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A Dual-Perspective Case Study: Analysing the Strategic-Operational
Disconnect in Digital Procurement Adoption within a Multinational
FMCG Organisation

Cranfield School of Management
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Supervisor: Professor Miying Yang
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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of MSc Management

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Academic Integrity Declaration

I declare that:

- the thesis submitted has been written by me alone.
- the thesis submitted has not been previously submitted to this university or any other.
- that all content, including primary and/or secondary data, is true to the best of my knowledge.
- that all quotations and references have been duly acknowledged according to the requirements of academic research.

I understand that to knowingly submit work in violation of the above statement will be considered by examiners as academic misconduct.

Please refer to [Appendix A](#) for CURES ethical approval reference.

Abstract

Digital Transformation in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector is often undermined by non-technical challenges, creating a persistent “strategic-operational” disconnect where investments in procurement technology fail to achieve intended value due to misalignment between the leadership’s strategic intent and user adoption. Current literature usually treats these macro (organisational) and micro (user) adoption challenges in isolation, failing to capture the complexities existing in the socio-technical reality.

This study employs an in-depth, single-case study design within a multinational FMCG corporation headquartered in London, utilising a dual-perspective qualitative methodology, involving semi-structured interviews with organisational leaders and end users. The data was collected using a comprehensive theoretical framework that covers individual-level theories such as Technology Acceptance Model and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, and organisational-level theories such as Diffusion of Innovations, Resource-Based View and Socio-Technical Systems.

The findings confirmed a fundamental disconnect: while leaders prioritised strategic drivers such as automation and compliance in procurement, user adoption was actively hindered by micro-level issues covering poor usability and conditional utility. This “resistance” was found to be a rational response to a cumbersome tool than mere behavioural inertia, challenging the leadership’s perception of an entrenched “culture of convenience” amongst users. Data triangulation confirms that this disconnect demonstrates a breakdown of the socio-technical system.

The study concludes that overall strategic value from a new procurement technology is unattainable unless technology design and implementation in procurement are strongly driven by the tangible, effortless utility for the end-user. This work contributes a holistic, empirically grounded analysis, extending existing adoption theories by providing a multi-level view essential for effective change management to improve adoption.

Keywords: *Technology Adoption, Digital Transformation, Digital Procurement, Leadership Perspective, User Perspective, Change Management, User Resistance, Automation, Compliance, Technology Acceptance Model, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, Diffusion of Innovation, Technology-Organisation-Environment framework, Resource-Based View, Dynamic Capability, Institutional Theory, Sociotechnical Systems Theory and Digital Divide Theory*

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List of Abbreviations

DT	Digital Transformation
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
AI	Artificial Intelligence
IoT	Internet of Things
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
ML	Machine Learning
S2P	Source-to-Pay
RPA	Robotic Process Automation
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
DOI	Diffusion of Innovation
TOE	Technology-Organisation-Environment
RBV	Resource-Based View
DC	Dynamic Capability
IT	Institutional Theory
STS	Socio-Technical Theory
CMT	Change Management Theory
DDT	Digital Divide Theory
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ROI	Return on Investment
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
CSRD	Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive
EU	European Union
RFQ	Request for Quotation
RQ	Research Questions

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Digital Transformation (DT) is quickly reshaping how businesses, particularly in the FMCG sector, operate. Faced with strong global competition and evolving consumer demands, FMCG firms are heavily investing in technology, transforming the procurement function from a back-office operation into a key strategic area for innovation (Cukier, 2025). However, successful implementation is more of a complex socio-technical challenge than technicalities, often hindered by organisational resistance and cultural inertia.

This study investigates the intersection of technology, strategy, and human behaviour within a multinational FMCG corporation headquartered in London.

The organisation is a market leader, operating across 31 markets, for a portfolio of beverage categories including soft drinks, energy drinks and ready-to-drink coffee. The procurement function, due to strong influence on modernising supply chains, has been identified by the leadership as a key strategic area for digital investments. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, the organisation will be referred to, throughout this thesis, simply as “host organisation” or “organisation”.

1.2 The Research Problem

The central problem is the fundamental disconnect between leadership intent and user adoption. The organisation has invested heavily in a new digital tool; yet, its benefits are not completely realised due to misalignment between leadership and user expectations.

While leaders focus on macro-level goals like efficiency and compliance, users are concerned with micro-level utility, scoring the tool by its usability and convenience. This gap creates a challenge where leaders perceive a “culture of

convenience” amongst users as a barrier, while users experience fundamental issues with functionality and support. This prevents the organisation from unlocking the technology’s strategic potential and achieving long-term objectives.

1.3 Research Gap Identified

A significant gap exists in academic literature on technology adoption in procurement which often isolates the strategic, high-level perspective from the granular, end-user experience, rarely synthesising both viewpoints within a single study. Consequently, the resulting studies on adoption failure are often partial or contradictory, failing to capture many socio-technical elements.

This study addresses this deficiency by conducting a dual-perspective qualitative investigation into the adoption of a recently implemented “autonomous sourcing tool” using proven individual-level theories (TAM, UTAUT) to analyse user perspectives and organisational-level theories (TOE, DOI, RBV, DC, IT and STS) to analyse organisational perspectives.

These two viewpoints are then triangulated to provide a holistic and actionable diagnosis of the adoption challenges.

1.4 Research Significance

This study holds practical and academic significance. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for the host organisation, helping identify root causes of low adoption of an autonomous sourcing tool and refining their approach to ensure that digital investments yield intended returns.

Academically, the study contributes to the knowledge pool by addressing a significant gap. By systematically analysing leadership and user perspectives within a single case study, this work offers a more holistic and nuanced understanding of digital transformation complexities in procurement.

1.5 Research Aim, Question and Objectives

The research aim is to critically investigate factors influencing adoption of an autonomous sourcing tool by comparing user and leader perspectives within a multinational FMCG corporation by asking *“How does the strategic-operational disconnect between leader’s macro-level goals and user’s micro-level utility concerns hinder successful adoption of an autonomous sourcing tool within an FMCG multinational corporation?”*

The objectives are to analyse end-user perceptions of the tool’s usability, functionality and support using individual-level adoption theories, analyse leadership’s strategic goals, drivers and barriers to adoption using organisational-level adoption theories, perform data triangulation to compare findings from both user and leadership perspectives, and to contextualise findings by triangulating them with relevant secondary data from the industry and organisation.

1.6 Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured into six main chapters as outlined in the chart below;

Introduction: Chapter 1 provides the introduction, outlining the research problem, its significance, and the research objectives

Literature Review: Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive literature review, detailing the theoretical foundations and existing research on technology adoption

Methodology: Chapter 3 outlines the methodology, including the research design, data collection, and analysis

Results: Chapter 4 presents the findings from the thematic analysis and data triangulation

Discussions: Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings, provides recommendations, and outlines how the findings support, extend, or contradict existing theories

Conclusion: Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarising the key findings, discussing the research's limitations, and suggesting areas for future work

Figure 1-1 Visualisation of thesis structure (author)

2. Literature Review

This chapter establishes the existing research foundation by developing a logical flow from a broader context covering definitions, frameworks and models, narrowing to the FMCG sector and evolution of procurement through Source-to-pay (S2P) digitalisation and enabling technologies.

The review then analyses the proven theoretical foundations used in this study, concluding with a synthesis of drivers, barriers and opportunities that serve as an empirical benchmark for insights collected.

2.1. Broad Understanding and Contextual Literature

2.1.1 Digital transformation: Definitions, Frameworks, and Maturity Models

DT is a strategic process that uses technology to fundamentally change an organisation's business model and value proposition, developing an adaptable and scalable business for competitive advantage (Gong & Ribiere, 2020; Mikalef & Parmiggiani, 2022; Vial, 2019; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Schallmo & Williams, 2018). The critical academic challenge is to correctly distinguish DT from digitisation and digitalisation, as DT alone re-envision the entire business.

This strategic change is guided by DT frameworks, which provide conceptual roadmaps to navigate technological change (Amoah et al., 2021; Kozarkiewicz, 2020; Nguyen Thi Xuan Hoa & Tuyen, 2021; Hanelt et al., 2021; Steinlechner et al., 2021; Lichtenthaler, 2021; Coundouris, 2021), and digital maturity models, which assess an organisation's readiness and progress across dimensions like culture, strategy and technological capabilities (Wallner, 2016; Anderson & William, 2018; Peter, 2017; Gimpel et al., 2018; Rogers, 2016; Berghaus et al., 2017). This dual approach provides a guide and means of assessment. However, a consistent observation remains that many models prioritise technological/process dimensions over organisational culture.

A detailed breakdown of relevant strategic frameworks and digital maturity models can be found in [Appendix B](#).

2.1.2 Digital Transformation in the FMCG sector

Facing intense competition and variable demand, the FMCG industry is undergoing rapid DT. This shift, driven by AI, big data and IoT, is essential to building supply chain resilience and gaining a competitive edge through improved visibility and collaboration (Brewis & Strønen, 2021; Tazvivinga & Samuels, 2024).

FMCG organisations are now in a “third-wave of digitisation”, using technology for strategic differentiation and business growth (Rajesh Narayan et al., 2024). Critically, a conflict exists between lengthy, costly ERP modernisation projects and the urgent need for agile DT. A key issue, relevant to this study, is the failure of many applications to scale and deliver anticipated value, often due to being siloed (Smith et al., 2022).

In response, executives are prioritising end-to-end digital innovation over single-process digitisation due to superior results (Haas et al., 2022; Zhou, 2023). To achieve this, organisations are experimenting with technologies like generative AI to improve various functions including supply chains. Success hinges on a value-led approach, developing new talent and creating an AI-enabled digital core to replace legacy systems (Haas et al., 2022; Wright, 2024). This shift requires preparing for significant changes in roles and skills while maintaining high standards of trust and transparency (Haas et al., 2022; Zhou, 2023; Wright, 2024).

2.1.3 Procurement Transformation: Evolution of Strategic Sourcing and Source-to-Pay Digitalisation

Procurement has evolved from a passive, transactional role to a strategic, value adding function due to global supply chain complexities (Cukier, 2025; Martins,

2025; Chan & Owusu, 2022; Paul et al., 2024; Rimkūnienė, 2013). This transition moves beyond the traditional “iron triangle” of cost, quality and time to focus on enhancing net margins and managing risks (Green, 2024; Erriquez et al., 2023). This approach is enabled by technologies such as AI, ML and predictive analytics, leading to a more centre-led, hybrid operating model (Parameswara Rao Tatini, 2025; Shearer, 2025; Bilton, 2023; Ideson, 2024).

The S2P process (*used by host organisation*), spanning from sourcing to payment, is a critical component of this digitalisation which is driven by the need for increased efficiency, speed and accuracy (Jaggaer, 2025; Zycus, 2024; Blank, 2020). By integrating AI, advanced analytics and RPA along with other enterprise systems, digital platforms enhance visibility and enable procurement to transition into a strategic growth enabler (Jaggaer, 2025; Zycus, 2024). However, this transition faces non-technical challenges like organisational silos and change resistance requiring to develop new skills, strong governance and effective change management (Chan & Owusu, 2022; Erriquez et al., 2023).

2.1.4 Digital Technologies in Procurement

DT in procurement relies on emerging technologies to shift from tactical to strategic, enabling automation and predictive analysis (Sayed Mahmoud El-Khouly et al., 2024; Jahani et al., 2021; Günthner, 2021).

Core technologies include AI and ML for spend analysis, Big Data and Predictive Analytics for proactive decision making, and RPA for automating repetitive tasks (Sayed Mahmoud El-Khouly et al., 2024; Günthner, 2021; Cooper, 2024). Additionally, Blockchain and IoT provide end-to-end transparency, while Cloud Computing and System Integration connect partners and improve coordination. The adoption of such technologies help address complex challenges, creating value through improved performance, risk management and supplier collaboration (Jahani et al., 2021; Günthner, 2021; Cooper, 2024).

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

This section, based on the identified research gap, describes relevant technology adoption theories through a dual lens to examine the DT challenges from both individual and organisational perspectives. These theories support the study's research questions as listed in the table below;

Table 2-1 Theoretical foundations across individual, organisational and process of change perspectives

Theoretical Models	Context	Description	Supporting Papers
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis et al., 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Walker and Johnson, 2008)	Individual Acceptance	Explains user behavior based on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.	(IJOA, 2021), (Brandon-Jones & Kauppi, 2018), (Motaung & Sifolo, 2023), (KASMONO et al., 2025), (Luo et al., 2023), (Wamba & Queiroz, 2022), (Alomar, 2017)
Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003)		An integrated model explaining an individual's technology acceptance and usage intentions.	(IJOA, 2021), (Amal Jishnu HM et al., 2024), (KASMONO et al., 2025), (Luo et al., 2023), (Wamba & Queiroz, 2022), (Alomar, 2017)
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen, 1985) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 2012)		Foundational theories assuming rational behavior is driven by attitude and social pressure. TPB adds perceived behavioural control.	(IJOA, 2021), (Amal Jishnu HM et al., 2024), (Mahat et al., 2022), (Luo et al., 2023), (Alomar, 2017)
Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory (Rogers, 1983)		Explains how a new technology spreads through a social system,	(Tibokbe & Shankar, 2025), (Mahat et al., 2022), (Luo et al.,

		influenced by the innovation's perceived characteristics.	2023), (Wamba & Queiroz, 2022), (Alomar, 2017), (Omorodion & Osifo, 2020), (Ifije Ohiomah, 2025)
Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) Framework (Tornatzky et al., 1990)	Organisational Context	Explains organisational technology adoption based on the interplay of technological, organisational, and environmental contexts.	(Luo et al., 2023), (Alomar, 2017)
Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991; Barney, 2001)		Theory emphasising how a firm's unique resources are a source of competitive advantage that influences technology adoption.	(Tibokbe & Shankar, 2025), (Wamba & Queiroz, 2022)
Dynamic Capability (DC) (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007)		Shows how firms leverage competencies to adapt and enhance themselves in response to a changing digital environment.	(Wamba & Queiroz, 2022)
Institutional Theory (IT) (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000; Laosirihongthong et al., 2020; Fosso Wamba et al., 2016)		Examines the role of external regulatory and cultural factors in shaping organisational technology adoption.	(Tibokbe & Shankar, 2025), (Wamba & Queiroz, 2022), (Alomar, 2017)
Sociotechnical Systems Theory		Highlight the need for a	

(STS) (Imran et al., 2021) and Change Management Theory (CMT) (Ahmed et al., 2024)	Process of Change	balance between technological and social components for a digital system to succeed.	(KASMONO et al., 2025)
Digital Divide Theory (DDT) (Reddick et al., 2020)		Emphasises bridging the digital divide through training and infrastructure to ensure the positive impact of technology is experienced equally.	

2.3. State of Knowledge: Drivers, Barriers and Strategic Opportunities in Digital Procurement

Existing studies reveal that successful adoption in procurement is influenced by a complex set of drivers and barriers. Understanding how to overcome these challenges reveal clear opportunities for strategic value.

Pre-existing, research proven factors detailed below across three subsections are produced to benchmark the analysis of macro and micro-level perspectives.

2.3.1 Drivers of Digital Technology Adoption in Procurement

Table below showcases drivers of digital adoption classified into five categories: Strategic and Business, Organisational and Leadership, External and Environmental, Human and Skill, and Technological and Data.

Table 2-2 Drivers of digital technology adoption in procurement across 5 categories

Drivers (by category)	Drivers (by sub-category)	Supporting Papers
Strategic and Business	Cost Savings and Efficiency: Lowering transaction and personnel costs; reducing	(Yevu & Yu, 2019; Areej Althabatah et al., 2022; Eadie et

	effort and error; increasing speed and profit margins.	al., 2010; Masoom et al., 2025; Flechsig et al., 2021; Paschal et al., 2024; Soni, 2011; Celestin & S Sujatha, 2024; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	Competitive Advantage: Enabling agility, matching digital frontrunners, expanding market share, innovating new services.	(Yang et al., 2021; Areej Althabatah et al., 2022; Eadie et al., 2010; Linh et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017)
	Improved Quality and Performance: Enhancing process efficiency, reducing errors; increasing transparency for continuous improvement.	(Eadie et al., 2010; Masoom et al., 2025; Flechsig et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	Risk Management and Compliance: Proactively assessing and mitigating risks, ensuring business continuity, improving regulatory compliance.	(Areej Althabatah et al., 2022; Paschal et al., 2024; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	Value Creation and New Models: Moving up the economic value chain, creating new sources of value and business models; enabling collaborative innovation.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Linh et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Verina & Titko, 2019)
	Sustainability: Reducing waste; promoting paperless environments, verifying ethical sourcing, aligning with CSR goals.	(Yevu & Yu, 2019; Imadeddine Oubrahim & Naoufal Sefiani, 2023; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
Organisational and Leadership	Leadership Support and Strategy: Top management belief, support, and clear	(Yang et al., 2021; Thun et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al.,

	strategic vision aligned with firm's goals.	2017; Verina & Titko, 2019)
	Process Improvement: Re-engineering processes, eliminating manual rekeying, improving communication.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Imadeddine Oubrahim & Naoufal Sefiani, 2023; Thun et al., 2021; Flechsig et al., 2021; Soni, 2011; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	Organisational Maturity: Having digital readiness, complex needs, and a culture of innovation and employee enthusiasm.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Flechsig et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017)
	Cross-functional Collaboration: Improving information flow among departments and with external partners.	(Yang et al., 2021; Thun et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Celestin & S Sujatha, 2024; Masoom et al., 2025; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	Advanced Technologies: Availability and maturity of tools like AI, ML, IoT, blockchain, and cloud computing.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Areej Althabatah et al., 2022; Verina & Titko, 2019)
	Data and Analytics: Ability to process big data, gain real-time visibility, leverage data-driven and predictive insights.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021; Imadeddine Oubrahim & Naoufal Sefiani, 2023; Areej Althabatah et al., 2022; Thun et al.,

		2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	System Integration: Need for horizontal and vertical integration of systems, supported by IT infrastructure.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Thun et al., 2021; Masoom et al., 2025)
External and Environmental	Customer and Partner Pressure: Customer demand and pressure from business partners to adopt new technologies.	(Yang et al., 2021; Yevu & Yu, 2019; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Verina & Titko, 2019; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	Competition: The need to match digital frontrunners to remain competitive.	(Yang et al., 2021; Verina & Titko, 2019)
	Government and Market Forces: Government regulations, policies, and broader market shifts.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Yevu & Yu, 2019; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
Human and Skill	Employee Motivation and Satisfaction: Reducing workload; providing professional growth opportunities; shifting focus to valuable activities.	(Thun et al., 2021; Flechsig et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017)
	Talent and Skills: Developing technical skills and expertise, having digitally savvy human capital.	(Pattharin Tangwaragorn et al., 2024; Eadie et al., 2010; Thun et al., 2021; Morakanyane et al., 2017; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
	Leadership in People: Championing technology adoption and creating good work opportunities.	(Yevu & Yu, 2019)

Technological and Data	Automation: Automating routine processes to enable better resource allocation and efficiency.	(Areej Althabatah et al., 2022; Thun et al., 2021; Paschal et al., 2024; Motaung & Sifolo, 2023)
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2.3.2 Barriers to Digital Technology Adoption in Procurement

Table below showcases barriers of digital adoption classified into six categories: Technological and Infrastructural, Organisational and Process, Financial and Resource Constraints, External and Environmental, Process-related and Other Barriers.

Table 2-3 Barriers to digital technology adoption in procurement across 6 categories

Barriers (by category)	Barriers (by sub-category)	Supporting Papers
Technological and Infrastructural	Data Quality and Inconsistency: Inaccurate, incomplete data and lack of standardisation.	(Gurgun et al., 2024; Flechsig et al., 2021)
	Integration with Legacy Systems: Difficulty connecting new tools with existing ERP systems, lack of interoperability	(Yevu et al., 2021; Gurgun et al., 2024; Masoom et al., 2025; Flechsig et al., 2021; Mavidis & Folinas, 2022; Khanapuri et al., 2011; Shakur et al., 2024; Eadie et al., 2010)
	Technical Immaturity and Complexity: Unproven, unreliable, or user-unfriendly systems, poor real-time connectivity and errors.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Gurgun et al., 2024; Shakur et al., 2024)
	Security and Privacy: Concerns about data security, privacy, and confidentiality, cyber-attacks, lack of trust.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Ojo-Fafore & Laryea, 2024; Yevu et al., 2022;

		Michael Jama et al., 2024; Gurgun et al., 2024; Joseph Jerome et al., 2021; Flechsig et al., 2021; Gilbert & Celestin, 2025; Eadie et al., 2010)
Organisational and Process	Lack of Skills and Expertise: Insufficient digital literacy, technical expertise, and training, limited human resources.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Ojo-Fafore & Laryea, 2024; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Gurgun et al., 2024; Masoom et al., 2025; Joseph Jerome et al., 2021; Flechsig et al., 2021; Gilbert & Celestin, 2025; Paschal et al., 2024; Ifije Ohiomah, 2025; Eadie et al., 2010)
	Inertia and Resistance to Change: Reluctance to abandon traditional routines, resistance from employees and officials, lack of a supportive digital culture.	(Motaung & Sifolo, 2023; Yevu et al., 2021; Celestin & S Sujatha, 2024; Yevu et al., 2022; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Gurgun et al., 2024; Joseph Jerome et al., 2021; Gilbert & Celestin, 2025; Paschal et al., 2024; Khanapuri et al., 2011; Ifije Ohiomah, 2025; Althabatah et al., 2022; Eadie et al., 2010)
	Poor Management Support and Communication: Lack of top management commitment, support, and a clear digital	(Yevu et al., 2021; Yevu et al., 2022; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Joseph

	strategy, poor interdepartmental communication.	Jerome et al., 2021; Flechsig et al., 2021), (Khanapuri et al., 2011; Ifije Ohiomah, 2025; Althabatah et al., 2022; Eadie et al., 2010)
	Rigid Structures and Silos: Inflexible central control, bureaucratic dysfunction, lack of platforms for sharing.	(Michael Jama et al., 2024; Flechsig et al., 2021; Mavidis & Folinas, 2022; Ifije Ohiomah, 2025)
Financial and Resource Constraints	High Costs and Uncertain ROI: Significant investment and maintenance costs, difficulty measuring ROI.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Ojo-Fafore & Laryea, 2024; Yevu et al., 2022; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Masoom et al., 2025; Joseph Jerome et al., 2021; Gilbert & Celestin, 2025; Khanapuri et al., 2011; Shakur et al., 2024; Ifije Ohiomah, 2025; Eadie et al., 2010)
	Limited Resources: Lack of resources for training, limited human resources.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Yevu et al., 2022; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Ifije Ohiomah, 2025)
External and Environmental	Regulatory and Legal Issues: Fragmented legal frameworks, lack of national IT policy, issues with e-contract enforcement.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Celestin & S Sujatha, 2024; Yevu et al., 2022; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Gilbert & Celestin, 2025; Mavidis & Folinas, 2022; Khanapuri et al., 2011; Eadie et al., 2010)

	Supplier and Partner Readiness: Lack of willingness and capability from partners, low SME participation.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Yevu et al., 2022; Michael Jama et al., 2024; Gurgun et al., 2024; Joseph Jerome et al., 2021; Gilbert & Celestin, 2025; Althabatah et al., 2022)
	Competition and Market Uncertainty: Highly competitive marketplace and uncertainty about new technologies.	(Yevu et al., 2021; Yevu et al., 2022; Gurgun et al., 2024)
Process-related	Inefficient Processes: Highly manual, inefficient, and non-standardised internal processes.	(Motaung & Sifolo, 2023; Gurgun et al., 2024)
Other Barriers	Ethical Concerns: Fear of reduced bribery and corruption.	(Yevu et al., 2022; Eadie et al., 2010)
	Uncertainty and Risk: Uncertain nature of the industry that may necessitate frequent change orders.	(Gurgun et al., 2024)

2.3.3 Opportunities and Strategic Value Creation

Finally, table below showcases opportunities and value of digital adoption classified into six categories: Efficiency and Cost, Competitive Advantage, Data-driven Insights, Transparency and Risk, Supplier Relationships, Sustainability, and Organisational/Human Capital.

Table 2-4 List of 7 identified opportunities and strategic value creation across digital technology adoption in procurement

Opportunities and Value Creation	Description	Supporting Sources
Efficiency and Cost Savings	Automating processes, reducing lead times, minimising	(Radell & Schannon, 2018; Cooper, 2024;

	manual effort and errors, and cutting operational costs.	Ashish Dhongde, 2024; Bloomberg, 2022; Meegle, 2025)
Strategic and Competitive Advantage	Accelerating innovation, gaining a competitive edge, and expanding market share by shifting procurement from transactional to strategic.	(Radell & Schannon, 2018; Bloomberg, 2022; Meegle, 2025)
Data-Driven Decisions and Insights	Providing real-time data and insights on spending and supplier performance using predictive analytics for demand forecasting and risk management	(De la Boulaye et al., 2017; Cooper, 2024; Bloomberg, 2022; Meegle, 2025)
Transparency and Risk Management	Illuminating supply chain blind spots, ensuring compliance, diversifying supplier networks, and reducing disruptions.	(De la Boulaye et al., 2017; Cooper, 2024; Bloomberg, 2022)
Supplier Collaboration and Innovation	Fostering stronger, more strategic partnerships and enabling joint innovation, inventory management, and streamlined communication.	(De la Boulaye et al., 2017; Radell & Schannon, 2018; Cooper, 2024; Meegle, 2025)
Sustainability and CSR	Aligning with ESG goals, verifying ethical sourcing, monitoring environmental impacts, and evolving procurement into a strategic revenue engine.	(Cooper, 2024; Ashish Dhongde, 2024; Bloomberg, 2022)
Organisational and Human Capital	Freeing up employee time for strategic work, building cross-functional capability, and improving team collaboration.	(Radell & Schannon, 2018; Bloomberg, 2022)

3. Methodology

This chapter details the research design and execution for the study. It begins by justifying qualitative, single-case study approach as ideal for exploring the complexities of digital adoption within the host organisation, central to which is the use of the dual-perspective framework over a particular digital tool. The chapter then details the data collection method through a multi-method qualitative approach followed by explaining sampling strategy used for interviews and thematic analysis implemented as the primary guide of data analysis. The chapter concludes by outlining necessary ethical considerations for this study.

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The study addresses research gaps by adopting a two-perspective approach to digital technology implementation in the FMCG sector, exploring both user and leadership perspectives. This is rooted in the concept that social reality is developed through subjective meanings, making it a “qualitative study” that answers “how” and “why” questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The study also employs a theory-driven, deductive research approach. This is essential because the thesis utilises an established dual theoretical framework as its foundational lens. The deductive process allows to rigorously test how well the existing theories define the adoption phenomena within this specific case, providing a basis for subsequent analysis and potential theoretical refinement (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.2 Research Design

The selected research design is a **single case study**, for its ability to provide an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within real world context. This approach allows for detailed exploration of individual and organisational realities influencing technology adoption. The complexities of the procurement

function and the multifaceted nature of DT necessitate this deep dive into a single setting, which would be difficult to achieve with a broader, more superficial study (Yin, 2018).

For data collection purposes, the study focuses specifically on an ***autonomous digital sourcing tool*** currently being implemented and adopted within this organisation.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

To achieve holistic understanding, this study utilises a multi-method qualitative approach, deliberately employing data triangulation focussing on semi-structured interviews, supplemented with detailed research on secondary data. This strategy allows for a deep, contextual and triangulated analysis by integrating rich, primary insights with supportive archival data (Patton, 2015) as outlined in the table below;

Table 3-1 Purpose, participants/sources and data collected across semi-structured interviews and secondary data collection

Data Collection Method	Purpose	Participants / Sources	Data Collected
Semi-structured Interviews	To explore the "how" and "why" behind technology adoption from a two-perspective approach. This flexibility allows for a detailed exploration of user experiences, perceptions, and organisational strategies.	Primary Data: Key personnel from the host organisation. <i>The interview questions were designed using individual-level theories (TAM, UTAUT) for user perspectives and organisational-level theories (TOE, DOI) for leadership perspectives.</i>	Individual-level data on perceptions, beliefs, motivations, perceived usefulness and usability. Organisational-level data on strategic decisions, external pressures, resource allocation and cultural context. <i>Please refer to Appendix C for interview questions framework</i>

Secondary Data Collection	To provide a contextual backdrop, triangulate the primary findings, and establish an industry benchmark. This method enhances the study's validity by cross-referencing primary insights with official, documented internal information.	Secondary Data: Publicly available industry reports and internal company document insights (strategic plans, internal memos).	Industry and Internal Context: The company's four-pillar digital strategy (insights, value, agility, engagement) aligns with broader industry trends making DT a top priority for FMCG companies. Drivers and Barriers: Insights into external regulatory pressures (EU's CSRD) and internal challenges like skills gaps, poor data quality, and user preference for manual processes. Strategic Opportunities: A long-term vision to shift procurement to a strategic, "agentic" model to gain benefits like supply chain resilience and automated processes. Please refer to Appendix D for detailed secondary data collected.
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3.4 Sampling Strategy

The strategy employs purposive sampling, prioritising expertise and relevance over statistical representativeness, which is crucial for a deep, contextual study (Patton, 2015).

Interview participants were selected based on their **role and function** to include individuals from different levels across relevant departments (Flick, 2014). The final sample of **17 participants consisting of 9 users and 8 leaders** was structured to include varied stakeholders and deemed to have reached data

saturation when later interviews yielded no novel insights or themes (Saunders & Townsend, 2018).

Please refer to [Appendix E](#) for list of interview participant profiles.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

This study employed a **deductive, theory-driven thematic analysis** grounded within user and leadership-perspective supporting theoretical frameworks that informed the development of semi-structured interviews, providing guidance to data interpretation. Also, in line with this approach, a set of pre-existing themes were derived from the theoretical frameworks which helped in easier code mapping, albeit open to emergent insights incorporated as new sub-themes.

The following figure describes Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic process adapted in this study to include data triangulation as well (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cranfield University, 2025)

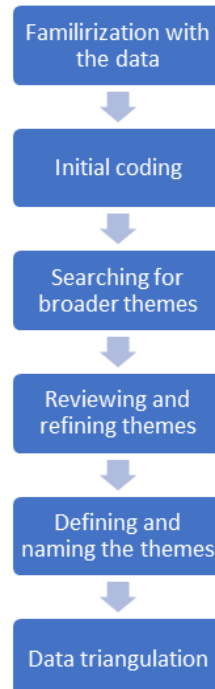


Figure 3-1 Stages of thematic analysis (Brain & Clarke, 2006; Cranfield University, 2025)

The initial coding framework was constructed around the identified theoretical frameworks where each transcript was examined line by line, and relevant excerpts were coded accordingly. The related codes were grouped in pre-defined and emergent sub-themes, which were further refined into broader, overarching themes. Finally, data triangulation was conducted between primary data points and secondary data. While the approach is predominantly deductive, the study remained open to emergent insights that went beyond assumptions.

All interviews were transcribed using an interview transcriber and analysed manually, without the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo. This decision was based on the manageable dataset size and research preference for direct engagement with data, allowing for deeper interpretation of participant perspectives

Please refer to [Appendix F](#) for detailed thematic analysis process breakdown.

3.6 Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

To ensure research integrity and respect for all participants, a strict ethical framework was followed using Cranfield's CURES guidelines (Appendix A) and the informed consent form. The rights and privacy of both individuals and the case study organisation are protected.

Interview participants received the consent form with a detailed information sheet. The organisation is anonymised across all data, and interviewee names along with personable identifiable information were replaced with identifiers to protect privacy. All research data, including recordings and transcripts, are stored securely on a password-protected computer and will be permanently deleted post required retention period.

Please refer to [Appendix G](#) for informed consent form.

3.7 Research Limitations

This study has inherent limitations which are acknowledged to support the rigorous and transparent approach. Firstly, as a single case study, the findings are specific to one organisation may lack generalisability to other organisations/industries. Secondly, the qualitative nature of the study introduces data subjectivity, as findings may be influenced by participant biases and researcher's interpretation due to manual coding. Finally, the research was constrained by time spent with organisation and resources such as location, limiting the overall scope.

4. Results

This chapter presents key findings from relevant data analysis. The results are organised into four main sections: thematic findings from user perspective, thematic findings from leadership perspective, primary data triangulation between user and leadership perspectives and a final triangulation that brings insights from primary and secondary data.

4.1 Thematic Findings: User Perspective

Detailed analysis of nine user interview transcripts provided a rich, first-hand account of the user experience over the autonomous sourcing tool. The analysis revealed four key themes that showcase the core narrative and recurring tensions within the feedback.

Theme 1: Conditional Usability and Functional Inconsistency

Users described how the tool's effectiveness is fundamentally split. It proves highly effective for simple, administrative tasks (mini-tenders and RFQs), which users praised for streamlining work and reducing follow-up mails. However, the limitations become apparent when applied to complex, creative projects. Here, users report the tool “not adding any value”, forcing them to do work “in double” by reverting to manual negotiation outside the platform.

Theme 2: Navigational and Support Deficiencies

The theme highlights a critical paradox: despite strong human support, the tool lacks intuitive, self-guided features. Users praised the support from external teams and colleagues but noted this support often compensated for shortcomings. Many reported they “didn't receive much training” and were consequently left to “figure out on their own”.

Theme 3: Organisational and Behavioural Resistance

The theme describes how ingrained behaviours and culture can be primary obstacles to adoption. Users had a preference for familiarity where some “prefer

direct contact with procurement” and complained on social and privacy barriers where they indicate “tool creates communication silos” and “everyone was able to see requests”.

Theme 4: Systemic and Strategic Improvement opportunities

Users offered a clear vision for the tool’s future, expressing needs for simplified user experience with “fewer fields, clearer categories” and “simpler question formats”. They also called for “deeper system integration” with platforms like Ariba to eliminate redundancy.

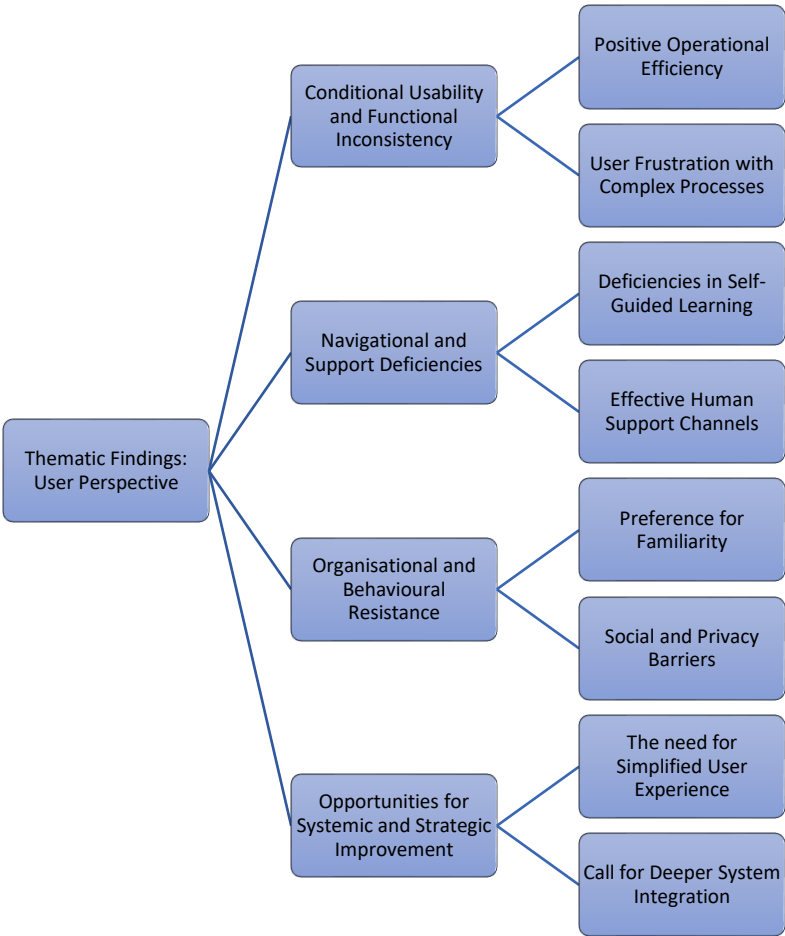


Figure 4-1 Visualisation of thematic findings for user perspective (author)

4.2 Thematic Findings: Leadership Perspective

Interview data from eight leadership interviews provided a comprehensive, high-level view of the tool's implementation from a strategic and organisational standpoint. Recurring tensions between ambitious goals and significant people-related challenges emerged as a consistent data feature.

Theme 1: Strategic Alignment and Goal Attainment

Leaders shared a unified vision for the tool, consistently identifying core goals as improving efficiency, automation and compliance. They aimed to “*reduce and automate*” manual tasks for “*faster, more efficient purchasing*” and to “*strengthen compliance*” for improved governance and transparency.

Theme 2: Cultural and Behavioural Challenges as Barriers

Leaders stressed that primary challenges was less technical and more rooted in user behaviour. The biggest barrier was “*resistance to change*” as employees were “*not open to change*”, preferring to “*fall back on simple, old processes*”. They also observed a “*culture of convenience*”, where teams favoured the “*path of least resistance*”, which conflicted with the tool's need for greater detail.

Theme 3: Internal Strategy vs. External Influence

While both internal and external factors drove change, leaders consistently prioritised internal, strategic needs. External pressure from competitors was seen as a “*stimulator*”. Leaders noted that “*most of the resistance is internal*” and affirmed that core drivers were to improve internal efficiency, ensuring long-term competitiveness.

Theme 4: Proactive Integration and Automation as future vision

The future vision for leaders focuses on moving technology beyond current limitations. They see a clear opportunity to evolve the tool into a single, “*all-in-one platform*” for both tactical and strategic spending. The most forward looking opportunity involves using Agentic AI and orchestration tools to automate low-value processes, proving value by saving time and reducing complexities.

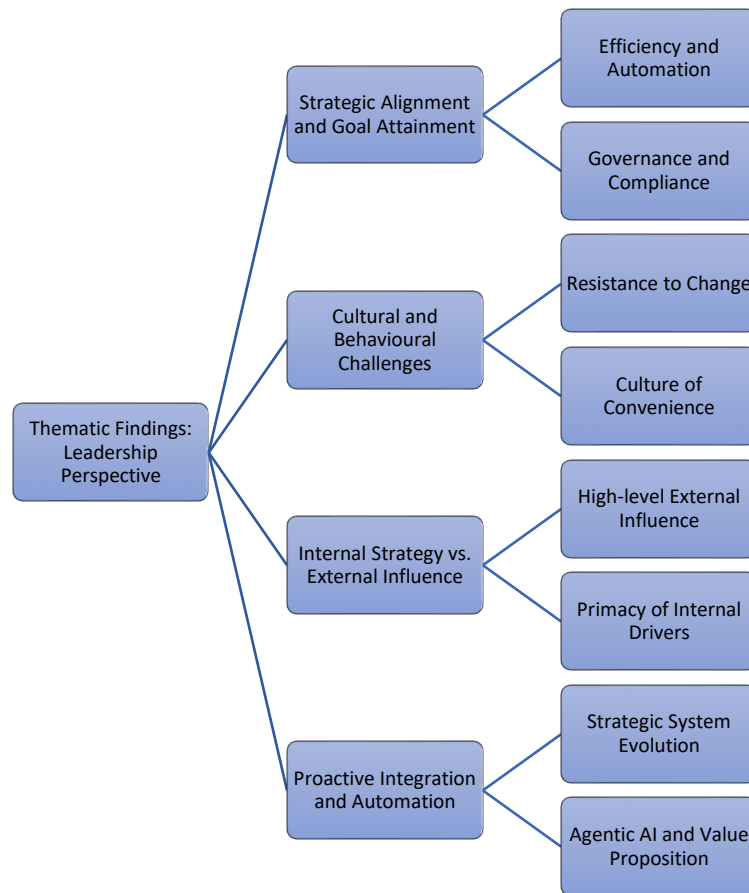


Figure 4-2 Visualisation of thematic findings for leadership perspective (author)

4.3 Triangulated Data between User and Leadership Perspectives

The section synthesises findings from user and leadership interviews to provide a comprehensive view of the tool's adoption scenario. By comparing and contrasting the perspectives from the data collected, points of convergence/divergence and underlying reasons for successes/challenges faced during the rollout are identified through four concepts explained in the table and image below;

Table 4-1 Triangulated data between user and leadership perspectives across 4 identified concepts

Concepts	User Perspective	Leadership Perspective
Usability and Strategic Purpose	Evaluates the tool based on immediate utility for specific tasks. Focuses on frustration with complex processes and its day-to-day inefficiency.	Views the tool through a strategic lens, as a means to achieve broader organisational goals like automation and compliance.
Support and Barriers to Adoption	Reports lack of built-in guidance, forcing reliance on human support from colleagues and external teams. Frames the issue as a tool deficiency.	Acknowledges challenges but frames them as a behavioural or cultural issue. Cites "resistance to change" and a "culture of convenience" as the primary barriers.
External and Internal Pressures	Makes no mention of external pressures from competitors or the market. Their experience is confined to the internal, operational context.	Considers external pressures as a "stimulator" but insists that primary drivers for change were internal, strategic needs.
Future Opportunities	Suggestions for future are practical and user-focused, aiming to improve their immediate workflow with simplified interfaces and better integration.	Vision is broader and more strategic, aiming for a unified, all-in-one platform powered by agentic AI and orchestration tools.

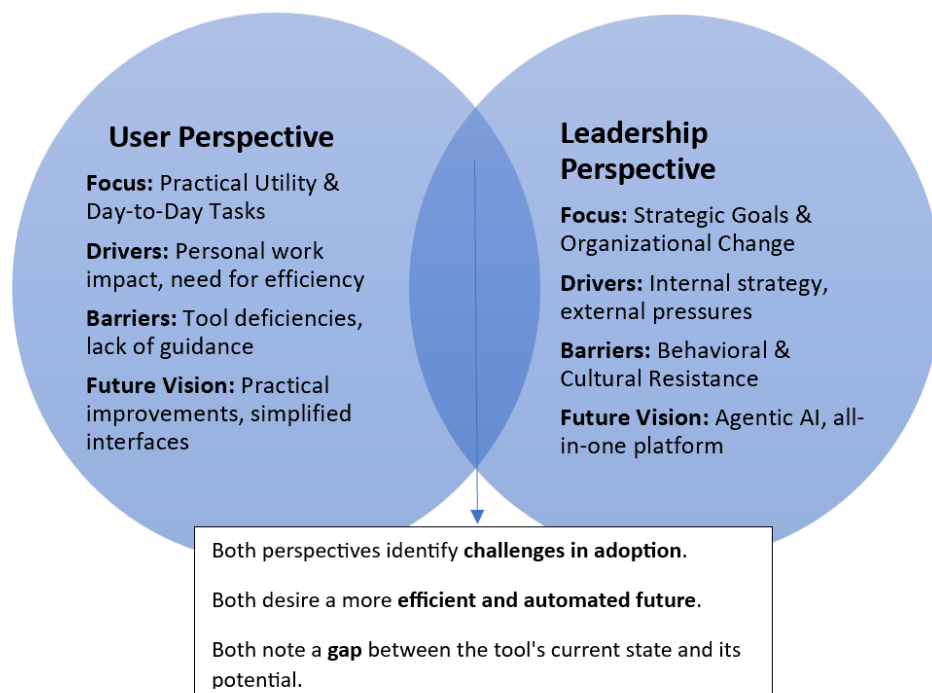


Figure 4-3 Visualisation of triangulated data between user and leadership perspectives (author)

4.4 Triangulated Data between Primary and Secondary Perspectives

This section provides the final triangulation, synthesising all three data sources: User, Leadership and Secondary (industry and internal reports) to validate findings against broader industry context. The synthesis confirms the systemic nature of adoption challenges, as summarised in the table and image below;

Table 4-2 Triangulated data between primary and secondary perspectives across 3 fundamental RQ concepts

Fundamental Concepts	User Perspective	Leadership Perspective	Alignment with Secondary Data
Project Drivers and Strategic Goals	Users are largely unaware of broad drivers. Their motivation is based on the tool's	The tool was driven by a clear strategic vision to increase efficiency, formalise	Converges with Leadership: Confirms that DT is a top priority for most FMCG and procurement

	functionality and its impact on their daily workload.	processes, and strengthen compliance.	leaders, fully supporting the leadership's strategic view.
Barriers and Challenges to Adoption	Identifies the most significant challenges as a lack of usability and built-in guidance.	Acknowledges challenges but frames the issue differently, diagnosing the core problem as cultural and behavioural.	Converges with Users and Leadership: Confirms these internal struggles are systematic, citing cultural resistance and skills gaps as industry-wide obstacles. The user's practical challenges are a manifestation of these broader systemic issues.
Future Opportunities and Vision	Desires a simpler, more intuitive tool and integration with other systems to eliminate redundant work.	Has a strategic vision for a unified platform powered by AI and automation.	Converges with Leadership: Fully aligned with external trends, confirming that this visionary perspective is a top industry priority.

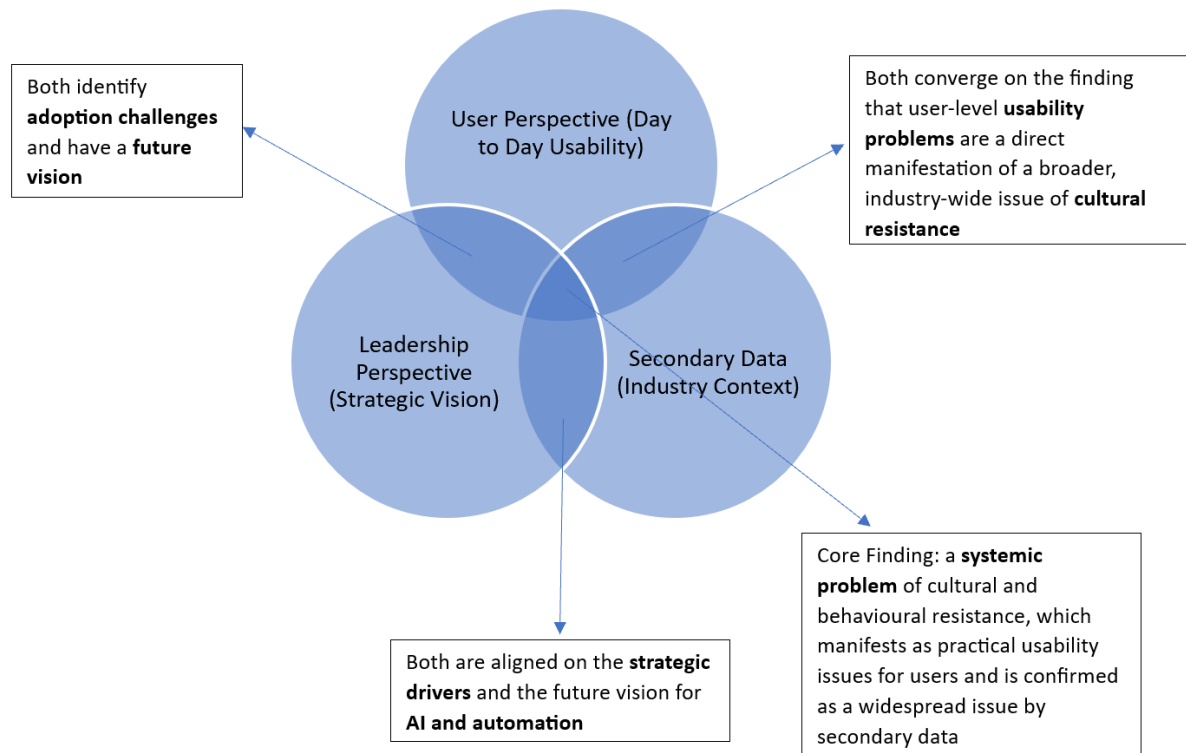


Figure 4-4 Visualisation of triangulated data between primary and secondary data (author)

4.5 Conclusion of Results

The triangulation of all sources firmly confirms the central finding which is a significant disconnect between the strategic vision of leadership and the operational reality of users. Leaders, driven by trends and internal pressures, are focussed on achieving high-level strategic goals. However, users, whose perspectives are necessarily limited to their day-to-day experience, are facing practical challenges that are not yet fully addressed. The secondary data confirms this disconnect as not an isolated organisational problem, but a systematic, industry-wide issue rooted in cultural resistance.

5. Discussion

This chapter critically interprets key findings by connecting them to academic theory and organisational practice. The discussion centres on the fundamental disconnect between two perspectives, assessing on how these results support, extend or contradict existing knowledge. Ultimately, the intention is to translate these insights into actionable recommendations to bridge the adoption gap.

5.1 Discussion of Findings in relation to Selected Theories

This section, through the following table, aims to correlate findings across perspectives and their supporting theories to understand how they support and extend the selected theories itself.

Table 5-1 Discussion of findings in relation to selected theories that support and extend

Finding	Supporting Theory	Discussion of Findings
User Perspective (supporting)	TAM, UTAUT	User feedback aligns with TAM: perceived usefulness was high for simple tasks but low for complex ones. The tool's lack of intuitive guidance acted as a barrier, forcing reliance on human support, relevant to UTAUT's facilitating conditions. This illustrates that a deficiency in facilitating conditions, including necessary organisational and technical infrastructure, can act as significant barriers to user adoption, even when the systems are strategically sound.
Leadership Perspective (supporting)	DOI, RBV	Leadership's diagnosis of "resistance to change" and a "culture of convenience" aligns with DOI, as internal social systems and minority preferences hampered adoption. Their view of the tool as a strategic asset for efficiency and compliance, defining them as sources of competitive advantage, aligning with RBV.
Extending Theories	DC	The study's dual perspective shows that a strategic resource is insufficient for successful adoption as it requires building dynamic capabilities for adoption and

		integration. The leadership's vision for an all-in-one agentic AI platform demonstrated this. However, there is a disconnect between ambition and immediate user needs beyond the firm level and into organisational strata.
	IT	While leaders see this as a strategic driver, the users reveal a challenge with compliance from the bottom up. Findings show that institutional pressures for legitimacy (governance/compliance) can be undermined by internal, micro-level cultural and behavioural resistance from users, adding a new dimension to macro-level institutional analyses.
	STS	The core finding (disconnect between leader and user perspectives) is a powerful extension of STS. It demonstrates a breakdown where the technical component (tool functionality and user experience) is misaligned with the social component (user habits, cultural norms and communication preferences), hindering DT.

5.2 Implications for Practice and Recommendations

This study holds significant practical value for the host organisation through actionable recommendations rooted in the perspectives of its leaders and users. While the context is based on a specific tool, the following recommendations, through the three tables below, are designed to bridge the gap between strategic intent and operational reality for any similar digital technology adoption in procurement.

5.2.1 Recommendations for Leadership

Leaders should focus on bridging the fundamental disconnect between their goals and user expectations. For this study, four highly critical recommendations have been framed in the table below that can help the leadership in taking advantage of their resources and experiences in improving technology adoption.

Table 5-2 Recommendation for leadership

Recommendation	Rationale and Practical Application
Communicate Strategic Value at the User Level	Bridging the disconnect by translating high-level goals like efficiency into tangible benefits for users, such as reduced manual work and more time for strategic tasks.
Acknowledge and Address the "Culture of Convenience"	Viewing this culture as a symptom of the technology being inconvenient that violates the principle of perceived ease of use than a user flaw. The focus should be on making automated workflows genuinely simpler than manual ones.
Invest in Continuous Training and Support	Moving beyond one-off training to a continuous learning model. Implementing easily accessible, self-guided manuals and on-demand video tutorials directly within tool to reduce reliance on informal human support.
Implement a Formal Change Management Strategy	Using a clear roadmap, dedicated team and communication plans to guide users through the transition, address fears, and highlight benefits to tackle resistance and convenience culture while also demonstrating tangible benefits.

5.2.2 Recommendations for Users

While the primary burden of change rests with leadership, users are also entitled to facilitate the adoption process. For this study, three recommendations have been framed in the table below for the users to help ease the adoption processes into their daily workload.

Table 5-3 Recommendation for users

Recommendation	Rationale and Practical Application
Embrace Structured Learning	To use formal learning paths instead of "figuring it out". This builds confidence and competence from basic to advanced use.
Provide Constructive Feedback	The user interviews provided invaluable feedback on usability. A formal, consistent channel for users to report pain points directly to leadership and support team is needed. This ensures usability issues are heard and addressed.

Champion the Tool's Practical Wins	Empowering users who have found the tool useful to become internal champions. By sharing their experiences, they can show real-world value and help overcome peer resistance.
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5.2.3 Recommendations for the Technology itself

The most direct way to bridge the gap is to continuously improve the technology's core functionality and user experience. For this study, five recommendations are framed in the table below to help continuously improve digital technologies and their adoption.

Table 5-4 Recommendation for the technology itself

Recommendation	Rationale and Practical Application
Prioritise Usability for Complex Tasks	Preventing manual workarounds, re-evaluate the technology design to reduce friction for complex projects. Simplifying fields, clarifying terminology, and creating streamlined, guided workflows.
Integrate to Eliminate Redundancy	Addressing the feeling of "work in double" by integrating the technology with other systems, removing the need for redundant data entry and manual workarounds.
Enhance Built-in Guidance and Support	The tool needs to become a source of support, reducing reliance on external help. This can be done by adding intelligent in-tool guidance, step-by-step instructions, and in-app chat support.
Establish a Governance Model for Data Transparency	Addressing privacy concerns and communication silos with a clear data governance model. This defines who has access to what data and why, building trust and encouraging proper use.
Adopt a Pilot-and-Refine Approach	Bridging the strategic-to-user-experience gap, testing new technologies with a small user group first. This validates practical utility and allows for early feedback before a full rollout.

6. Conclusion

The final chapter serves to conclude by summarising the key findings, acknowledging its limitations and outlining areas for future work. It aims to reinforce overall value and contribution of the thesis to the field of technology adoption in procurement.

6.1 Concluding Remarks

This study set out to investigate the factors influencing the adoption of a newly implemented autonomous sourcing tool by comparing perspectives of users and leaders within a multinational FMCG corporation headquartered in London. Through the dual-perspective analysis, the study successfully exposed a disconnect between the high-level strategic vision of leadership and the practical, day-to-day operational reality of users.

The findings demonstrate that while leaders aimed for strategic gains in efficiency, governance and compliance, their efforts were undermined by a deep-seated culture of convenience among users. This resistance was not merely a behavioural issue, but a rational response to a technology that, despite its potential, proved to be cumbersome and frustrating for complex tasks. By synthesising these perspectives, the study not only confirmed that challenges faced are systemic and industry-wide, but also provided a unique, empirically-grounded understanding of the “human-tech disconnect” at a micro-level.

Ultimately, the successful implementation of DT hinges on bridging this gap, ensuring that the technology's strategic value is directly translated into tangible, effortless utility for the end-user.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

While this study aims to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of technology adoption, it attempts to acknowledge all limitations. The primary limitation stems from the qualitative nature and single case study design which focuses on a

particular organisation, function and technology. Along with the limited interview sample size means that findings, while insightful for this specific context, may not be statistically generalisable to the entire FMCG industry or at least, other organisations. The findings reflect the unique cultural and structural dynamics of the host organisation, limiting the ability to draw universal conclusions.

Additionally, as with any qualitative research, there is a potential risk of researcher bias in the interpretation of interview data. Every effort was made to mitigate this through systematic thematic analysis using tools, but the subjective element in coding and analysis cannot be completely eliminated.

6.3 Areas for Future Work

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several avenues for future research emerge. Firstly, to address the issue of generalisability, a large-scale quantitative study is recommended. Such research could use a survey instrument to test the relationships between key variables such as perceived usability, organisational culture and adoption rates across a broader sample of organisations.

Secondly, a comparative case study could be conducted by examining two organisations, one with a highly successful technology adoption and another with significant challenges. Future research could also provide a deeper understanding of the specific change management strategies that successfully bridge the leader-user disconnect.

Finally, given the novelty of certain findings, future research could conduct a focused investigation into the culture of convenience as well as the social privacy barriers that were identified. By using a mixed-methods approach, researchers could quantify the impact of these behavioural and cultural factors on user adoption, providing further evidence over their significance in DT projects.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix A: CURES Ethical Approval Letter



22 July 2025

Dear Mr Sasikumar ,

Reference: CURES/26099/2025

Project ID: 29596

Title: The Adoption of Digital Technologies in Procurement: Drivers, Barriers, and Opportunities—A Case Study in the FMCG Industry

Thank you for your application to the Cranfield University Research Ethics System (CURES).

We are pleased to inform you your CURES application, reference CURES/26099/2025 has been reviewed. You may now proceed with the research activities you have sought approval for.

If you have any queries, please contact CURES Support.

We wish you every success with your project.

Regards,

CURES Team

8.2 Appendix B: Strategic Digital Transformation Frameworks and Digital Maturity Models

These frameworks and maturity models, which are studied and implemented across different industries and digital transformation contexts, allow to understand what are the different internal and external aspects, elements and rationale that are necessary to identify in an organisation that can help facilitate digital transformation successfully.

In the context of this study, a review of these proven aspects can help benchmark the analysis of the current host organisation across various stages.

Strategic digital transformation frameworks

Table 8-1 List of 24 identified digital transformation frameworks

Proposed Frameworks	Aspects	Supporting Source
A “Unified” Framework of Competing Forces from COVID-19 (Amoah et al., 2021)	"Digitalisation, Processes, Cost reduction, Business opportunities, Risk and negative consequences, Surveillance"	(Aghamiri et al., 2022)
Econometric Model to Assess a Company’s Preparedness Levels for Digital Transformation (Kääriäinen et al., 2021)	"Enterprise management, Productivity management, Digital transformation platform, Smart manufacturing"	
The Refined Model of Organisational Competence for Digital Transformation (Nguyen Thi Xuan Hoa & Tuyen, 2021)	"Vision and strategy, Digital leadership, Organisational learning process and organisational knowledge, Organisational alignment and organisational structure, Digital maturity, Personal competencies, Importance of personal characteristics, Technology selection, acceptance and use, Information culture, Organisational effectiveness"	

A Digital Competence Maturity Model (DigiCom) (González-Varona et al., 2021)	"Digital content, Human-Machine, Human-Human, Personal"	
Model of the Impact of DT on Project Management (Steinlechner et al., 2021)	"Disruptions, New technologies, Customer expectations, Competitive landscape, Data and analytics, Change process, Projectification of activities, Effects: process automation implementation of new technologies remote cooperation world sourcing new structures, Virtual project teams online, constant communication agile methods, Customer orientation and incremental product delivery, Project manager as a facilitator, Optimisation of processes of project delivery, Constant access to data, IT tools"	
Digital Transformation Model (Kozarkiewicz, 2020)	"Positioning, Roadmap, Implementation, Current state review"	
Development Approach Industry 4.0 Maturity and Realisation Model (Schumacher et al., 2019)	"Definition, Maturity model's scope, structure and design, Research and population with maturity items, Development assessment tool and structure of maturity report, Transformation maturity items into realisation paths, Definition procedure and rules for deriving action-field, Testing and creation of final step-by-step realisation model"	
I 4.0 Emerging Countries' DT strategy framework (ECDTS) (Andrade & Gonçalo, 2021)	"Digital platforms, Ecosystems"	
Interpretative Framework	"Business driver, Supply view, Entrepreneurial model"	

(Martinelli et al., 2020)		
Digitainability Conceptual Framework (Lichtenthaler, 2021)	"Digitalisation, Sustainability"	
Multi-Dimensional Framework (Hanelt et al., 2021)	"Contextual Conditions, Mechanisms, Outcomes"	
Digital transformation patterns (Rossini et al., 2021)	"Lean Production, Industry 4.0"	
Conceptual Framework of open innovation to support digital transformation (Rocha et al., 2021)	"Managerial strategic and social drivers, Digital technology enablers, Business partners, Scientific partners, Facilitating factors, Limiting or challenging factors, Contribution of collaboration for digital innovation"	
The interaction-based digital transformation framework (Veldhoven & Vanthienen, 2021)	"Digital technologies, Business, Society"	
Digitalisation and public crisis responses theoretical framework (Guo et al., 2020)	"Digitalisation, Dynamic capabilities, Response strategies, Response performance"	
Construct Map Conceptual Framework (van Tonder et al., 2020)	"Digital transformation, Digitalisation, Business model innovation"	
DT Framework (4 Dimensions)	Digital transformation strategies have four essential dimensions: use of technologies, changes in value creation, structural changes, and financial aspects. These dimensions are interdependent	(Matt et al., 2015)

	and must be closely aligned for a successful rollout of a DT strategy. They can be integrated into one joint DTF.	
PwC Digital Transformation Framework (Coundouris, 2021)	The model anchors digital change in Industry 4.0. Its core capability is Data and Analytics, which provides intel for business leaders. The framework outlines three stages for digital change: 1) digitalisation of vertical and horizontal value chains, 2) digitalisation of product and service offerings, and 3) digital business models and customer access.	(Ciruskabiri & Varnaseri, 2023)
Cognizant Digital Transformation Framework (Coundouris, 2021)	This model is a circular diagram built around four core quadrants: Customer, Product, Processes and Systems, and Organisation. It highlights the need for a holistic approach to DT.	
Gartner Digital Transformation Framework (Coundouris, 2021)	This framework is a six-step process for building a successful digital business. It begins with creating the right mindset and putting the right leadership in place. The framework emphasises a structured approach that moves from strategy formulation to acquiring skills and, finally, creating new digital business capabilities. It also highlights the importance of a Digital Business Centre of Excellence.	
McKinsey Digital Transformation Framework (Coundouris, 2021)	This framework is a proprietary "4Ds" model for DT. The four phases are: Discover (shape digital ambition and strategy), Design (reinvent and prototype new capabilities), Deliver (activate an ecosystem to rapidly deliver at scale), and De-risk (structure the change program, resources, and commercial model to reduce operational and financial risk).	
CapGemini Digital Transformation Framework (Coundouris, 2021)	This framework digitally transforms three critical areas of an enterprise: Customer Experience, Operational Process, and Business Model. It outlines nine building blocks across three pillars, such as Top line growth, Worker enablement, and Digital globalisation. The framework also emphasises that Digital capabilities (e.g., analytics capability, united data and	

	processes) and Business and IT integration are the foundational elements that support the transformation.	
MIT Digital Transformation Framework (Coundouris, 2021)	This framework is built on five core building blocks. These are: Operational backbone (integrated systems and processes), Shared customer insights (organisational knowledge about customer demands), Digital platform (a repository of business, technology, and data components), Accountability framework (clear ownership and coordination), and External developer platform (a digital platform for an ecosystem of partners).	
DXC Technology Digital Transformation Framework (Coundouris, 2021)	This framework is built on three pillars around a central Digital Technology Core. The three pillars are: Business Model Innovation, Digital Customer Experience, and Digital Organisation and Process Transformation. The model highlights that the technological core is what enables the transformation of the three business pillars.	

Digital maturity models

Table 8-2 List of 18 identified digital maturity models

Proposed Maturity Model	Aspects	Supporting Source
Digital Maturity Model for Telecommunications Service Providers (Valdez-De-Leon, 2016)	Strategy, Organisation, Culture, Value chain/Ecosystems, Operations, Technology, Innovation	(Bumann & Peter, 2019)
Maturity Model for Industry 4.0 Readiness and Maturity (Schumacher et al., 2016)	Strategy, Culture, Operations, Technology, Products, Customers, Leadership, Governance, Capabilities/Skills	

Digital Maturity Model (Peyman et al., 2014)	Strategy, Culture, Technology, Products, Leadership, Governance, Capability/Skills	
Digital Maturity Model (Berghaus et al., 2017)	Strategy, Organisation, Culture, Technology, Innovation, Products, Customers, Capability/Skills, Process digitalisation, Collaboration, Transformation management	
Digital Readiness Assessment (Wallner, 2016)	Strategy, Organisation, Culture, Technology, Customers, Capabilities/Skills	
Structuring Digital Transformation (Gimpel et al., 2018)	Organisation, Value chain/Ecosystem, Operations, Products, Customers, Transformation management, Cloud and Data	
Digital Future Readiness Transformation Model (Schlaepfer et al., 2017)	Organisation, Culture, Capabilities/Skills, Digital environment	
The Digital Maturity Model 4.0 (Gill & Vanboskirk, 2016)	Organisation, culture, Technology, Digital environment	
Maturity Model for Assessing the Digital Readiness of Manufacturing Companies (De Carolis et al., 2017)	Organisation, Technology, Process digitalisation, Monitoring and control	
Action Fields of Digital Transformation (Peter, 2017)	Culture, Technology, Customers, Leadership, Process Digitalisation, Cloud and data, Digital business development, Digital marketing	
Organisational Agility Maturity Model (Gunsberg et al., 2018)	Strategy, Culture, Innovation, Leadership, Capabilities/Skills, Digital marketing	
Digital Maturity Model (Newman, 2017)	Strategy, Organisation, Culture, Operation, Technology, Customers, Capabilities/Skills	

The Digital Transformation Playbook (Rogers, 2016)	Innovation, Customers, Cloud and data, Competition, Value	
Aligning the organisation for its digital future (Kane et al., 2016)	Strategy, Culture, Capabilities/Skills, Structure, Tasks	
Deloitte Digital Maturity Model (Anderson & William, 2018)	Strategy, Organisation, Culture, Operations, Technology, Customers	
Company Readiness Evaluation for Digital Business Transformation (Isaev et al., 2018)	Strategy, Organisation, Value Chain/Ecosystem, Operations, Technology, Innovation, Relationship with users	
Open Digital Maturity Model (Open Roads, 2017)	Strategy, Culture, Technology, Innovation, Products, Customers, Leadership, Capabilities/Skills, Cloud and data	
Digital Transformation Roadmap for Billion-Dollar Organisations (Westerman et al., 2011)	Customers, Process digitalisation, Digital business development	

8.3 Appendix C: Interview Questions Framework

Topic: Adoption of Digital Technologies in Procurement

Please note: The terms system and digital technology mentioned below are purely relevant to the autonomous sourcing tool

Attached: Informed Consent Form

Questions for leadership team:

1. From your perspective, what was the main strategic reason(s) for implementing the new digital technology? What are some of the main challenges that were faced throughout the entire rollout?
2. What external factors can influence digital technology adoption? Did you feel pressure from competitors, customers or the overall industry to make this type of change?
3. What resources, capabilities or existing infrastructure did the organisation have that helped or hindered this change with a new tool? How could this adoption affect the way users work and collaborate with each other?
4. Looking ahead, what future opportunities or strategic advantages do you see for the organisation through the adoption of new procurement technologies?

Questions for users:

1. When you first started using the new digital system, can you describe your experience? What were all the ways the new system has changed how you do your work, for better or worse?
2. Can you describe the learning process for the new digital system? What kind of support did you receive, and how well did the system fit with your existing activities?

3. What role did your colleagues or managers play in your experience with the new system? How has the technology affected the way your team communicate and collaborate?
4. Looking to the future, what improvements do you think could be made to the digital system(s), or what opportunities do you see to improve how you work with this tool?

8.4 Appendix D: Detailed Secondary Data Collected

Industry Context and Internal Context

Digital transformation has become a top strategic priority for most FMCG and CPG companies, with surveys indicating that it's a high priority for 75% of them (Genc, 2024) and nearly 80% of procurement leaders (Hargreaves, 2025). This focus is a response to structural market changes (PWC, 2024), and is reflected in the e-procurement market's projected growth to reach \$15.4 billion by 2033 (Verified Market Reports, 2025). The industry's commitment is demonstrated by the adoption of modern technologies, with 71% of CPG leaders leveraging AI in at least one function (Moulton et al., 2024). Major players like Unilever have trained 23,000 employees in AI, leading to a 3% increase in equipment effectiveness and an 8% reduction in factory costs (Unilever, 2025; Hargreaves, 2025b). A joint study with P&G also found that teams using generative AI completed tasks 12% faster, highlighting clear company-wide productivity gains (Dominguez, 2025).

This external context is directly mirrored by the host organisation's internal strategy. The organisation's internal data reveal a clear, evolving digital strategy for its procurement function, built on four key pillars: Insights, Value, Agility and Engagement. The goal is to leverage new technology to rationalise existing platforms, drive automation and deliver a user-focused experience. This approach signifies a broader transition from a centralised procurement model to a more agile, decentralised and agentic one, which involves digitising sourcing, risk monitoring and strategic collaboration with suppliers. Ultimately, the organisation's focus on a comprehensive digital strategy demonstrates a clear intention to enhance the organisational context of its operations, a key component of the TOE framework, and proves that its efforts are aligned with the market shift (Author, 2025)

Key Drivers and Theoretical Alignment

The primary drivers for digital procurement are a blend of external regulatory pressures and internal strategic goals. External mandates, such as the EU's CSRD and Germany's Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, force firms to adopt new technologies to ensure legal compliance and avoid penalties (Schwarz, 2025; European Commission, 2025; Kerkola, 2024), a dynamic that aligns with the coercive pressure element of Institutional Theory. The “Digital Product Passport” further reinforces the need for standardised data across global supply chains (Stretton & Buzeti, 2022). Simultaneously, market and competitive pressures in the FMCG sector are driving companies to invest in technology to mitigate risks from supply chain disruptions and cybersecurity threats (Moulton, Exarchos, et al., 2024; Genc, 2024; PwC, 2020). These external forces, combined with a constant demand for cost reduction and efficiency (PwC, 2020; Lemasson et al., 2024; PwC, 2024; Schwarz, 2025), are pushing procurement to become a strategic function.

Internally, for the host organisation, managerial perception is a significant driver, with procurement leaders expecting AI to fundamentally transform roles within five years (Hackett Group, 2025), a concept central to the organisational context of the TOE framework. The organisation’s internal drivers for this transformation directly align with these external pressures, motivated by an ambition to build dynamic capabilities and gain a relative advantage in the market. The specific goals of reducing costs, improving efficiency, and enhancing data-driven decision-making align with the core principles of the Diffusion of Innovations theory, providing a clear business case for leveraging technology across a range of functions, from supplier validation to user experience.

Challenges and Barriers

The path to digital procurement is not one without significant hurdles, and this is confirmed by both external and internal data, even though they highlight different aspects of the same problem. External industry reports consistently cite systemic challenges related to technology, skills, and culture. A major resistance to effective analytics and AI is poor data quality and inconsistent data, identified as

a critical obstacle to tool scalability (Deloitte, 2025; Srini Vaddepalli, 2024), which is compounded by the "supplier data burden" (Cernansky, 2025). Furthermore, widespread resource and skills gaps are a pervasive barrier, as organisations often lack the necessary expertise for digital transformation, particularly for employees who require upskilling in data analytics, AI, and strategic sourcing (McMillan, 2024; PwC, 2020). These deficits are noted as directly impacting UTAUT's facilitating conditions and the organisational context of the TOE framework. The external data also points to legacy ERP systems, integration complexity, and cultural resistance as key barriers, suggesting that a lack of active strategy tracking has caused digitalisation rates to flatten (Capgemini, 2024; Schwarz, 2025; PWC, 2024; PWC, 2024a). This indicates that the complexity of the technology and organisational resistance to change are as significant as the technology itself, a core component of DOI Theory.

On the other hand, the organisation's internal data reveal a significant gap between these strategic goals and the operational reality. The reports highlight a lack of user-friendliness and poor system functionality, which led to widespread issues with navigation, confusing terminology, system bugs, and a user preference for manual processes like sending emails instead. This is compounded by an internal lack of resources and support, with users reporting insufficient training and a limited number of people available to provide guidance. Users also express a fear that the technology may not deliver real value or that it may require too much time and effort, further hindering adoption. These specific systemic and user-related issues represent the complexity and organisational context elements of the DOI and TOE frameworks, respectively, giving a human face to the high-level barriers cited in industry reports (Author, 2025)

Strategic Opportunities and Benefits

The true value of digital procurement is reflected in both external trends and the organisation's internal goals, which extend beyond simple cost reduction. External reports show that procurement leaders are now prioritising long-term value, including building supply chain resilience, fostering strategic partnerships,

and enabling decarbonisation (McMillan, 2024; PWC, 2024; Erriquez et al., 2023). This strategic approach creates a more robust supply chain that can proactively manage risk and disruptions by diversifying supplier bases and implementing real-time monitoring (Schwarz, 2025; McMillan, 2024). This focus builds a firm's Dynamic Capabilities, allowing it to sense, decide, and reconfigure its supply chain in a rapidly changing environment (Li et al., 2025; Kaneberg et al., 2025). These strategic benefits are supported by tangible, measurable gains. Reports from the industry confirm that organisations with dedicated cost management programs achieve a higher percentage of their savings targets (Schwarz, 2025) and that procurement software users see a 30% reduction in manual errors (Hargreaves, 2025). Organisation-specific examples, such as a P&G study finding that AI helps teams complete tasks 12% faster (Dominguez, 2025) and Unilever's use of digital systems to drive operational efficiency (Unilever, 2025), highlight these gains. A higher level of process digitalisation has a direct impact on value creation, with 80% of companies succeeding due to improved data availability (PwC, 2020), all of which demonstrate the clear Relative Advantage of the new technology, a core component of DOI Theory.

The organisation's internal data confirm its alignment with these opportunities, with a clear focus on value creation through technology, value protection, and process improvement. Opportunities for technology investment exist across numerous procurement verticals, and the company aims to implement technologies that automate manual tasks, such as contract renewals and pricing analytics. The use of AI is a central element of this strategy, with the company expecting Generative AI to further automate processes and uncover new insights. The success of these initiatives is measured by tangible metrics, including reductions in procurement process cycle times, increased system utilisation and improved contract compliance, which echo the measurable benefits and strategic direction found across the industry.

8.5 Appendix E: Interview Participant Profiles

Table 8-3 Overview of interview participant profiles for primary data collection

Interview ID	Role Level	Core Function/Department	Direct Tool Experience
L1	Director	Procurement – Centre of Excellence	High
L2	Director	Procurement – Centre of Excellence	High
L3	Director	Procurement – Centre of Excellence	Medium
L4	Senior Manager	Procurement – Category Lead	Very High
L5	Senior Manager	Procurement – Compliance	Very High
L6	Senior Manager	Procurement – Sales and Marketing	High
L7	Manager	Procurement – Buying Channels	Very High
L8	Manager	Procurement – Corporate Services	High
U1	Senior Analyst	Procurement – Analytics	Very High
U2	Analyst	Procurement – Analytics	Very High
U3	Category Manager	Procurement Tower	Very High
U4	Category Manager	Procurement Tower	Very High
U5	Senior Buyer	Procurement Tower	Very High
U6	Buyer	Procurement Tower/Buying Desk	Very High
U7	Buyer	Procurement Tower/Buying Desk	Very High
U8	Buyer	Procurement Tower/Buying Desk (Tactical)	Very High

U9	Buyer	Procurement Tower/Buying Desk (Tactical)	Very High
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8.6 Appendix F: Thematic Analysis Breakdown

User Perspective:

Step 1: Familiarisation with the Data

A review of all 9 user interview transcripts was performed. The data, organised around theoretical elements, provides a rich, first-hand account of the user experience. A key feature of the data is the contradictory feedback, with positive and negative feelings often expressed about the same features.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

Specific codes were derived to capture individual ideas from the interviews, such as “RFQ streamlines process”, “Intake part is useful”, “RFP part adds no value to complex tasks”, “doing tasks in double”, “negotiating outside the platform”, “ease of use 3/10”, “excellent external support”, “lacked initial training/manual”, “terminology is confusing”, “managers were supportive”, “tool creates communication silos”, “privacy concerns”, “wants manual or step-by-step guide”, “needs built-in chat support” and “wants integration with other systems”.

Step 3: Searching for Sub-themes and Themes

Theme: Conditional Usability and Functional Inconsistency

Sub-theme: Positive Operational Efficiency: Codes showing positive experiences with specific features, such as RFQ streamlines process and Intake part is useful.

Sub-theme: User Frustration with Complex Processes: Codes related to difficulty with complex projects, such as RFP part adds no value and doing tasks in double.

Theme: Navigational and Support Deficiencies

Sub-theme: Effective Human Support Channels: Codes about the value of human support, such as excellent external support and internal colleagues are supportive.

Sub-theme: Deficiencies in Self-Guided Learning: Codes related to the tool's lack of intuitive guidance, such as lacked initial training and working it out as I went along.

Theme: Organisational and Behavioural Resistance

Sub-theme: Preference for Familiarity: Codes showing user and colleague resistance, such as prefers direct contact and did not save time.

Sub-theme: Social and Privacy Barriers: Codes related to new social issues created by the tool, such as privacy concerns and created silos.

Theme: Opportunities for Systemic and Strategic Improvement

Sub-theme: The Need for Simplified User Experience: Codes suggesting a simpler, more intuitive design, such as needs simplified fields and wants clearer categories.

Sub-theme: Call for Deeper System Integration: Codes related to technical improvements and integration, such as wants Ariba integration and needs technical improvements.

Step 4: Reviewing the Themes

The themes Conditional Usability, Navigational Deficiencies, Organisational Resistance, and Opportunities for Improvement effectively capture the core narrative and recurring tensions within the user feedback. This structure avoids simply mirroring the initial interview questions.

Final Thematic Analysis Overview: User Perspective

Theme 1: Conditional Usability and Functional Inconsistency

This theme describes the fundamental split in the user experience: the tool is highly effective for simple, administrative tasks but becomes frustrating and inefficient when dealing with complexity.

Positive Operational Efficiency: For well-defined, straightforward projects, the tool is a major asset. The RFQ module and Intake part were praised for their ability to streamline administrative work, speed up mini-tenders, and reduce the need for follow-up emails. U2 said the Intake part was "the most useful to me" because it allowed them to "collect the most info" efficiently.

User Frustration with Complex Processes: When applied to complex, creative projects, the tool's limitations became apparent. U2 indicates that users felt it was "not adding any value" for these tasks. U3 described the RFP event as "not really straight to the point" and noted it led to doing work "in double" and resorting to manual negotiation outside the platform. U6's comment that the tool "slowed me down instead of making my work easier" sums up this sentiment.

Theme 2: Navigational and Support Deficiencies

This theme highlights a critical paradox: while the organisation has strong human support channels, the tool itself lacks the intuitive guidance users need, creating a reliance on personal contact rather than the technology.

Effective Human Support Channels: Users consistently praised the human support they received, both from the tool's external team and from their colleagues. U1 and U3 commented that the external support was described as "excellent" and "really reactive", while internal teams "are readily helping her/him on the spot".

Deficiencies in Self-Guided Learning: This strong human support, however, often exists to compensate for the tool's shortcomings. U7 and U8 indicated that users reported that they "didn't receive much training" and were often left to "figure it out on my own". U7 also comment that the tool's terminology felt "disconnected" from their daily work, making them feel unsure and hesitant to use it confidently.

Theme 3: Organisational and Behavioural Resistance

This theme describes how deeply ingrained behaviours and organisational culture can be the primary obstacle to adoption, often more so than the technology itself.

Preference for Familiarity: Many users and their colleagues actively resisted the new tool, choosing the "path of least resistance" by sticking with old methods like email and direct contact. As U8 noted, many colleagues "preferred direct contact with procurement because the tool didn't feel user-friendly." U8 also noted that this resistance led to teams spending more time "talking about how confusing it was than using it productively".

Social and Privacy Barriers: U7 and U9 described that the tool also created new social and cultural issues. It sometimes led to communication "silos", but most significantly, it raised "privacy concerns" among users who were uncomfortable with "everyone being able to see requests from other teams felt wrong". This undermined trust and made people hesitant to use it properly.

Theme 4: Opportunities for Systemic and Strategic Improvement

Users offered a clear vision for a future version of the tool that is more intelligent, integrated, and actively helps them rather than just reacting to their input.

The Need for Simplified User Experience: U6 and U7 noted that users want the tool to be simpler and more intuitive. They suggested streamlining the interface with "fewer fields, clearer categories" and starting with "simple Yes/No or multiple-choice questions" to make it less overwhelming.

Call for Deeper System Integration: The desire for a better tool went beyond mere usability. U3 indicated that users wanted deeper integration with other systems like Ariba, which would eliminate the need for redundant data entry. U1 and U5 also noted the need for technical improvements like expanded line limits and the option to handle multiple currencies.

Table 8-4 Detailed summary of thematic analysis for user perspective

Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes
1. Conditional Usability and	Positive Operational Efficiency	"RFQ streamlines process," "Intake part is useful," "collect the most info efficiently."

Functional Inconsistency	User Frustration with Complex Processes	"RFP part adds no value to complex tasks," "doing tasks in double," "negotiating outside the platform," "slowed me down instead of making my work easier."
2. Navigational and Support Deficiencies	Effective Human Support Channels	"Excellent external support," "really reactive," "internal teams are readily helping her/him on the spot."
	Deficiencies in Self-Guided Learning	"Lacked initial training/manual," "figure it out on my own," "terminology is confusing," "working it out as I went along."
3. Organisational and Behavioural Resistance	Preference for Familiarity	"Prefers direct contact with procurement," "did not save time," "colleagues preferred direct contact," "talking about how confusing it was than using it."
	Social and Privacy Barriers	"Privacy concerns," "tool creates communication silos," "everyone being able to see requests felt wrong."
4. Opportunities for Systemic and Strategic Improvement	Need for Simplified User Experience	"Needs simplified fields," "wants clearer categories," "simpler Yes/No or multiple-choice questions," "ease of use 3/10."
	Call for Deeper System Integration	"Want Ariba integration," "needs technical improvements," "expanded line limits," "option to handle multiple currencies."

Leadership Perspective:

Step 1: Familiarisation with the Data

The data from 8 leader interviews provides a comprehensive, high-level view of the tool's implementation from a strategic and organisational standpoint. The recurring tension between ambitious project goals and significant people-related challenges is a consistent feature of the data.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

Interview transcripts were analysed to produce a list of initial codes to capture key ideas. These codes include “automate manual tasks”, “support buying policy”, “biggest challenge is adoption”, “people not open to change”, “formalise quote and buy process”, “strengthen compliance”, “people lack compelling reason to use”, “compliance tells the real story”, “trends are a stimulator”, “legacy systems hinder”, “profile of people has changed”, “culture of convenience”, “little appetite for change”, “prove the tool's value”, “all-in-one platform”, “agentic AI is the future”, “built-in guidance needed”.

Step 3: Searching for Sub-themes and Themes

Initial codes are grouped into sub-themes and then organised those sub-themes into a new set of overarching, emergent themes.

Theme: Strategic Alignment and Goal Attainment

Sub-theme: Efficiency and Automation: Codes showing a focus on automate manual tasks and reduce time.

Sub-theme: Governance and Compliance: Codes related to support buying policy and formalise quote and buy process.

Theme: Barriers to Adoption: The Cultural and Behavioural Challenge

Sub-theme: Resistance to Change: Codes showing that the main issue is adoption and a lack of appetite for change.

Sub-theme: The Culture of Convenience: Codes like path of least resistance and little appetite for change point to a preference for old, simple processes.

Theme: Drivers of Change: Internal Strategy vs. External Influence

Sub-theme: High-Level External Influence: Codes that mention external factors like benchmarking with competitors and trends are a stimulator.

Sub-theme: The Primacy of Internal Drivers: Codes like compliance tells the real story and resistance is stronger internally show that internal factors are more significant.

Theme: Future Vision: Proactive Integration and Automation

Sub-theme: Strategic System Evolution: Codes that envision an all-in-one platform and discuss the future of the tool.

Sub-theme: AI and User Value Proposition: Codes related to agentic AI, orchestration tools, and proving the tool's value to drive adoption.

Step 4: Reviewing the Themes

New, emergent themes are reviewed against all the provided leader data to ensure they are accurate and comprehensive. The themes consistently reflect the core strategic and organisational narrative.

Final Thematic Analysis Overview: Leader Perspective

Theme 1: Strategic Alignment and Goal Attainment

This theme encompasses the clear, unified strategic vision that drove the tool's implementation. Leaders consistently identified the core goals as improving efficiency, automation, and compliance.

Efficiency and Automation: L1 described that the primary goal was to "reduce and automate" manual tasks to save time for both shoppers and buyers. According to L2 and L6, The intent was to streamline processes, formalise the "quote and buy" process, and enable "faster, more efficient purchasing".

Governance and Compliance: L2, L4 and L5 indicated that leaders also viewed the tool as a critical way to "strengthen compliance and standardise procurement processes", ensure "better governance and transparency", and manage tail spend in a more diligent way. L7 noted that this was a strategic move to manage risk and modernise the buying channels.

Theme 2: Barriers to Adoption: Cultural and Behavioural Challenge

Despite a clear strategic purpose, the leaders consistently identified the main challenge as not technical, but deeply rooted in user mindset and behaviour.

Resistance to Change: L1 and L4 suggested that the biggest barrier was "adoption". L1, L5 and L8 noted that people were "not open to change" and had "little appetite for change", preferring to "fall back on simple, old processes because they're easier".

The Culture of Convenience: L4 and L6 observed a "culture of convenience" where teams prefer to provide minimal information and take "the path of least resistance", which directly works against the tool's requirements for greater detail and process adherence. This creates friction between business needs and system demands.

Theme 3: Drivers of Change: Internal Strategy vs. External Influence

Leaders acknowledged that both internal and external factors drove the change, but consistently prioritised internal, strategic needs as the more compelling reason for adoption.

High-Level External Influence: L1 indicated that external pressures from competitors and industry trends were seen as a "stimulator" rather than a direct pressure. L2 noted that the company wanted to formalise its tail spend management, and L4 and L5 pointed to compliance pressures and regulations as a key driver.

The Primacy of Internal Drivers: However, leaders consistently said the primary motivation was internal. L7 noted that while external pressures exist, "most of the resistance is internal." L2 and L8 suggested that the core driver was to improve internal efficiency and formalise processes to remain competitive and profitable in the long run.

Theme 4: Future Vision: Proactive Integration and Automation

The leadership's future vision for the technology is focused on moving beyond its current limitations and creating a more proactive, integrated, and intelligent system.

Strategic System Evolution: L1 noted that leaders saw a clear opportunity to evolve the tool from its current, tactical focus to a single, "all-in-one" platform that can manage both tactical and strategic spend. L7 indicated that this would also involve consolidating multiple buying channels into one system.

Agentic AI and Value Proposition: L2 and L3 described that the most forward-looking opportunity was seen in the use of orchestration tools and agentic AI. The purpose of this technology is to automate low-value processes and create a "layer on top" of existing systems. L8 noted that this the key to proving the tool's value to users is by demonstrating that it "saves time or reduces complexity".

Table 8-5 Detailed summary for thematic analysis for leadership perspective

Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes
1. Strategic Alignment and Goal Attainment	Efficiency and Automation	"Automate manual tasks," "reduce and automate," "formalise quote and buy process," "faster, more efficient purchasing."
	Governance and Compliance	"Support buying policy," "strengthen compliance," "better governance and transparency," "manage tail spend."
2. Barriers to Adoption: The Cultural and Behavioural Challenge	Resistance to Change	"Biggest challenge is adoption," "people not open to change," "little appetite for change," "fall back on simple, old processes."
	The Culture of Convenience	"Culture of convenience," "path of least resistance," "people lack compelling reason to use," "little appetite for change."
3. Drivers of Change: Internal Strategy vs. External Influence	High-Level External Influence	"Trends are a stimulator," "benchmarking with competitors," "compliance pressures and regulations."

	The Primacy of Internal Drivers	"Compliance tells the real story," "most of the resistance is internal," "improving internal process is key," "remain competitive and profitable."
4. Future Vision: Proactive Integration and Automation	Strategic System Evolution	"All-in-one platform," "manage both tactical and strategic spend," "consolidating multiple buying channels."
	Agentic AI and Value Proposition	"Agentic AI is the future," "use of orchestration tools," "create a layer on top," "saves time or reduces complexity."

8.7 Appendix G: Informed Consent Form

Informed consent form

Title of the project:	A Dual-Perspective Case Study: Analysing the Strategic-Operational Disconnect in Digital Procurement Adoption within a Multinational FMCG Organisation / The Adoption of Digital Technologies in Procurement: Drivers, Barriers, and Opportunities—A Case Study in the FMCG Industry
Name of the researcher:	Gautam Sasikumar
Name of supervisor	Prof. Miying Yang
Researcher contact details:	
CURES reference number:	<i>CURES/26099/2025</i>
Participant identifier :	<i>Randomly Allotted</i>
Date:	04/09/2024

Part 1: Request consent to participate and note the ability to withdraw.

Please tick or sign the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
I confirm that I have been informed about this research project on 28.06.2025 and I have been allowed to ask questions.	☐	☐
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to participate, and I can withdraw from the study at <i>any time</i> , without having to give a reason.	☐	☐
I understand that taking part in the study involves semi structured interviews	☐	☐

Part 2: Use of the information in the study.

Please tick or sign the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
I understand that information I provide will be used for understanding how to correlate industry insights for the thesis	☐	☐
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the thesis requirement.	☐	☐
I understand that, if other participants in the research project are identifiable and/or are made known to me throughout the course of my participation in this research project, I confirm that I agree to maintain their confidentiality and will not divulge any personal data or comments made that may allow them to be identified.	☐	☐
I understand that the data I provide will be used by Cranfield University for the purpose of this research. The data will be stored on the University's network that can only be accessed by authorised users, in line with UK Data Protection Act 2018 whilst the research project is in process.	☐	☐
I understand that the data I provide will be used by Cranfield University for the purpose of research. The data (and any backups) will be stored in securely encrypted areas, only accessible by authorised researchers in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018 & our ethical code of conduct whilst the research project is in process.	☐	☐

Future use and reuse of the information by others.

Please tick or sign the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
I give permission for the researcher that I provide to be deposited in user depository so it can be used for future research and learning.	☐	☐

<p>Interviews will be recorded and securely stored on the Cranfield University network as audio files. These audio files will be securely deleted as soon as they are no longer required.</p> <p>The recordings will be transcribed and saved as text files. These files (and any backups) will also be securely deleted as soon as they are no longer required.</p> <p>Anonymised transcripts will be created, by removing or replacing identifiers such as name, age, and location. These anonymised transcripts may be quoted from or published in full, in support of findings (e.g. in journal articles, conference papers</p> <p>I am happy for my anonymised transcript to be published:</p> <p>Video recordings will be securely stored on the Cranfield University network. These video files will be securely deleted as soon as they are no longer required.</p> <p>Still images (extracts) of the videos will be taken to provide evidence for the research findings. These images will also be securely deleted as soon as possible. Where we wish to publish images online in support of the research, we will contact you for permission to do so.</p> <p>The videos will be analysed to aggregate findings such as timings, positions, etc. Any analysis will attempt to remove any personal descriptors but where this is not possible further permission(s) will be sought.</p> <p>I understand that the final analysis will be published in support of the research findings</p>	☐	☐
<p>Analytical software will be used to aggregate the results of the research and every reasonable step will be taken to anonymise the data</p>	☐	☐

I understand that the aggregated data will be published in support of the research findings.		
<p>I understand that the discussions will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.</p> <p>The analysis will be only used for this research project and no other purpose.</p> <p>Any results in the report to the client will not be available to me for commercial reasons.</p> <p>I will respect the confidentiality of the others taking part in the workshops by not discussing comments made outside of the room.</p>	☐	☐

I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided on this form and give my consent to taking part in this research and confirm that I will abide by any stipulations, therein, required of me.

Participant's signature:		Date:	
Participant's name:			
Researcher's signature:	Gautam Sasikumar	Date:	04/09/2025

One copy of this form must be given to the participant and one copy held by the researcher.

***For the host organisation, relevant boxes involving storage and submission of personal information/video/audio recordings to networks/storages have been deemed irrelevant as these storage activities are not conducted to protect privacy of interviewees.**