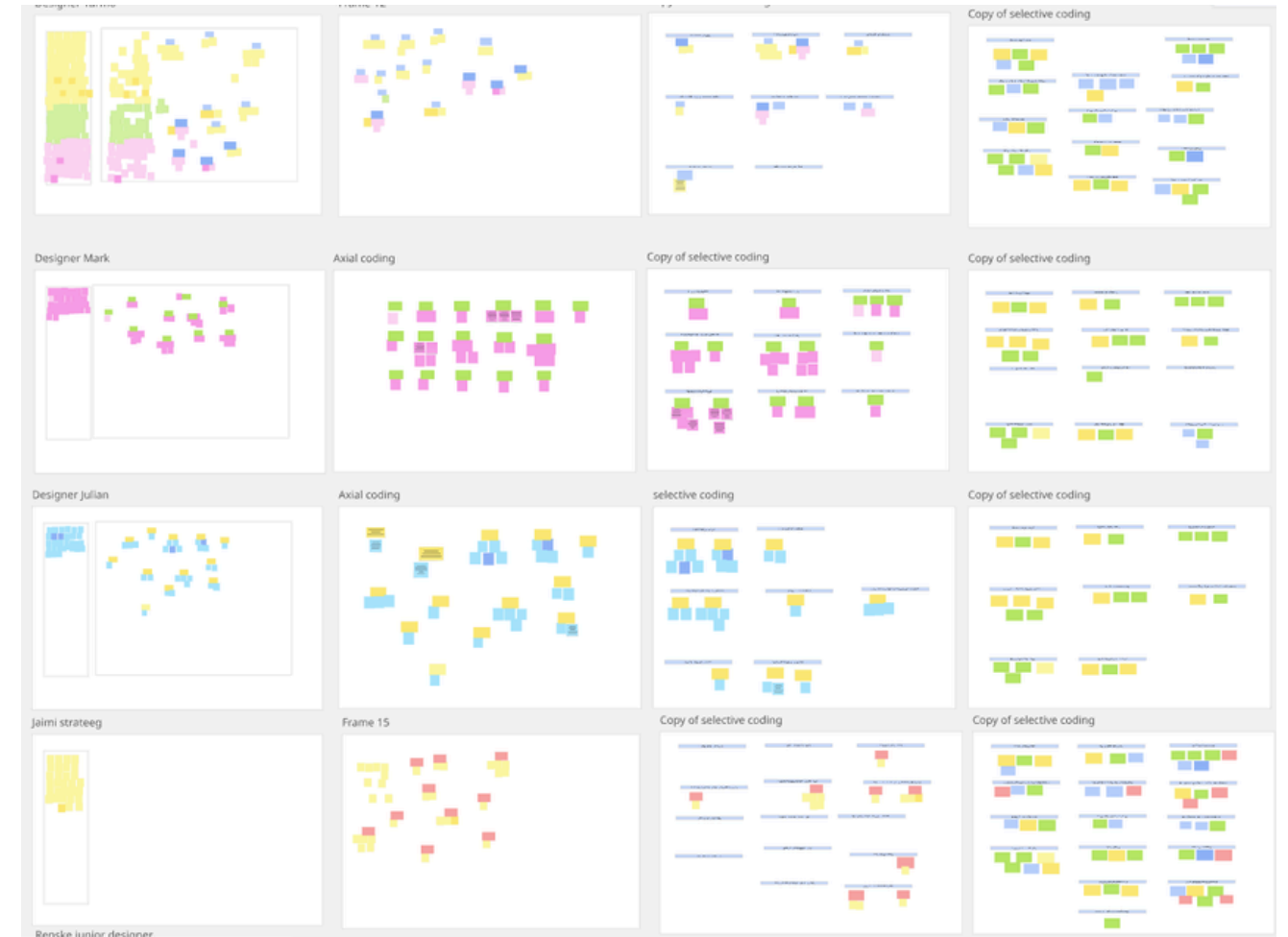


Figure A7: Overview GTM coding of interviews with team members of OFFFF

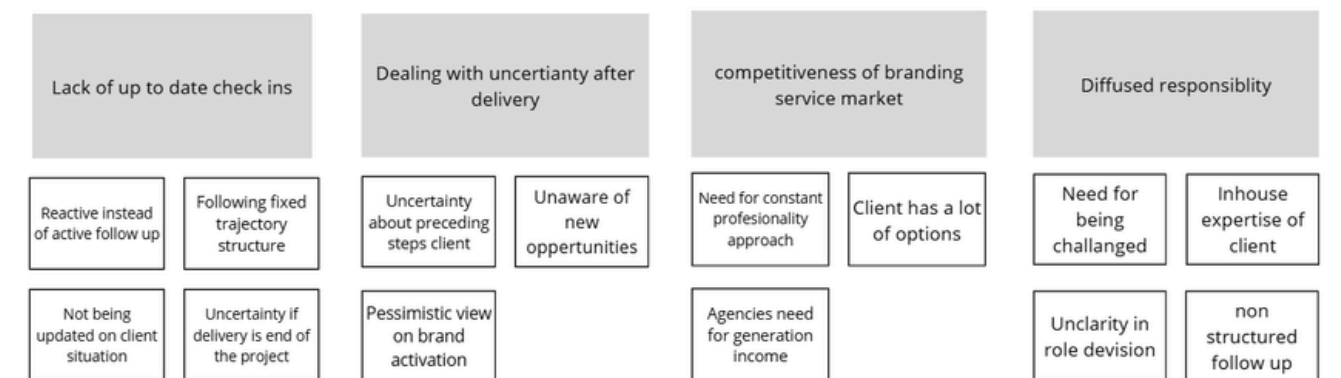


Figure A8: Overview of concepts from interviews with team members of OFFFF

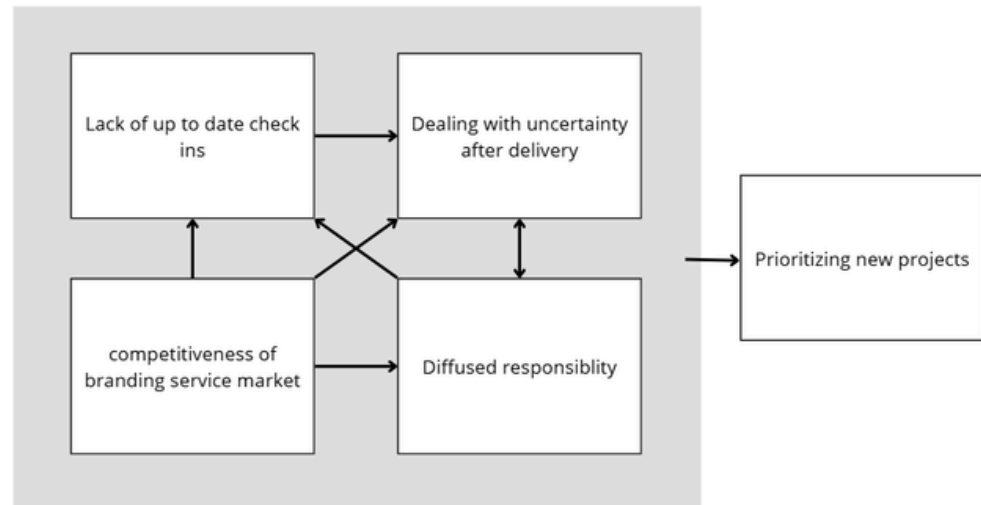


Figure A9: Axial coding

APPENDIX E:

VALUE PROPOSITION CANVAS FROM MAPPING SESSION



Figure A10: Result of the Value Proposition Canvas during the conducted mapping session with team OFFFF

APPENDIX F:

APPROVED PROJECT BRIEF

DESIGN FOR our future TU Delft

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name student Kirsten Neuteboom Student number 5,003,849

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT
Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title Extending Brand Identity Implementation: Exploring the Post-Delivery Phase

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.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; 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)

These days, a product or service is almost irrelevant without a brand (Mindrut et al., 2015). This makes the creation of a strong brand identity essential. Branding studios, such as OFFFF, co-create identities with their clients through workshops that redefine a company's core values and strategic perspective.

The result is a coherent and suitable brand identity, which is eventually handed over to the client. However, research shows that brand identity should not be treated as a one-off deliverable, but as a continuous and iterative process that requires ongoing attention (Beverland, 2018). A brand project must be effectively managed across all phases, including activation and tracking, to achieve meaningful outcomes. Designers are familiar with the Double Diamond approach, yet even this framework ends at delivery. Service design agency KOOS has adapted this into the "Double Diamond, Double Donut" approach, where after delivery the process continues into a creation and scaling phase by actively involving clients and stakeholders.

Building on this, and combining it with Beverlands (2018) 8 Steps of Brand Building, this project explores the opportunities in the post-delivery phase of brand identity projects, where long-term value and activation can be secured.

→ space available for images / figures on next page

Figure A11: Project brief

DESIGN FOR our future TU Delft

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

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)

Compared to other agencies that provide strategic guidance, OFFFF's process often stops after delivery. While competitors such as Koos and Business Models Inc. continue to track implementation and sometimes position themselves as in-house project managers to guide and educate organizations, OFFFF's clients are often left without structured aftercare. As a result, even though a strong brand identity is created, the brand does not always come to life within the client organization.

Internally, OFFFF emphasizes the importance of consistency. Yet, branding implementation is not linear but iterative. Adoption requires ongoing involvement, guidance, and adaptation—elements that are not structurally embedded in the current delivery model.

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 (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Design an intervention to enable the iterative activation of brand identity, with branding agencies and their clients, in the context of post-delivery brand identity projects.

Then 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)

The research phase includes a literature review, case analysis of other branding agencies, and qualitative interviews with former and potential clients of OFFFF to uncover their needs and capabilities.

Insights will be synthesized using thematic analysis and visual mapping tools (e.g., stakeholder maps, journey maps). In the design phase, concepts for interventions—such as activation roadmaps, aftercare formats, and co-creation workshops—will be generated through ideation and prototyping.

These concepts will be iteratively refined with feedback from OFFFF and client stakeholders. The validation phase involves pilot testing one or more interventions and evaluating their adoption potential, usability, and business fit. The expected outcome is a validated framework that extends brand identity delivery into an iterative process and supports effective brand activation.

Project planning and key moments

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 a **kick-off meeting**, **mid-term evaluation meeting**, **green light meeting** and **graduation 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).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting	<u>16 Sep 2025</u>
Mid-term evaluation	<u>17 Nov 2025</u>
Green light meeting	<u>29 Jan 2026</u>
Graduation ceremony	<u>18 Feb 2026</u>

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
For how many project weeks	
Number of project days per week	

Comments:
1 day of on 20 okt
2 weeks off during christmas break (22 dec-2 jan)

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 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. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.
(200 words max)

For my graduation project I chose to collaborate with a small design studio because I want to experience what it is like to work in a creative and dynamic environment where ideas can quickly be tested and developed. I am curious to learn how such an agency operates in practice, balancing creativity with strategy, and how close collaboration with clients shapes the outcomes of a project. Working with clients particularly appeals to me.

During my bachelor, I followed the minor Connected Creativity, which taught me the value of co-creation and dialogue in the design process. This project offers me the opportunity to build further on that interest by engaging directly with clients and stakeholders, and by exploring how design can support long-term relationships.

Finally, I am especially intrigued by the field of branding. The process of creating and activating a brand identity often feels abstract, and I am motivated to make this process more tangible—both for myself as a designer and for the clients who will bring the brand to life.

