

Concept Document

1. Purpose of This Concept Document

This concept document synthesizes the outcomes of Stage 1 (Empathize), Stage 2 (Define), and Stage 3 (Ideate) of the Design Thinking process into a coherent product concept.

Rather than introducing new research or ideas, this document explains how the existing ChessPlatform concept aligns with the identified user needs, problems, and ideation outcomes. It connects research insights directly to the platform's core functionalities and overall vision.

2. Background and Research Foundation

2.1 Research Context

The concept is grounded in qualitative, human-centered research conducted with Troyan, a former high-school professional chess player, supported by secondary research and observational insights into online chess communities.

The research revealed that while chess is inherently social, most existing platforms prioritize gameplay and performance over meaningful interaction, emotional expression, and community-building.

3. Key Insights from Stage 1: Empathize

The following user insights informed the platform concept:

- Chess players often feel socially isolated despite frequent play
- Existing chess platforms emphasize ratings and outcomes, not people
- Players want to share ideas, opinions, and experiences, not just results
- Toxic or dismissive behavior discourages participation
- Chess-related discussion is fragmented across platforms not designed for it

These insights highlight the need for a chess-focused space that supports social interaction, expression, and community identity.

4. Problem Definition from Stage 2: Define

Based on synthesized research, the core problem was defined as:

Chess players lack a socially meaningful environment that supports emotional expression, learning, and identity, resulting in isolation within a fundamentally social game.

This problem framing guided all concept-level decisions, ensuring the platform addresses root causes rather than surface-level symptoms.

5. Concept Vision

ChessPlatform is conceived as a social-first chess community where players can:

- Express ideas and opinions about chess
- Engage in discussion and reflection

- Build identity beyond ratings
- Interact safely and meaningfully with others

The platform complements chess gameplay rather than replacing it, focusing on the social and communicative layers of chess culture.

6. Core Concept Pillars (Derived from Stage 3: Ideate)

The platform concept is structured around five core pillars, each derived from ideation clusters.

6.1 Identity Beyond Rating

ChessPlatform emphasizes user identity through profiles, authored content, and participation rather than solely through performance metrics.

- User profiles present personal information and activity
- Contribution (articles, comments, streams) forms a visible identity

This supports the user need to be seen as a person, not just a rating.

6.2 Social Learning and Knowledge Sharing

The platform enables users to:

- Write and publish chess-related articles
- Comment on articles and discuss ideas
- Learn through shared perspectives rather than top-down instruction

This aligns with research showing that chess learning is most meaningful when it is social and reflective.

6.3 Safe and Moderated Interaction

Research identified psychological safety as a critical unmet need.

ChessPlatform addresses this through:

- Comment and article reporting mechanisms
- Clear moderation signals
- User-level accountability through profiles

These features aim to reduce toxicity and encourage respectful participation.

6.4 Community Presence and Real-Time Interaction

Beyond static content, the platform supports:

- Live streams
- Real-time chat
- Spectating ongoing activity

This creates a sense of shared presence, reinforcing community rather than isolated consumption.

6.5 Long-Term Engagement and Belonging

By enabling recurring interaction—through articles, comments, profiles, and streams—the platform supports:

- Ongoing relationships

- Familiarity among users
- A persistent sense of belonging

This directly addresses the problem of one-off, transactional interactions common in chess platforms.

7. Core Functionalities and Their Conceptual Justification

| Functionality | Conceptual Rationale |
|----------------------------|---|
| User accounts & profiles | Support identity and accountability |
| Article creation & editing | Enable expression, reflection, and contribution |
| Commenting system | Facilitate dialogue and social learning |
| Reporting system | Maintain psychological safety |
| Live streaming | Create real-time community presence |
| Chat | Enable informal, human interaction |
| Spectating | Encourage shared experiences |

Each function directly maps back to a validated user need identified in earlier stages.

8. Relationship to the Design Thinking Process

- Empathize: Identified emotional, social, and cultural gaps in chess communities
- Define: Framed the lack of meaningful social environments as the core problem
- Ideate: Explored identity, learning, safety, and connection as solution directions

ChessPlatform represents a conceptual convergence of these stages, without claiming finality or perfection.

9. Scope and Intentional Limitations

This concept intentionally:

- Does not focus on chess gameplay mechanics
- Does not attempt to replace existing play platforms
- Prioritizes social value over competitive optimization

These limitations are deliberate, ensuring clarity of purpose and alignment with user research.

10. Conclusion

ChessPlatform is a conceptually research-driven response to the social and emotional needs of chess players. Rooted in professional UX research frameworks and real user insights, it reframes chess platforms as communities, not just competitive arenas.

By aligning core functionalities with validated user needs, the platform concept demonstrates how research-informed design can create meaningful, human-centered digital spaces within established domains such as chess.