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Beyond a static documentation environment: A framework for transforming Knowledge Management Systems into user-centric service platforms

Designing a user-centered internal service to support the
Purchasing Operations Process in a retail enterprise

Master's thesis in Quality and Operations Management

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Abstract

In today's dynamic business environment, effective knowledge management is critical for organizations to leverage their operational know-how. This qualitative single case study investigates the documentation environment within the Purchasing Operations Process of a global retail enterprise. Although intended to align daily operational activities with overarching strategic goals, the current system is underutilized, resulting in a disconnect between management expectations and user performance. Through empirical data and theoretical analysis, the findings reveal distinct organizational gaps. Users require practical, role-specific guidance, visual support, accessible language, and clear updates to effectively apply documented knowledge. Conversely, management needs the system to act as a structured, reliable "single source of truth" that ensures strategic alignment. The analysis demonstrates that while the documentation environment should function as a dynamic Knowledge Management System (KMS), it currently operates as a static repository where knowledge is difficult to retrieve and apply in daily routines.

To resolve this, the thesis contributes a theoretical framework that reconceptualizes the documentation environment from a mere documentation repository into a user-centered service platform. This framework illustrates how both user and management *needs* can be seamlessly integrated to actively facilitate mutual value creation within the organization.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge Management System, Service Management, documentation environment, knowledge transfer, user needs, management needs, service platform, value creation.

Contents

List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	ix
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Organizational context and documentation environment	1
1.2 Problematization	2
1.3 Aim	3
1.4 Research questions	4
1.5 Delimitations	5
2 Theoretical Framework	7
2.1 Service Management	7
2.1.1 Service-Dominant Logic	8
2.1.2 Service Quality	9
2.1.3 Service Design and Service Platform	10
2.2 Knowledge Management	12
2.2.1 Tacit and Explicit Knowledge	13
2.2.2 SECI model	13
2.2.3 Knowledge Management System	15
2.2.4 Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Transfer	16
2.3 Relationship between theoretical concepts	18
3 Methodology	22
3.1 Research design overview	22
3.2 Research design	25
3.3 Empirical context	25
3.4 Sampling strategy	26
3.5 Data collection	28
3.6 Data analysis	32
3.7 Quality of the study	34
3.8 Ethical aspects	35
4 Empirical Findings	36
4.1 User <i>needs</i>	36
4.2 Management <i>needs</i>	41
4.3 The documentation environment	44

5	Analysis	49
5.1	AS IS situation	49
5.1.1	User needs and current value-in-use gaps	49
5.1.2	Value facilitation from a management <i>need</i> perspective	51
5.1.3	The documentation environment as a KMS	53
5.2	TO BE situation	54
5.2.1	Identifying value co-creation	54
5.2.2	Value gaps between user and management <i>needs</i>	60
5.2.3	The KMS transformed into a user-centered service platform	62
6	Conclusion	64
6.1	Transferability	66
6.2	Future Research	66
6.3	Limitations	66
6.4	Theoretical and practical contribution	67
	References	69
A	Main interview structure for users and selected management participant	I
B	Workshop structures	III
C	Interview summary structure	V
D	Empirical support for identified user <i>needs</i>	VI
E	Empirical support for identified management <i>needs</i>	XI

List of Figures

1.1	Analytical framework illustrating the AS IS and TO BE situations . .	4
2.1	Comparison of theoretical value co-creation and thesis study. Adapted from (Grönroos, 2015).	8
2.2	Service Quality Model. Extracted from Parasuraman et al. (1985) . .	9
2.3	Conceptual integration of service design within a service platform. . .	12
2.4	Modes of the Knowledge Creation. Extracted from Nonaka (1994). . .	14
2.5	Visual integration of the theoretical concepts. Own illustration. . . .	20
5.1	KMS as a service platform framework	62

List of Tables

3.1	Research design overview	23
3.2	Overview of the interview respondents	29
3.3	Overview of the workshop participants	31
4.1	Summary of user needs	40
4.2	Management <i>needs</i> for the documentation environment	43
4.3	Summary of the current state of the documentation environment . . .	47
5.1	User <i>needs</i> as analytical gaps	50
5.2	Management <i>needs</i> as value facilitation gaps	52
5.3	Overlapping <i>needs</i> in the AS IS documentation environment	55
5.4	Integration of overlapping needs and gaps	61
D.1	Empirical support for identified user needs	VI
E.1	Empirical support for identified management <i>needs</i>	XI

1

Introduction

This thesis is conducted in collaboration with a global retail enterprise and focuses on the documentation environment supporting the purchasing end-to-end process, referred to as the Purchasing Operations Process. In this study, the documentation environment refers to where users are expected to access the organization's ways of working for the Purchasing Operations Process.

In this thesis, the Purchasing Operations Process is used as the empirical context of the study. It refers to the broader purchasing flow, from creating and onboarding a new supplier through later stages of purchasing-related work. The focus is therefore not on purchasing as a function in itself, but on how the documentation environment supports users and management within this process.

Despite its role in supporting the process, there are indications that the current documentation environment does not fully support how work is carried out in practice. To explore this, the documentation environment is approached as an internal service, and the thesis adopts a user-centered perspective to understand how it can better support daily operations while contributing to the overall Purchasing Operations Process. This makes service quality relevant, since the study focuses on how users experience the documentation environment as support in their daily work.

1.1 Organizational context and documentation environment

The studied organization operates on a global scale and is guided by a foundation of vision and core values that shape its long-term direction. Based on this foundation, objectives are defined at strategic and operational levels. These objectives influence how individual divisions develop their strategies, which are then translated into business plans. The business plans define expected outcomes, key performance indicators (KPIs), and the scope of each division's responsibilities.

Business plans express strategic intent, but this intent must be translated into daily purchasing work. Within the Purchasing Operations Process, this takes place through roles that interact directly with suppliers, such as business developers, product engineers, and supply planners. Through their daily activities, these actors put the organization's strategic direction into practice. To support this translation, their work needs to align with management *needs* and the organization's ways of working. This creates a *need* for clear support that helps users carry out operational tasks in line with organizational expectations.

This alignment between strategy and daily operations is intended to be supported by

the organization's documentation environment. In this thesis, the documentation environment refers to the system through which users are expected to access the organization's ways of working in the Purchasing Operations Process. Here, ways of working refers to documented guidance, such as procedures and working methods, that helps users understand how purchasing-related tasks are expected to be carried out. The documentation environment is therefore intended to give users a shared point of reference and make knowledge available in a form that supports how tasks are carried out across the process.

Users are expected to use the documentation environment throughout different stages of the supplier lifecycle. For example, during supplier onboarding, it is intended to provide guidance on eligibility checks, risk assessment, and approval steps. During ongoing operations, it is intended to support tasks such as supplier setup, pricing, ordering, and contract management. It is also intended to support supplier offboarding by providing guidance on how those activities should be handled.

1.2 Problematization

From a practical perspective, the studied organization faces a challenge in making purchasing-related knowledge available across a large and complex organization. Considering that the company has more than 200,000 employees and operates across seven regions, a large amount of information needs to be shared within the Purchasing Operations Process. Since users work in different roles and operational categories across the organization in different regions, they may not need the same type of support in their daily work. For example, what is relevant for one role or region may not be relevant in the same way for another. This makes it important that the documentation environment can support users in relation to their specific work context.

At the same time, the documentation environment is intended to reflect both management *needs* and user *needs* in relation to the organization's strategic direction. From a management perspective, it is meant to communicate the organization's ways of working within the Purchasing Operations Process and support the translation of strategic intent into daily purchasing work. From a user perspective, it is expected to support daily work in a way that is relevant and workable in practice. However, the intended role of the documentation environment may not always be reflected in daily work. Although documentation is available, it is not clear whether it functions as the common source of guidance it is expected to be. The practical problem is therefore not only about whether information exists, but also about how knowledge is made available and used in daily purchasing work.

From a theoretical perspective, this creates a *need* to understand the documentation environment as more than a static documentation repository. Previous research has established a strong foundation connecting Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) with service-oriented approaches. For instance, Balco and Drahošová (2016) argued that viewing a KMS as a service from a cloud computing perspective yields significant organizational benefits. Similarly, Gadola et al. (2026) analyzed knowledge sharing through the lens of intra-organizational collaboration by focusing on the design and implementation of modular platforms. Furthermore, Haug (2024)

conceptualized the conditions for KMS success, emphasizing that "KMS quality" which is influenced by its service characteristics and delivery methods, performing as critical determinant. While these studies highlight the importance of service elements in knowledge management, this thesis recognizes the *need* of analyzing the KMS through a more comprehensive service perspective. Specifically, it builds upon Balco and Drahošová (2016)'s foundation by exploring exactly how this service provides and co-creates value. It extends Gadola et al. (2026)'s focus by treating the KMS as a holistic service platform rather than only a digital architecture. Finally, it operationalizes Haug (2024)'s concept of KMS quality by assessing how to secure quality when transferring knowledge.

Consequently, this thesis approaches the documentation environment as an internal service designed to facilitate knowledge transfer by integrating management and users *needs*. In this context, service quality becomes paramount, as the system must be evaluated based on how users actually experience and utilize its support in their daily routines. The core problem, therefore, lies in how knowledge is managed through the platform. To resolve this, it is essential to examine the relationship and potential friction between the intended strategic purpose of the documentation environment and its actual operational use within the Purchasing Operations Process.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to assess user and management *needs* in relation to the documentation environment supporting the Purchasing Operations Process. Based on this assessment, the thesis conceptualizes a service platform framework that shows how these *needs* can be integrated to support value creation for both users and management.

To do so, the study adopts a perspective grounded in service management, which views organizations as systems and users as customers where value is created through services and interactions between actors (Grönroos, 2007). In this thesis, the users of the documentation environment are viewed as customers. Within this theory, service-dominant logic further emphasizes that value emerges through the application of knowledge and skills in interaction between actors rather than being embedded in products or systems (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Based on these concepts, the thesis applies an analytical framework that distinguishes between the AS IS and TO BE situations, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. In the AS IS situation, the framework focuses on user *needs*, management *needs*, and the current documentation environment. This reflects the empirical focus of the thesis, where the documentation environment is assessed in relation to what users and management need from it.

In the TO BE situation, the documentation environment is conceptualized as a service platform where user *needs* and management *needs* can be integrated. This is informed by research suggesting that value can emerge through the interaction of three interdependent actors rather than only through a dyadic relationship (Benoit et al., 2017). In this thesis, the three interdependent elements are users, management, and the service platform. Their interaction reflects the concept of value

co-creation within the service system (Grönroos, 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

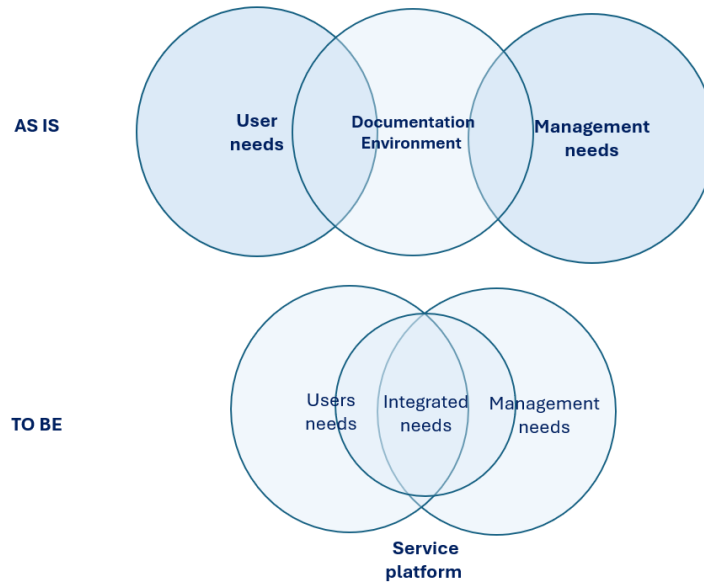


Figure 1.1: Analytical framework illustrating the AS IS and TO BE situations

Building on this framework, the TO BE situation focuses on how the documentation environment can be conceptualized as a service platform that integrates both user and management *needs*. From a service management perspective, the effectiveness of such a platform depends not only on the technical availability of information, but also on how the service is experienced and used in practice (Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

The three spheres of the framework are further described below:

1. **User *needs*:** This sphere focuses on how employees use the current documentation environment and what they need from it in their daily work. It examines how users work with the documented ways of working when carrying out purchasing-related tasks. In this way, the study addresses how the documentation environment supports work in practice.
2. **Management *needs*:** This sphere focuses on what management requires the documentation environment to communicate and support within the organization. It addresses how management wants the organization's ways of working to be reflected in the documentation environment and what information is needed to maintain alignment with the organizational direction.
3. **Service platform:** This sphere focuses on how the documentation environment can be conceptualized as a service platform that brings together user *needs* and management *needs*. It also addresses how knowledge can be made available and used within the Purchasing Operations Process .

1.4 Research questions

The thesis first defines the AS IS situation. Based on the existing documentation environment for Purchasing Operations Process documentation, the study aims to

understand user *needs* from the perspective of current use with important attention to users' pain points when accessing the tool. Hence, sphere 1 (user *needs*) connects to the following research question:

RQ1: What are the users' *needs* regarding the documentation environment within the Purchasing Operations Process ?

In addition to the user perspective, the study also examines the management perspective. More specifically, it focuses on what management wants to communicate through the documentation environment and how this relates to the organization's strategy. Hence, sphere 2, management *needs*, connects to the following research question:

RQ2: What management *needs* should be reflected in the documentation environment to support the alignment of the Purchasing Operations Process with the organization's strategy?

Once the AS IS situation is empirically mapped, the study brings the user and management spheres together by comparing the current state of the documentation environment with their respective *needs* and expectations. Building on this synthesis, the thesis aims to identify how the documentation environment can integrate these *needs* and support both groups simultaneously. This is addressed in the proposed TO-BE situation by exploring how the documentation environment can be conceptualized as a service platform that responds to the identified *needs* and facilitates value creation. Hence, the third sphere connects to the following research question:

RQ3: How can the documentation environment for the Purchasing Operations Process be conceptualized as a service platform that integrates users and management *needs*?

In the end, the study will develop a service platform framework that considers the *needs* for both users and management and that should be reflected in the service platform.

1.5 Delimitations

This thesis is delimited to the current AS IS documentation environment supporting the Purchasing Operations Process . The focus is on understanding the documentation environment within this specific process. Since the study is limited to the Purchasing Operations Process , the findings are closely connected to this context and may not fully apply to other processes within the organization. The outcome of the study is an assessment of the current situation together with practical suggestions for improvement.

The scope is also delimited to the documentation environment and its role in supporting the Purchasing Operations Process . This means that the thesis focuses on how purchasing-related knowledge and ways of working are made available to users through the documentation environment. The study does not cover the full purchasing organization. It also does not examine all systems used in purchasing work. Instead, the focus remains on the documentation environment and its role in supporting daily work within the Purchasing Operations Process .

The thesis is further delimited in terms of implementation. It does not cover how proposed improvements should be implemented and does not include a detailed roadmap. The work also does not evaluate specific tools from other processes that could overlap with the Purchasing Operations Process . Ongoing documentation changes, including the planned move of work methods to the cloud, are only considered at a general level to understand their potential influence on the documentation environment. Possible next steps are therefore briefly mentioned as recommendations for future work.

The empirical focus is delimited to workshops, semi-structured interviews, and a review of the current documentation environment. These sources were selected to understand the current situation from the perspectives included in the study. The thesis does not include prototype testing or evaluation of implementation outcomes. Therefore, the suggestions presented in the thesis are based on the AS IS assessment and the identified *needs* rather than on tested future solutions.

2

Theoretical Framework

This thesis has a conceptual foundation primarily on service management and knowledge management theories. In this section, literature is presented on each subject and how the conceptualization of the documentation environment seen as a service platform was done. In the end, how these two theories connect to benefit knowledge transfer in organizations is explained.

2.1 Service Management

Since the early 1980s, businesses and organizations have experienced a significant shift from focusing solely on “core” products to recognizing services as a way to open the possibility of increased competitive advantage and as a main driver for value creation (Vandermerwe & Erixon, 2023; Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988). In increasingly competitive and globalized markets, organizations face the risk of falling into the commodity trap and experiencing severe economic challenges if they rely solely on their traditional goods-dominant offerings (Chesbrough, 2011; Vandermerwe & Erixon, 2023).

Consequently, there is a strategic transition toward organizations changing their traditional business models to focus on value-added services to differentiate themselves, sustain their market position, and access new revenue streams (Forkmann et al., 2017). This shift acknowledges that the context in which value is delivered has fundamentally changed (Vandermerwe & Erixon, 2023), requiring organizations to adopt a service-oriented perspective to meet evolving user expectations and leverage new technological capabilities (Ostrom et al., 2015).

Although this transition has been applied mostly to the core external offerings of businesses, Vandermerwe and Erixon (2023) emphasize that the trend of the 2020s is “anything-as-a-service,” driven by the widespread availability of cloud computing and the shift from ownership to access-based models.

In that sense, this thesis will analyze which characteristics of these new service trends need to be applied in an internal service context. Recent research supports this shift inward, demonstrating that service platforms and service-oriented thinking are increasingly adopted within established organizations to promote intra-organizational collaboration, overcome resource scarcity, and enhance internal efficiency (Gadola et al., 2026). To properly understand how to successfully design this internal service, it is necessary to explore the underlying logic, quality measures, and design principles of service management.

2.1.1 Service-Dominant Logic

Service-Dominant (S-D) logic represents a shift from traditional goods-dominant models, where value is embedded statically in a product, to a framework where service is the fundamental basis of exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). At the core of S-D logic is the concept of value co-creation, which implies that value is not created and delivered solely by organizations acting as “providers” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Instead, value is always co-created, fundamentally including the customer as a coproducer who determines the value based on how useful the service is for them (Grönroos, 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

In the literature, this phenomenon is referred to as “value-in-use,” which presents a notable difference from its counterpart, “value-in-exchange.” While value-in-exchange materializes at a particular point in time, often determined by the price paid, value-in-use evolves dynamically over time during the usage or consumption process, focusing on the actual purpose and worth it serves for the customer (Grönroos, 2015). Consequently, value co-creation in this context is characterized by interactions across main spheres: the provider sphere and the customer sphere (Grönroos, 2015). The provider acts primarily as a value facilitator that can only offer value propositions, whereas the customer is actively engaged in integrating resources to create value (Grönroos, 2015; Lusch & Nambisan, 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). By understanding the intersection point of these spheres, referred to as the joint sphere, direct interactions occur, and value-in-use can be successfully co-created (Grönroos, 2015).

Therefore, this thesis acknowledges that the value of an internal service cannot be determined in isolation; rather, it emerges phenomenologically when organizational actors interact with the service offering to fulfill their specific *needs* (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). As Figure 2.1 shows, in this context, the provider is represented by management (who facilitates the value-in-use offer through the service) and the customer by users (who utilize the service and provide their *needs* to co-create value).

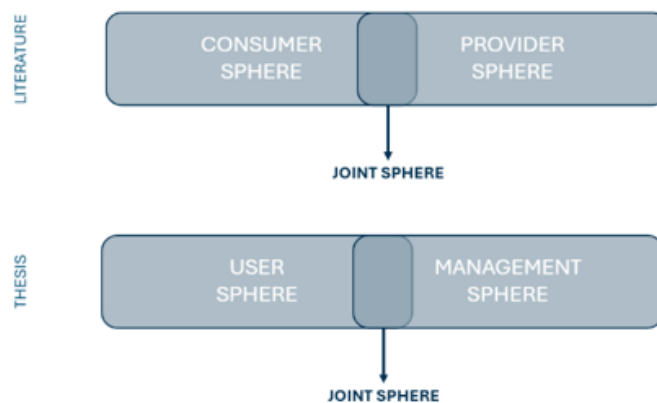


Figure 2.1: Comparison of theoretical value co-creation and thesis study. Adapted from (Grönroos, 2015).

2.1.2 Service Quality

To understand how a service successfully meets user *needs*, it is necessary to evaluate service quality. Andreassen et al. (2016) posit that in order to reach customer satisfaction, service quality must be achieved as an antecedent. Unlike the usual understanding of quality related to physical goods, service quality is much more difficult for the consumer to evaluate due to the intangible, heterogeneous, and inseparable nature of services (Parasuraman et al., 1988). To operationalize this evaluation, Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed the SERVQUAL model, which measures perceptions of service quality across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Because of service intangibility, organizations usually have difficulties identifying the consumer’s true perception of quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985). A foundational framework for this assessment is the GAP model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985), shown in Figure 2.2.

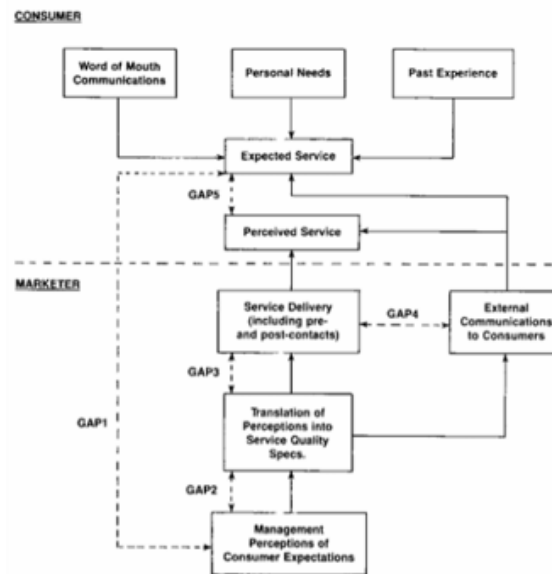


Figure 2.2: Service Quality Model. Extracted from Parasuraman et al. (1985)

In this model, the authors initially referred to the actors as “marketers” and “consumers,” identifying discrepancies between expectations and actual service delivery from both perspectives (Parasuraman et al., 1985). When analyzing internal services, and based on the spheres presented in section 2.1.1, the provider acts as management and the consumer acts as the internal user. Based on this context and the scope of the study, analyzing how good these two spheres connect when developing a service is primarily relevant (GAP 1) as to how much the sphere of the user is taken into action for the service delivery (GAP 5).

On one hand, GAP 1 (the expected service-management perception gap) occurs when management fails to accurately understand what users expect or need from a service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). If service providers misunderstand the features that meet user *needs*, the resulting service specifications will be fundamentally flawed, preventing the delivery of high-quality service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In other words, a discrepancy between management’s perceptions and the users’ actual

expectations directly and negatively impacts the overall evaluation of the service (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

On the other hand, GAP 5 (the expected service-perceived service gap) represents the ultimate measure of service quality from the user's perspective Parasuraman et al. (1985). It highlights that the overall quality perceived by the user is a function of the magnitude and direction of the discrepancy between what they initially expected and how they experienced the actual service performance (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In synthesis, organizations need to acknowledge how these underlying gaps affect the internal service. As proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985), the ultimate user perception of quality (GAP 5) is a direct function of the other gaps occurring on the management's side, primarily their misunderstanding of user expectations (GAP 1). Therefore, by proactively identifying and closing GAP 1, management has the opportunity to close GAP 5, ensuring a service delivery that offers high-quality performance and ultimately enhances overall organizational satisfaction and value creation (Andreassen et al., 2016; Parasuraman et al., 1985).

2.1.3 Service Design and Service Platform

The discussion of value co-creation and service quality inherently leads to the concept of service design. Service design is defined as the activity of planning and organizing the infrastructure, communication, people, and material components of a service to improve both its quality and the interaction between the provider and the user (Andreassen et al., 2016). It is, in essence, the concept that integrates the theoretical *need* for S-D logic with a practical consideration of how service quality should be achieved, drawing on synergies with design thinking (Andreassen et al., 2016; Plattner et al., 2011).

In that sense, a core principle of service design is user-centricity, which captures and understands the holistic user experience by putting the user first and the organization second (Andreassen et al., 2016; Plattner et al., 2011). User-centricity ensures that the service acknowledges how users connect to it; by taking the users' perspective in an outside-in approach, service design can enhance the overall experience and effectively close any existing quality gaps (Andreassen et al., 2016).

However, for service design to be successfully executed, in addition to acknowledging the actors (management as providers and employees as users) and their *needs*, it is also necessary to define the environment where the value co-creation occurs (Andreassen et al., 2016; Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). This interaction can happen in different contexts depending on the nature of the service (Wirtz et al., 2019). In a digitalized era, this interaction environment is conceptualized as a service system that is embedded within a digital platform (Wirtz et al., 2019). Maglio and Spohrer (2008) define a service system as a dynamic value co-creation configuration of resources, connected to people and shared information within technology. Building on this, Nambisan (2017) highlights that digital platforms provide the shared modular structure necessary to host these complementary offerings and facilitate interactions. Thus, the platform acts as a flexible environment that pushes value creation forward for the user (Nambisan, 2017).

Consequently, digital platforms should not be seen as static services; rather, they

should be understood as active ecosystems that allow continuous interaction (Nambisan, 2017). Grönroos and Voima (2013) explain this dynamic through the lens of “value spheres”: the provider sphere, the joint sphere, and the customer sphere. In an organizational context, the provider acts strictly as a value facilitator by designing, structuring, and providing the digital platform (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). However, the actual value-in-use is only realized in the customer’s sphere when the service is accessed, interacted with, and its offering is applied in daily routines (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). To bridge these spheres, the digital platform can operate as part of the joint sphere: including the co-creation environment (Nambisan, 2017). By applying user-centricity in the design of these digital platforms, organizations can ensure that their digital infrastructure provides a functional service that successfully aligns *needs* from both the provider and the customer perspectives (Maglio & Spohrer, 2008; Nambisan, 2017).

Different authors highlight that value co-creation between the provider and customer spheres frequently takes place within a digital platform; a concept closely tied to service design principles (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). In the context of corporate performance, for instance, digital platforms are increasingly utilized to facilitate knowledge sharing. Broadly, a digital platform encompasses an entire ecosystem that “combines technologies, processes, applications and people to create, interact and distribute products, services and information”, thereby mediating interactions between end-users and producers. However, while the term platform is commonly used when designing products, software, or infrastructure (Eisenmann et al., 2006), Löfberg and Åkesson (2018) argue that it must be understood as more than purely a technological tool; rather, it is an enabler of co-creation.

Analyzing the platform concept from a service perspective, Löfberg and Åkesson (2018) build upon earlier literature to redefine its core function. For instance, Chesbrough (2011) noted that service efficiency can be improved by dividing a platform into two parts: an internal, standardized back-end and an adaptable front-end that invites customers to co-create value. Furthermore, when Lusch and Nambisan (2015) conceptualized the service platform, they described it as “a modular structure” that “facilitates the interaction of different actors and resources”, allowing the service to be created in various forms. Due to this modular nature, a service platform can offer multiple value propositions beyond its core intended offering (Löfberg & Åkesson, 2018). In the same vein, earlier studies emphasized that these diverse value propositions depend heavily on the interaction and the capabilities of the actors involved. This dynamic makes it relevant to approach the platform with a clear business logic, treating it as an active service offering (Löfberg & Åkesson, 2018).

In the context of this thesis, and in alignment with the service perspective outlined by Löfberg and Åkesson (2018), the organization’s documentation environment is approached precisely as a service platform where co-creation occurs. By treating the sharing of ways of working as a service platform, the organization shifts from utilizing a static documentation environment to deploying a dynamic, user-centered service that facilitates value co-creation between the management and user spheres (Gadola et al., 2026), so that a quality service can be provided creating both management and user satisfaction.

As presented in Figure 2.3, this perspective clearly establishes the three main spheres

of service management applied to this research: management (representing the provider sphere that facilitates the service), the users (representing the customer sphere that realizes value-in-use), and the service platform (representing the environment of the joint sphere where value co-creation happens for this specific context). Ultimately, this service platform structures information in a way that aligns the daily operational experiences of the users with the overarching goals of management, enabling efficient resource use and value co-creation across departments while maintaining a strict user-centric focus (Gadola et al., 2026; Sjödin et al., 2020).

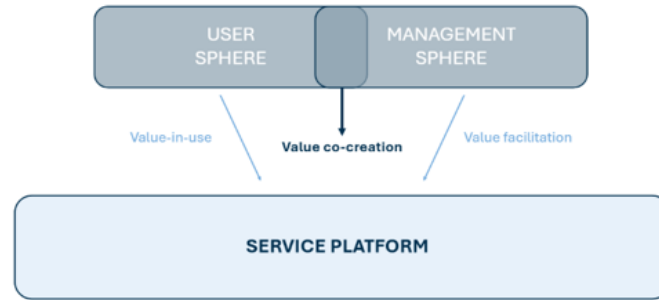


Figure 2.3: Conceptual integration of service design within a service platform.

Note. This original model illustrates the conceptual integration of value spheres and digital infrastructure, based on the theoretical frameworks provided by Grönroos and Voima (2013) and Nambisan (2017).

2.2 Knowledge Management

Business organizations today are characterized by a dynamic and competitive environment, making organizational knowledge a valuable asset and the “lifeblood” of a firm (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). Thus, the knowledge-based view of the firm posits that for an organization to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage, it must understand how knowledge is managed, combined, and applied across its resources (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Grant, 1996).

To properly assess knowledge management, distinguishing knowledge from information is key. Nonaka (1994) argues that information is simply a flow of messages, whereas knowledge is created and organized by this very flow of information, anchored on the commitment and beliefs of its holder. By adopting a traditional epistemological approach, Nonaka (1994) defines knowledge as a “justified true belief,” emphasizing that knowledge is not a static object, but an active, dynamic human process of justification. This conceptualization forms one of the core foundations of knowledge management theory, and this thesis adopts this definition as its primary premise.

Building on this foundation, knowledge management is defined as the discipline and continuous process of identifying, creating, sharing, transferring, and storing collective knowledge within an organization (Uden et al., 2018). Effective knowledge management yields numerous benefits, such as fostering innovation, improving overall performance, and responding efficiently to operational challenges (Alavi & Leidner,

2001; Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). In an organizational context, knowledge is not considered a static resource, but rather a dynamic one that is deeply embedded in individuals, routines, tasks, tools, and social networks (Argote, 2013; Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). Therefore, effective knowledge management *needs* a comprehensive understanding of the nature of knowledge itself, the processes through which it is created and transformed, and the systems, which are increasingly digital in today's world, that facilitate its flow across the organization to ensure that valuable expertise is not lost (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

2.2.1 Tacit and Explicit Knowledge

In organizational contexts, knowledge acts as the ultimate “source of truth” and is broadly classified into two dimensions: tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994; Polanyi, 1966). On one hand, explicit knowledge is formal, systematic, and easily codified into mediums such as documents or databases Alavi and Leidner (2001) and Nonaka (1994). Because of its structured nature, explicit knowledge can be aggregated at a single location, stored in objective forms, and appropriated or shared without the direct participation of the “knowing subject” (Lam, 2000).

On the other hand, tacit knowledge is highly personal, deeply rooted in action, experiences, and specific contexts, making it difficult to formalize or communicate (Nonaka, 1994). Furthermore, tacit knowledge is comprised of two underlying elements: a technical component and a cognitive component (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994). The technical element refers to practical knowledge that people develop through practice and observation (Nonaka, 1994). The cognitive element refers to the assumptions and ways of thinking that shape how individuals understand their world. (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994).

In the scope of this research, these characteristics of knowledge align directly with the different actors involved and their corresponding *needs*. Tacit knowledge represents the dimension mostly relied upon by senior employees and represents empirical knowledge: the day-to-day realities, the cognitive mental models used to solve problems, and the ad-hoc technical skills they have developed over time. Meanwhile, explicit knowledge represents the dimension that seeks to structure the ways of working (including the knowledge within the organization) in a standardized way that allows transferability. This means relying on formal documentation that ensures operational activities are aligned with the global guidelines and strategic frameworks built by the organization.

2.2.2 SECI model

In organizational contexts, knowledge acts as the ultimate “source of truth” and is broadly classified into two dimensions: tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994; Polanyi, 1966). On one hand, explicit knowledge is knowledge that is easy to write down and share, such as information stored in a database (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994). Because of its structured nature, explicit knowledge can be aggregated at a single location, stored in objective forms, and appropriated or shared without the direct participation of the “knowing subject” (Lam, 2000).

On the other hand, tacit knowledge, in contrast, is harder to write down because it is based on what people learn through experience and the situations in which they work (Nonaka, 1994). Furthermore, tacit knowledge is comprised of two underlying elements: a technical component and a cognitive component (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994). The technical element consists of concrete know-how, crafts, and skills acquired through practice and observation Nonaka (1994). The cognitive element refers to the mental models, beliefs, and viewpoints that provide the perspectives through which individuals perceive and define their world Alavi and Leidner (2001) and Nonaka (1994).

In the scope of this research, these characteristics of knowledge align directly with the different actors involved and their corresponding *needs*. Tacit knowledge represents the dimension mostly relied upon by senior employees and represents empirical knowledge: the day-to-day realities, the cognitive mental models used to solve problems, and the ad-hoc technical skills they have developed over time. Meanwhile, explicit knowledge represents the dimension that seeks to structure the ways of working (including the knowledge within the organization) in a standardized way that allows transferability. This means relying on formal documentation that ensures operational activities are aligned with the global guidelines and strategic frameworks built by the organization. As Figure 2.4 illustrates, the interaction between these two dimensions is fundamental for organizational learning.

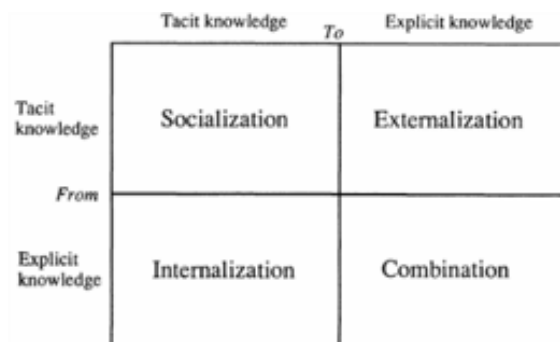


Figure 2.4: Modes of the Knowledge Creation. Extracted from Nonaka (1994).

Two of these transformations keep the same dimension of knowledge. On one hand, socialization involves sharing tacit knowledge directly through social interactions, observation, imitation, and shared experiences, which connects to how organizational cultures are set up (Nonaka, 1994). On the other hand, combination merges different bodies of explicit knowledge that sorts, adds one into another, and categorizes these explicit pieces, and by that, the process creates a more complex and systematic set of knowledge that can be easily distributed across the organization (Nonaka, 1994).

However, the other two transformations require a deliberate effort to bridge the gap between empirical experience, what people know because of years of applying it, and formalized systems, how organizations structure and set up the information (Nonaka, 1994). These “critical modes” are externalization and internalization (Nonaka, 1994; Tsai & Lee, 2006).

Externalization is the process of transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowl-

edge (Nonaka, 1994). This occurs when the deep, experience-based know-how of employees is translated into concrete concepts, frameworks, and documented procedures that can be shared across the organization (Forkmann et al., 2017). In practice, it means capturing personal, ad-hoc ways of working and codifying them into manuals, guidelines, or support tools to reduce transaction costs and avoid dependency on tacit knowledge alone (Forkmann et al., 2017; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Externalization often relies on continuous dialogue, collective reflection, and the use of metaphors to capture what is otherwise difficult to communicate (Nonaka, 1994).

Internalization is the reverse process, where explicit knowledge is converted back into tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). In practice, it strongly resembles the “learning by doing” mentality (Nonaka, 1994; Tsai & Lee, 2006). Internalization happens when individuals apply explicit rules, documented procedures, or new frameworks to their daily tasks. This means that the system gives the users the opportunity to test the new formalized concepts in real situations, absorbing the knowledge and embedding it into their personal, intuitive work routines (Forkmann et al., 2017; Tsai & Lee, 2006). A complete learning cycle ensures that explicit knowledge does not remain inert in a database, but is transformed into actionable expertise, ultimately enhancing the individual’s capability and the organization’s competitiveness (Tsai & Lee, 2006).

This understanding of knowledge transformation is key because competitive advantage does not come solely from possessing knowledge, but from the organization’s dynamic capability to continuously transform it so it can apply it in the organization’s activities (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994). According to Nonaka (1994), an organization’s true “core competence” that produces sustainable competitive advantage lies specifically in its management capability to trigger and sustain the knowledge creation spiral.

Organizations can strategize around this by recognizing that while knowledge is created and developed by individuals, the role of providing the “forum” that allows the knowledge to be transformed, shared and transferred lies on the organization itself (Nonaka, 1994). Forkmann et al. (2017) point out that for organizations to do so, they require building “ambidextrous knowledge management capacities,” such as deploying tools like knowledge databases (for explicit knowledge) and social structures (for tacit knowledge) simultaneously. By doing so, the organization can proactively control the knowledge spiral, ensuring that empirical insights do not remain isolated but are captured, codified, and reapplied effectively across the entire company (Forkmann et al., 2017; Nonaka, 1994).

2.2.3 Knowledge Management System

A Knowledge Management System (KMS) is an information system developed to support and enhance the organizational processes of knowledge creation, facilitating storage, retrieval, transfer, and application through the development of technology solutions (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Throughout its process, it is intended to be involved in capturing and storing the expertise within the organization, utilizing it as a reference base for tackling issues or searching for continuous improvements

(Cristache et al., 2025).

In today's organizations, a KMS often manages knowledge through structured digital repositories that capture explicit knowledge as documented organizational memory, helping to prevent knowledge loss and reduce the effort needed to search for information (Balco & Drahošová, 2016; Haug, 2024). Furthermore, advanced KMSs provide opportunities beyond simple storage; they enable organizations to code and share best practices, establish higher-level corporate knowledge directories, and create networks of knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). By offering a setup that directs users to specific expertise, the system facilitates the social networks that connect individuals, thus guiding employees to the right human sources when complex problems arise that require tacit knowledge exchange (Haug, 2024).

Haug (2024) emphasized that KMS have the purpose of allowing knowledge sharing and that they (the KMS) could support in the ways of codifying knowledge. This means that explicit knowledge registered by someone has a place where it can be shared to another person(s). Additionally, KMS supports personalization by providing the environment where social interactions occur so tacit knowledge can be shared (Haug, 2024). Despite these relevant uses of KMS, organizations could face several challenges regarding the use and sustainability of them (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Haug, 2024; Watson & Hewett, 2006). Implementing a system does not automatically guarantee that knowledge will be shared nor applied (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). A primary challenge is how KMS can provide value, and as Haug (2024) explains, the system should contain an "adequately extensive knowledge" so the user don't experience searching for things they can't find in the system and in the long run, prevents them to keep using the KMS.

Another challenge is system maintenance; as environmental dynamism forces rapid changes in the organizations, the knowledge within the KMS must be constantly updated to the changes applied in the organizations and at the same time, it has to be constantly revised to prevent it from becoming obsolete and hinder the system's value (Haug, 2024; Watson & Hewett, 2006). Furthermore, organizations often struggle to establish KMS quality. This includes "software quality", meaning that the system should be easy to use, and "knowledge quality", meaning that the information should be relevant and accurate for users' *needs* (Haug, 2024).

This analysis also includes the "KMS use" that highlights how satisfied are the users with both using the system but also how much they intend to use it and for the purpose it is intended to (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Haug, 2024). These are critical success factors because users evaluate the KMS based on their perceived benefits, which means that if the system fails to provide reliable and needed information, it will generate resistance and lack of use (Haug, 2024; Watson & Hewett, 2006).

2.2.4 Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Transfer

The terms of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer are often used in literature to refer to the same perspective of how knowledge goes from one entity to another (Argote, 2024; Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). Argote (2024) explains these two terms by addressing that knowledge sharing refers to making information available from one person (or group) to another with a high emphasis on the flow of informa-

tion, and that knowledge transfer has a broader perspective and considers the whole process of knowledge sharing and how well it is absorbed by the recipient. Furthermore, Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2016) used these two terms together to emphasize that one is connected to each other since knowledge sharing integrates the motivation behind the flow so that the transferability of knowledge can succeed by adopting it. In that sense, this thesis focuses mostly on knowledge transfer considering that it doesn't exclude sharing, but it contains it (Argote, 2024).

Knowledge transfer is defined as the process through which one organizational unit learns from or is affected by the experience of another one (Argote et al., 2000). Organizations have a strong *need* to transfer knowledge in a proper way to ensure standardization, prevent the loss of critical intellectual assets, and maintain a competitive advantage (Watson & Hewett, 2006). When organizations perform knowledge transfer correctly, they gain immense benefits in operational efficiency, innovation, and strategic alignment (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016).

To achieve this goal, the transfer must be facilitated through appropriate roles and mechanisms (Argote, 2024). Knowledge is deeply embedded in organizational networks, which comprises three main elements: members, tasks, and tools (Argote et al., 2000). Members act as the primary carriers capable of transferring both tacit and explicit knowledge; tools (such as a KMS) serve as the technology that consistently stores explicit knowledge on a large scale; and tasks represent the routines where this knowledge is ultimately applied (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). While tools are highly effective at transferring codified, explicit knowledge across large distances (Haug, 2024), the transfer of tacit knowledge is far more complex, casual ambiguity makes it harder to standardize, and often requires moving the members themselves or relying on deep socialization networks and direct observation (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016; Nonaka, 1994).

Because of these complexities, the challenges to effective transfer are significant. One common challenge appointed in literature is internal "stickiness" which refers to the inherent difficulty of moving knowledge across different contexts due to its tacit nature and the friction involved in the process (Argote, 2024). Stickiness is often difficult to understand since cause-and-effect relationships are not easy to point out and similarly, successful practices are hard to define since the recipient unit's lack of "absorptive capacity" to recognize the value of new external knowledge, assimilate it, and apply it (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Additionally, the more complex knowledge is, the harder it gets to structure it, and rapid technological changes promote that the information becomes quickly obsolete (Argote, 2024; Haug, 2024).

Overcoming these challenges relies heavily on user motivation (Argote, 2024). As social exchange and expectancy theories state, individuals must perceive a clear value and experience of ease of access to be motivated to engage with a knowledge system (Watson & Hewett, 2006). A lack of motivation among employees to either contribute to their expertise or reuse existing knowledge creates strong resistance (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016; Watson & Hewett, 2006). Recent studies highlight that addressing this resistance requires facilitating a "depth of consideration" (Argote, 2024). When organizations support deep consideration through proper mechanisms and high motivation, it leads to "deep transfer" that connects to knowledge engagement, and in that sense, it ensures that the knowledge is not just formally

adopted but fully understood and successfully applied into daily routines (Argote, 2024).

In the context of this thesis, Knowledge Management and Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) play a fundamental role, as the internal service being analyzed is based on the organization's documentation environment, which is the repository of its operational ways of working that holds its collective knowledge. Consequently, the Knowledge Management theory provides the necessary analytical lens to understand how to effectively manage and deliver the core value proposition of this internal service platform (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). By analyzing the different dimensions of knowledge, which are tacit and explicit knowledge, the literature clarifies how an organization can strategically apply distinct mechanisms (through the SECI model) to capture, transform, and share expertise (Nonaka, 1994). This includes understanding how to balance technological tools for codifying knowledge with social structures for personalization, which is necessary to overcome knowledge "stickiness" and ensure that successful knowledge transfer actually occurs (Haug, 2024). Most importantly, it establishes why treating knowledge as a dynamic capability rather than a static asset is critical for sustainable competitive advantage (Alavi & Leidner, 2001), highlighting that organizations must provide the "forum" to facilitate value co-creation between management and users (Nonaka, 1994). Building on these foundations, the next section will explain how Knowledge Management and Service Management connect more specifically, presenting a unified framework for the service's development.

2.3 Relationship between theoretical concepts

Service Management offers the perspective of how to build an internal service by considering how it can create value for both the management (provider) and user (customer) spheres. It highlights the importance of creating synergies, closing service quality gaps, and establishing a digital service platform that contains the joint sphere that allows value co-creation to happen (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). In parallel, Knowledge Management offers the perspective on managing an organization's most critical asset: its knowledge. It delineates the dimensions of tacit and explicit knowledge, the continuous transformations between them, and the strategic imperative for the organization to act as a facilitator providing the "forum" where effective knowledge transfer and internalization can occur (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994).

Building on these theoretical foundations, this thesis first assesses the current documentation environment supporting the PPurchasing Operations Process to identify both user and management *needs*. By empirically examining these *needs* alongside the specific characteristics of the documentation environment, the study establishes the baseline argument that this environment is the organization's Knowledge Management System (KMS). To achieve the aim of the thesis, it is required to understand how these actors characterize their *needs* and, fundamentally, how they perceive value within their respective roles as service providers and consumers (Andreassen et al., 2016). Therefore, the research analyzes what value means for each sphere more specifically, management's *needs* for value facilitation and the users' *needs*

for value-in-use. By evaluating how these *needs* overlaps with the current KMS, the thesis identifies existing analytical gaps, analyzing them through both a service quality and a KMS quality lens to highlight current operational friction (Haug, 2024). Ultimately, this analysis conceptualizes how the KMS can be transitioned from a static digital repository into a dynamic service platform that actively enables value co-creation (Löfberg & Åkesson, 2018). By applying service design principles, the outcome is a service platform framework demonstrating how purchasing-related knowledge can be strategized to transform today's situation to tomorrow's desired state. This framework illustrates how the KMS creates mutual value by integrating both user and management *needs* while remaining aligned with the company's strategic direction (Gadola et al., 2026).

This theoretical connection relies primarily on the premise that organizations must actively act as facilitators of the environments where knowledge transfer takes place (Nonaka, 1994). When Nonaka (1994) presented the SECI model, he emphasized that while individuals are the ones who create and develop knowledge, it is the organization's role to provide the "forum" (or field of interaction) that allows this transformation and transfer to occur. Over the years, KMS have adopted various approaches to establish this "forum", depending on the organization's focus. For instance, Balco and Drahošová (2016) explain that a KMS can function as a digital repository where codified, explicit knowledge is stored as organizational memory. Moreover, Alavi and Leidner (2001) posit that a KMS allows organizations to create corporate directories and networks of knowledge to manage expertise. Similarly, Haug (2024) notes that a KMS provides the environment not only for document repositories but also for facilitating social networks around knowledge. To synthesize this and add on, Argote and Fahrenkopf (2016) outline that successful knowledge transfer requires a combination of members, tasks, and tools. In this context, the KMS serves as the critical digital tool that provides the structured environment for knowledge transformation to happen on a larger scale (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). All these approaches, although named differently, refer to the same underlying concept: the KMS acts as the provided organizational environment where different types of knowledge transfer and transformation take place (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016; Balco & Drahošová, 2016).

In the context of this thesis, a documentation environment exists in the organization but is not defined as a KMS itself. The documentation environment currently stores and shares the documentation of operational ways of working for its users and through the empirical analysis, the thesis notes that due to the documentation environment's functional purpose of transferring knowledge, it is intended to be a KMS. However, the thesis acknowledges that it currently functions as only one of the characteristics described by Balco and Drahošová (2016), which is a digital repository. However, as theory mentions, the KMS must not be viewed merely as a static digital tool or repository; rather, it must be operationalized as a dynamic service platform (Balco & Drahošová, 2016). By treating the KMS as a service platform bridges the gap between technology and human interaction, establishing a collaborative environment where value co-creation occurs (Gadola et al., 2026). It shifts the focus from utilizing a static documentation repository to deploying a dynamic, user-centered service that facilitates value co-creation between the man-

agement and user spheres (Gadola et al., 2026). It is precisely within this active platform that the theoretical transformations of knowledge take place. By capturing and coding tacit knowledge, such as empirical experiences from senior employees, into explicit knowledge (externalization), and presenting it in a user-centric way, the service platform enables the internalization of new practices. This allows users to easily access, apply, and embed these standardized ways of working into their daily routines (Haug, 2024; Nonaka, 1994).

This demonstrates why it is beneficial to approach knowledge transfer through service design principles: to successfully orchestrate members, tasks, and tools, organizations must design the transfer mechanism not as a static environment, but as an interactive service (Argote, 2024; Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). An intra-organizational service platform operates so it contains the joint sphere that reduces the friction of searching for distributed knowledge, creating an environment where employees are actively guided to the right resources and peers (Gadola et al., 2026). By applying user-centricity to the design of this transfer mechanism, organizations ensure that the platform provides the necessary characteristics such as ease of use, relevant knowledge quality, and structured social interactions that properly align with the employees' expectancy and motivation (Argote, 2024; Haug, 2024). Consequently, integrating service design principles into knowledge transfer turns a static repository into a dynamic co-creation process, empowering users to overcome internal knowledge stickiness (Argote, 2024) and effectively apply new practices. As showcased in Figure 2.5, treating the KMS as a service platform allows organizations to establish the collaborative joint sphere where value co-creation occurs. Ultimately, this demonstrates how an organization can successfully connect management with user *needs*, actively transforming tacit knowledge and explicit, transferring these organizational assets, and back again.

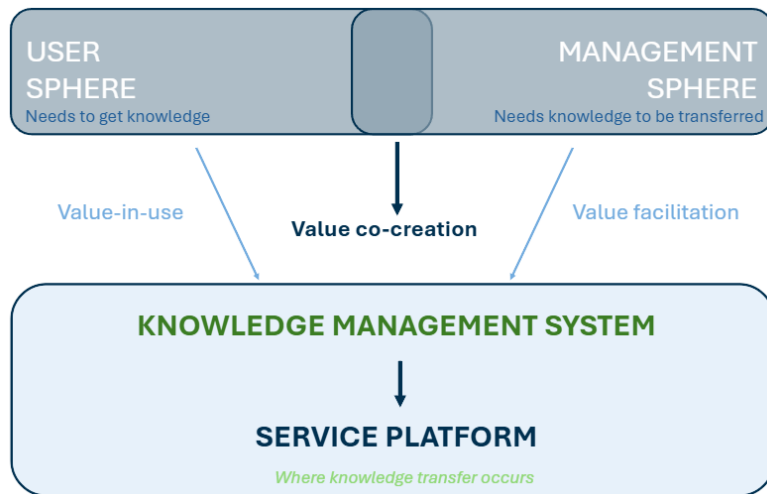


Figure 2.5: Visual integration of the theoretical concepts. Own illustration.

By making this connection, a key part of the study will then be to understand how knowledge should be transferred in the context of the specific organization, and it is here where the KMS acts as the critical tool mechanism. Viewed through the

modern paradigm of "anything-as-a-service" (Vandermerwe & Erixon, 2023), it can be argued that at a higher level than its traditional role as a static digital repository, the KMS can become a dynamic service platform. By taking the service platform concept of "a modular structure" that "facilitates the interaction of different actors and resources" (Löfberg & Åkesson, 2018), the documentation system evolves as a dynamic integrator that orchestrates internal resources, enables flexible collaboration, and bridges the gaps between management's explicit strategic goals and users' tacit operational realities (Gadola et al., 2026).

Further on, this thesis will refer to the service platform to explain how the case company facilitates knowledge transfer within the context of the PPurchasing Operations Process. Balco and Drahošová (2016) analyzed KMS as a cloud computing service to showcase the benefits of this approach for organizational performance. While their research was extensive, it focused heavily on the digital perspective and less on the service conceptualization of the KMS. Later, Gadola et al. (2026) analyzed knowledge sharing from the perspective of intra-organizational collaboration through the design and implementation of platforms. However, they approached platforms purely from a structural modularity standpoint and did not incorporate service design principles. Furthermore, from a quality perspective, Haug (2024) emphasized the need for a KMS to facilitate social networks and ensure extensive, high-quality knowledge to prevent user resistance and system abandonment. Yet, these approaches still focused on the KMS as a technological tool or mechanism and did not delve into its potential as a service.

In this sense, the main theoretical contribution of this research lies in specifically connecting service platforms with the KMS to facilitate knowledge transfer. Specifically, it demonstrates that the PPurchasing Operations Process documentation environment is not merely a static digital repository for operational ways of working, but an internal service that can be designed to facilitate continuous knowledge transfer and secure value co-creation among organizational actors. By applying service design principles to a knowledge management system, this thesis aims to conceptualize how an organization effectively creates value in knowledge transfer for both users and management by integrating their respective *needs*.

3

Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological choices used to achieve the research aim. It describes the research approach and how data was collected and analyzed, while also addressing study quality and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research design overview

To clarify how the research questions were addressed, table 3.1 presents an overview of the research design. The table links each research question to the main theoretical concepts, the type of data required, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. This overview shows how the study generated and analyzed empirical data in order to answer the research questions and support the development of the service platform framework.

Table 3.1: Research design overview

Research question	Main theory/concepts	Data needed	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Expected output	Section where answered
RQ1: What are the users' <i>needs</i> regarding the documentation environment within the PPurchasing Operations Process ?	Service Management Knowledge Management	User behavior, current ways of accessing information, user knowledge of available tools, user understanding of information, and user expectations	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis	Identification of user <i>needs</i> as baseline expectations for the documentation environment	Findings
RQ2: What management <i>needs</i> should be reflected in the documentation environment to support the alignment of the PPurchasing Operations Process with the organization's strategy?	Service Management Knowledge Management	Management information requirements, strategic expectations, governance <i>needs</i> , required ways of working, communication <i>needs</i> , and ownership expectations	Semi-structured interviews Workshops	Thematic analysis	Identification of management <i>needs</i> related to strategic alignment, common ways of working, and expectations for the documentation environment	Findings
Continued on next page...						

Table 3.1 – continued from previous page

Research question	Main theory/concepts	Data needed	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Expected output	Section where answered
RQ3: How can the documentation environment for the PPurchasing Operations Process be developed as a service platform that integrates users and management <i>needs</i>?	Service Management Knowledge Management	Connections between user and management <i>needs</i> , current documentation environment characteristics, platform structure, process ownership, and requirements for integrating both perspectives	Semi-structured interviews Workshops Documentation environment review	Thematic analysis Theoretical analysis	Service platform framework integrating user and management <i>needs</i>	Analysis and Conclusion

3.2 Research design

This thesis uses an exploratory single-case study with a qualitative research strategy in a retail enterprise operating globally. A case study design fits when the goal is to understand a real-life situation in depth and within its context, rather than measuring variables across many companies (Bell et al., 2022). In this thesis, the case is the current documentation environment supporting the PPurchasing Operations Process . The exploratory design is suitable because the study examines user *needs* , management *needs* , and the current documentation environment in order to support the formulation of a service platform framework for how user and management *needs* can be integrated within a service platform. A single-case focus makes it possible to gain detailed insights through multiple data sources, which supports the understanding of the case (Bell et al., 2022).

This thesis follows a qualitative research design, as it seeks to generate an in-depth understanding of user *needs* , management *needs* , and the current AS IS documentation environment within the PPurchasing Operations Process . The qualitative data in this thesis were collected through semi-structured interviews, workshops, and documentation environment analysis. These methods were used to empirically examine how purchasing-related knowledge is currently made available and used in practice, and to identify how user and management *needs* can be integrated within a service platform.

Theoretical perspectives are used as secondary data to support the development of the service platform framework and baseline data model. These perspectives strengthen the conceptual foundation and support how *needs* are translated into framework elements. This part of the study follows an abductive logic, since empirical findings from the case are continuously compared with theoretical insights and benchmarking results to refine explanations and adjust the framework design (Bell et al., 2022).

A preparatory phase was carried out at the beginning of the study to refine the research focus and support the planning of the data collection. This included initial discussions with the case company, a review of relevant internal material, and early development of the interview guide. These activities helped clarify the scope of the study and identify relevant participants for the main data collection.

3.3 Empirical context

The empirical context of this study is the Purchasing Operations Process in the studied retail enterprise. In this thesis, this refers to the broader purchasing process, not one specific purchasing activity. It includes the flow from creating and onboarding a new supplier to later supplier-related activities during the product lifecycle.

The process was selected because it is supported by a documentation environment that users are expected to rely on when carrying out purchasing-related activities. This made it possible to study how the documentation environment supports the use of documented ways of working in daily practice.

Although the empirical material was collected within a purchasing context, the study does not aim to examine purchasing work as such. Instead, the Purchasing Operations Process is used as a case context for studying the relationship between users, management, and the documentation environment. The participants were purchasing professionals and management-related roles connected to this process, which means that the findings are grounded in this specific organizational setting.

3.4 Sampling strategy

The sampling strategy was designed to include participants with relevant experience from different parts of the PPurchasing Operations Process . Purposive sampling was used to select the initial participants who were considered most relevant for the study. These included users and managers who work closely with the current documentation environment within the process and therefore have direct experience of how it functions in practice. This was important because these participants could explain both where the current documentation environment supports the work and where gaps in usability appear (Bell et al., 2022).

In this thesis, users refer to individuals who are expected to use the documentation environment as support in their daily purchasing-related work. The management perspective was gathered from participants selected because of their responsibility for managing and guiding the process, rather than because they use the documentation environment in their daily work. Managers can access the documentation environment when reviewing or sharing information, but they were not treated as the primary intended users and were not included in the study on that basis.

In this thesis, the management perspective was gathered from participants selected because of their responsibility for managing and guiding the process, rather than because they use the documentation environment in their daily work. Managers can access the documentation environment when reviewing or sharing information, but they were not treated as the primary intended users and were not included in the study on that basis.

Snowball sampling was used as a complement to purposive sampling, a method particularly relevant due to the distributed nature of process knowledge within the retail entreprerise operating globally (Bell et al., 2022). Since insights regarding the end-to-end process and identifying key information-users are spread across various organizational levels, initial contact was established with management-level participants. These participants provided a foundational understanding of the PPurchasing Operations Process and referred the researchers to employees involved in daily operations. To ensure a comprehensive assessment, participants were selected from different operational categories. This variety was essential to recognize commonalities and specific *needs* across both different roles and varying operational contexts. The roles included business developers, production engineers, supply planners, quality specialists, and other users with direct experience interacting with the documentation environment. While some roles were represented multiple times, the participants belonged to different operational categories, ensuring that the findings reflect a variety of perspectives. The specific category names are coded as X-category, Y-category, Z-category and W-category to maintain the anonymity of the internal

structure of the organization. In practice, interviewees were asked to suggest other colleagues who could contribute relevant insights. Consequently, snowball sampling helped identify critical perspectives that were not initially visible and ensured the inclusion of participants from different parts of the PPurchasing Operations Process .

3.5 Data collection

Different data collection methods were used to capture both in-depth insights and a broader overview of the current situation. Combining several sources of evidence is consistent with a case study approach and supports a richer understanding of the case context (Bell et al., 2022).

The main source of data was semi-structured interviews. In total, 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with users and other relevant participants connected to the PPurchasing Operations Process (see table 3.2). This interview format supported consistency across the interviews, while also allowing flexibility to ask additional questions and explore participants' answers in more depth. Semi-structured interviews were suitable for this study because they made it possible to cover the main topics in a structured way, while still giving participants room to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives (Bell et al., 2022).

A main interview structure was initially used for users and some management participants (see Appendix A). Later in the interview process, more specific interview structures were developed for platform-related and management interviews.

All interviews were conducted in English and were anonymized. The aim was to keep each interview to an appropriate length while still allowing enough time for the participants to develop their answers.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams, and the transcripts were used to support the data collection and analysis. To make the empirical material more focused, the interview responses were summarized into key points that captured how participants experienced the documentation environment and how it supported the use of purchasing-related knowledge in practice (see appendix C).

Table 3.2: Overview of the interview respondents

Interview	Respondent	Position	Perspective
1	17	Supplier Development Leader	Management
2	14	Process Developer	Platform
3	13	Digital Integration Leader	Platform
4	1	Category Sourcing Leader	User
5	33	Category Sourcing Leader	Management
6	2	Purchasing Business Analyst	User/Platform
7	3	Supply Planner	User
8	4	Production Engineer	User
9	5	Business Developer	User
10	6	Production Engineer	User
11	7	Quality Specialist	User
12	8	Supply Planner	User
13	9	Production Engineer	User
14	10	Business Developer	User
15	11	Supply Planner	User
16	12	Production Engineer	User
17	15	Process Developer	Platform
18	16	Solution Owner	Platform

The interviews with users mainly focused on the documentation environment for the PPurchasing Operations Process which contains its ways of working. In that sense, the documentation environment is the main source where documented ways of working are made available to users and it is intended to support users in understanding how purchasing-related activities should be carried out and be applied in practice by the users.

The purpose of these interviews was to analyze the user sphere so to understand how the documentation environment is currently utilized in practice. Specifically, to present the user *needs* and explore how these individuals experience the current AS IS situation in their daily work. Analyzing these experiences clarifies how the documentation environment supports activities within the PPurchasing Operations

Process and identifies existing gaps and pain points. The findings are based on 12 semi-structured interviews conducted with direct users of the documentation environment. Participants represent a variety of roles, including Business Developers, Production Engineers, Supply Planners, and Quality Specialists, across different operational categories. This diversity of roles allowed for the identification of a broad spectrum of user *needs*. Furthermore, it provided a foundation for recognizing *needs* that remain consistent across roles, while simultaneously identifying the specific differences in content required by the distinct contexts of various roles and operational categories.

Data for the management sphere was collected through two targeted workshops and individual interviews from management-related roles (see appendix B). The workshops were divided between two managerial perspectives: one representing matrix management (focusing on cross-functional support, sustainability, and overall supply processes) and the other representing hierarchical management (focusing on category leadership and direct operational oversight). Individual interviews with specific leadership roles were subsequently conducted to capture detailed pain points regarding their teams and how they currently approach the connection between high-level strategy and daily operations.

The first workshop included 13 participants (see table 3.3) and was more open, exploring how strategy is used in the PPurchasing Operations Process. The second workshop included 3 participants (see table 3.3) and was more structured, focusing on how strategy-related information can be translated into daily work within the PPurchasing Operations Process.

The workshop data mainly consisted of notes from the workshop discussions and the activities carried out by the participants. These notes were used to identify the main themes that appeared during the workshops. When a specific statement from an individual participant was used, it was treated as an individual respondent statement rather than as a general workshop observation.

The workshop format made it possible to gather data from several participants at the same time, which made it more time-efficient than conducting individual interviews with all of them. At the same time, it created space for discussion and shared reflection. This complemented the interviews by capturing collective perspectives and supporting a broader understanding of the organizational context (Bell et al., 2022).

Table 3.3: Overview of the workshop participants

Workshop	Participant	Position	Perspective
1	17	Supplier Development Leader	Management
1	18	Sustainable Business Manager	Management
1	19	Sustainable Business Manager	Management
1	20	Supplier Development Leader	Management
1	21	Supplier Development Leader	Management
1	22	Sustainable Business Manager	Management
1	23	Supplier Development Leader	Management
1	24	Sustainability Leader	Management
1	25	Sustainability Project Leader	Management
1	26	Supplier Development Leader	Management
1	27	Sustainable Business Manager	Management
1	28	Supplier Development Leader	Management
1	29	Sustainable Business Manager	Management
2	30	Business Development Manager	Management
2	31	Business Development Manager	Management
2	32	Business Development Manager	Management

The documentation environment was reviewed to create an overall understanding of the current AS IS situation. This included going through relevant documentation support and related material to understand how information is presented in practice. Additionally, interviews with respondents working close to the documentation environment, such as process developers and people involved in the ongoing transformation of the current platform were held. The purpose was to describe the current platform-related conditions that influence how the documentation environment supports the PPurchasing Operations Process . The interviews were structured around the current documentation environment, the connection between process and ownership, limitations in updates and maintenance, and the ongoing transformation toward a more standardized setup.

Relevant theoretical perspectives were used as secondary sources in the study. These were used to support the framework design and to connect the empirical findings to relevant concepts (Bell et al., 2022).

3.6 Data analysis

The empirical material for this study was derived from three primary sources: interviews with users, management, and platform-related participants; workshops with management-related roles; and a direct review of the current documentation environment. To systematically process this data, the thesis employed a qualitative thematic analysis (Bell et al., 2022).

Step 1: Structuring the empirical material.

The analysis began with a deductive approach, where predefined concepts from the problematization guided both the interview structures and the first stage of the analysis (Bell et al., 2022) (see Appendices A and B). Once the semi-structured interviews were conducted, the transcripts were processed and summarized to capture specific categories of discussion (see Appendix C). During this initial data reduction phase, the empirical material was systematically reviewed to identify recurring patterns and concurrent themes within both the user and management spheres. This involved analyzing the general responses and grouping similarities to understand how the documentation environment functions in practice and where operational friction occurs.

Step 2: Interpreting underlying needs.

However, because the current documentation environment is perceived primarily as a problem area by the respondents, the raw empirical data frequently manifested as "pain points" or frustrations, particularly from the management sphere.

Consequently, the researchers had to conduct a latent thematic analysis, where the focus was on interpreting underlying meanings rather than only describing what was explicitly stated (Bell et al., 2022). In this thesis, the semantic level refers to what respondents clearly expressed in the interviews, while the latent level refers to the researchers' interpretation of the underlying *needs* behind these statements. The identified pain points were thus analytically reframed by the researchers into constructive "*needs*." This translation was critical, as interviewees rarely articulated

their *needs* directly, but rather illustrated them by describing the negative experiences caused by their absence.

Step 3: Analyzing the documentation environment.

Parallel to the interview analysis, the documentation environment was analyzed to identify structural characteristics rather than experiential themes. This was achieved through methodological triangulation, where different sources of empirical material were combined to support a more comprehensive understanding of the case (Bell et al., 2022). In this thesis, this meant combining the structural information provided by platform-administrators, the systemic critiques raised by users and management during interviews, and the researchers' own direct observations of the digital environment.

Step 4: Connecting empirical findings with theory.

The extracted user and management *needs*, alongside the AS IS system characteristics, formed the empirical baseline for the subsequent theoretical analysis. In the second analytical phase, an abductive approach was taken, meaning that the empirical findings were interpreted through a back-and-forth movement between the data and the theoretical framework (Bell et al., 2022). The identified *needs* were mapped against Knowledge Management (KM) principles, recognizing that the core purpose of the environment is knowledge transfer. Specifically, the SECI model (Nonaka, 1994) was applied to determine which types of knowledge transformation, such as externalization or internalization, were failing or required.

To evaluate how this knowledge was being transferred, the thesis operationalized the concept of the Knowledge Management System (KMS). By analyzing the system's current characteristics against KMS theory, the researchers assessed how the environment functioned as a KMS and identified specific performance gaps. These gaps were subsequently scrutinized through the combined lenses of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and KMS quality (Haug, 2024). This dual-lens approach provided a deeper understanding of why the operational pain points existed, while simultaneously establishing a theoretical foundation for what must be improved to ensure the documented knowledge is actively utilized. It is important to note that, within this study, the SERVQUAL model was applied from a strictly conceptual perspective. It was utilized to frame the performance of the current documentation environment and to translate the empirical pain points into specific theoretical labels (specifically, Gap 1 and Gap 5). Consequently, the identified gaps were explored qualitatively to understand the underlying nature of the misalignments, deliberately departing from the quantitative statistical analysis typically associated with the traditional application of the SERVQUAL framework.

Step 5: Categorizing value through service theory.

As a final analytical step, the synthesized *needs* and quality gaps were categorized based on Service-Dominant Logic and service management concepts of value (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This step aimed to define what value meant in this specific organizational context. By integrating the *needs* of both spheres, opportunities for value co-creation were identified. Furthermore, the anal-

ysis separated *needs* that were mainly connected to the user sphere from *needs* that were mainly connected to the management sphere. User-related *needs* were connected to value-in-use, while management-related *needs* were connected to value facilitation. This helped clarify that value is created in different ways for users and management, without treating the two perspectives as conflicting. Ultimately, this theoretical integration supported the conceptualization of the final framework, illustrating how a static KMS can be understood as a more dynamic user-centered service platform.

3.7 Quality of the study

The quality of the study is addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are commonly used criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). In addition, quality in qualitative research is supported by transparency in the research process and by showing how the findings are grounded in the collected material (Flick, 2014).

Credibility was supported by the use of several qualitative data sources, including interviews, workshops, and a review of the current information environment. It was also strengthened by including participants from different roles and perspectives connected to the PPurchasing Operations Process . This made it possible to compare findings across the empirical material and assess whether similar themes appeared in different parts of the study. In this way, the study aimed to strengthen credibility by making sure that the interpretations were based on what the participants described and on the collected material (Flick, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Dependability was supported by describing the research process in a clear and structured way, including the sampling strategy, the data collection process, and the main steps of the analysis. This was done to make the research process transparent and to show how the study was carried out over time. Dependability concerns the consistency of the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This also relates to Flick's view that the quality of qualitative research depends on making the research procedure clear for the reader (Flick, 2014).

Confirmability was supported by keeping a clear connection between the collected material and the conclusions. Throughout the study, the aim was to base the interpretations on the collected data and the participants' perspectives rather than on personal assumptions. Confirmability concerns whether the findings are clearly grounded in the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This is also in line with Flick's argument that qualitative research should make it clear how interpretations are supported by the empirical material (Flick, 2014).

Transferability was addressed by clearly describing the case context, the participants, and the data collection process. This gives the reader a basis for judging whether the findings may be relevant in other organizational settings with similar characteristics. Transferability concerns the extent to which the findings may be relevant in other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). By providing contextual information and explaining the research process, the study also supports transparency, which is important for assessing quality in qualitative research (Flick, 2014).

3.8 Ethical aspects

This thesis involves users and internal company documentation, which makes ethical handling essential. The work is carried out under an NDA, meaning confidential information such as company strategy and internal performance insights is not shared. Any results that could be sensitive are described at a general level and discussed with the company before being included in material intended for external sharing or publication.

Before any data collection, GDPR-related information is prepared and then communicated at the beginning of each interview, workshop, or survey activity. This explains what data is collected, why it is collected, how it will be used, who will have access to it, and how long it will be stored. Participation is voluntary and based on informed consent, including permission for audio recording when relevant and the right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Interviews focus on work-related experiences, and personal or potentially sensitive topics such as relationships with management are avoided. All interview materials are anonymized, and details that could identify individuals or expose sensitive company information are removed or described in a way that prevents traceability.

All collected material, including notes, recordings, transcripts, and survey results, is stored securely with limited access only for the authors of this thesis. Data is kept only as long as necessary to complete the thesis and is then deleted according to an agreed retention plan. Finally, no collected data is uploaded to generative AI tools. If AI support is used, it is limited to approved internal tools such as the company's GPT and Copilot and only for language support, without entering personal data or confidential project material.

4

Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the data collection. The chapter focuses on what users and management need from the documentation environment, and how the environment currently functions within the PPurchasing Operations Process . User *needs* are presented in relation to daily work and the use of purchasing-related knowledge in practice. Management *needs* are presented in relation to what the documentation environment is expected to communicate and support. The chapter then describes the current documentation environment as the setting in which these *needs* are expected to be supported. Together, these findings provide the AS IS understanding of the documentation environment within the PPurchasing Operations Process .

4.1 User *needs*

The user interviews showed that users need the documentation environment to provide more practical and accessible support in daily work. The identified user *needs* are presented below and summarized in Table 4.1.

Practical guidance. Based on the results, users need practical guidance within the documentation environment. They need documentation that covers the end-to-end process and specifies both what must be delivered and how specific activities should be carried out in practice. While the current tool provides general process descriptions, users described a *need* for more activity-level details, as their daily work is often focused on granular tasks rather than on managing the overall process. For instance, Respondent 4 observed that exception requests require more detailed and updated guidance, as they mainly provide general scenarios. Furthermore, Respondent 10 pointed out that while the manual offers high-level direction, users need guidance that better reflects the practical realities of executing a process in daily work. In relation to practical application, users expressed that the documentation should include more examples or case-based guidance to support decision-making in practice. Respondent 1 specifically suggested adding more real-life scenarios and adapting examples to current, concrete situations. Users noted that while a high-level process overview is useful during initial onboarding, more specific and actionable details are needed to support daily routines. When the documentation environment does not provide answers for how to address daily operational situations, users often seek ad-hoc advice from more experienced colleagues. For example, Respondent 5 noted that when crucial details are missing from the documentation, they ask their des-

ignated “buddy” or treat experienced colleagues as the primary experts. Overall, users described a *need* for the documentation environment to explain not only “the what,” but also “the how” of carrying out activities in practice.

End-to-end process guidance. Several users described a *need* for a clear end-to-end process guidance, specifically regarding what should occur before and after a certain activity. This stems from the *need* to identify the prerequisites for a process to be efficiently executed, thereby avoiding operational delays caused by insufficient preparation. For example, Respondent 2 noted that the users need clearer information about what must be completed before advancing to the next system phase (especially when using tools). Consequently, understanding subsequent steps provides users with a sense of acknowledgment regarding the relevance of activities they might otherwise consider unnecessary, clearly illustrating how each individual activity affects the entire chain. Adding to this, Respondent 4 explained that information should be presented in chronological order, connected to specific *needs* and granular processes, and must clarify exactly what must happen before the next step. Respondent 7 echoed this sentiment, highlighting that information within specific activities is often not presented in a clear timeline or structure showing the exact sequence of steps and related documents. Similarly, Respondent 5 described a critical *need* to understand the underlying purpose behind tasks, specifically, why tasks are done, how they connect to broader purposes, which actors are affected, and the specific consequences or impacts on others if an error occurs. Respondent 4 also emphasized the same need, pointing out that current documentation frequently needs to provide these details more clearly regarding the true purpose of an activity and its direct connection to compliance. This feedback indicates that users need end-to-end process guidance that reflects the actual work process and provides visibility of how individual activities connect to the wider process.

Role- and operational category-specific relevance. Another important *need* is role- and operational category-specific relevance. Since the documentation environment is used by a variety of roles and operational categories, users need to easily identify which information applies to their specific work context and which does not. Several respondents described that the documentation environment contains a large volume of information, while different roles and operational categories require different types of support. Currently, this distinction can typically only be found in one of the columns where the documentation is listed within the digital environment, or inside the document itself, where it describes the operational categories to which the document applies. Although this need was mentioned by several users, it was particularly emphasized by users in the Y-category. Users in this category explained that documentation within the main environment does not always apply to them. For example, Respondent 2, a Purchasing Business Analyst, explicitly stated that “not everything in the Purchasing Manual is applicable to Y-category.” As a result, Supply Planners, Production Engineers, and Business Developers from the Y-category need to spend time identifying which documents are relevant to their work. Additionally, users from this category mentioned that they have an additional, separate documentation environment for more specific activities. They therefore use

the main documentation environment for general organizational alignment and compliance, and the secondary system for their specific operational context. Respondent 9 pointed out that overlapping information across different platforms increases the *need* for clearer access to relevant and updated documents. In general, because users cannot filter the main documentation environment by operational category or role, they often need to review listed documents or check inside each document individually to determine its relevance. As Respondent 11 noted, the volume of information can be overwhelming, and users need working methods that better reflect the reality of actual cases. This feedback indicates a *need* to structure or filter the documentation based on role or operational category, so that users can more easily identify the information relevant to their daily work.

Fast and easy access to information. Users also expressed the *need* for fast and easy access to information. Several respondents explained that they need to locate specific guidance quickly, particularly when addressing urgent tasks or supplier-related issues. For instance, Respondent 8 highlighted the *need* for documentation that is easy to search and precise during time-sensitive situations. Respondent 7 described this *need* by comparing the current documentation environment to a large university library, where the information may exist but is difficult to locate without clearer guidance. Respondent 11 emphasized the *need* for a word-specific search function, while Respondent 12 explained that general intranet searches often return too many irrelevant results because there is no dedicated search bar within the documentation environment itself. Respondent 1 suggested that the documentation environment should function “more like a tool rather than a book.” This would make information easier to retrieve through a direct search function and more accessible if the documentation were connected to the daily interfaces and systems that users already use, such as MS Teams. This feedback reflects a clear user *need* for a dynamic documentation environment that actively supports them in finding the right information when it is needed.

Simple language with clear explanations. A further *need* involves simple language and clear explanations. Several users described a *need* for documentation that is easier to understand, especially because internal terminology, jargon, and acronyms are frequently used. For instance, Respondent 5 mentioned that, as a newcomer to the organization, understanding internal jargon took time and made it more difficult to interpret the document’s intended meaning. Users also described a *need* for a legend or guide that explains common internal terms and acronyms used within the organization. Similarly, Respondent 8 highlighted that users who speak English as a second language need information that is written in a clear and direct way, without unnecessary complexity or excessive text. Therefore, users need documentation written in a practical manner, with clear explanations of terminology and a clear description of what is required to execute operations. In that sense, some respondents suggested that incorporating a glossary of internal terms within the documentation environment would make the content easier to read and understand.

Visual support and exemplification. The interviews also reveal a *need* for vi-

sual support and exemplification. Several respondents, including Respondents 1, 2, and 7, noted that the visual process wheel on the documentation environment's main page effectively illustrates the overall PPurchasing Operations Process . Users suggested that similar visualizations for specific parts of the process would support their understanding of more detailed activities. For example, Respondent 2 requested more visual presentations for the internal and more granular parts of the process to aid interpretation. This connects to users' *need* to understand the broader impact of their activities. Respondent 5 noted that users need clearer explanations of the implications of a process and how tasks connect to broader purposes, while Respondent 7 highlighted the *need* for clearer timelines or structures inside specific activities to show how steps connect. Additionally, users need supplementary formats such as screenshots, videos, short document versions, and applicable cases. For instance, Respondent 5 described videos as a simpler, faster, more dynamic, and more explicit learning tool compared to relying solely on text, and suggested providing both long and short versions of step-by-step instructions. Similarly, Respondent 3 proposed adding video training and audio versions to accommodate different ways of absorbing content. Other respondents emphasized that examples of real-world cases would better connect the provided information to actual work situations and support decision-making in practice. This was supported by Respondent 1, who suggested adding real-life scenarios adapted to current situations, and by Respondents 8, 9, and 11, who emphasized the *need* for concrete examples that reflect actual operations. Linked to the *need* for clear explanations, this feedback indicates that users need support formats that make written documentation easier to understand and apply in practice.

Up-to-date and reliable information. Lastly, users emphasized the *need* for up-to-date and reliable information. Since the documentation often serves as a baseline for compliance and general organizational requirements, users need to trust that the information is valid when carrying out their daily work. Several respondents described the importance of knowing whether documents are current and whether changes have been made. For instance, Respondent 7, a Quality Specialist, explained that users often rely on the documentation because it is the only formal source available, even when specialists may be aware that certain documents need to be updated or clarified. Respondent 9 described a *need* to double-check information, while Respondents 1, 2, and 4 pointed out that older or seemingly inaccurate documents can make users uncertain about whether the information should be followed. At the same time, some users, such as Respondent 3, described the documentation environment as reliable for checking processes that are not performed regularly. These different experiences show that users need clearer signals of validity and reliability in the documentation environment. This was also connected to users describing the *need* for clearer communication when working methods are updated. Currently, users receive updates in different ways depending on their role or operational category. For example, Supply Planners receive updates during quarterly forums, which are highly encouraged but not mandatory. Production Engineers, such as Respondent 6, rely on bi-monthly forums led by Quality Specialists, while others, such as Respondent 9, receive updates through ad-hoc emails. These examples show that

Table 4.1: Summary of user needs

User <i>needs</i>	Description	Respondents
Practical guidance	The documentation environment should explain both “the what”, meaning the deliverables, and “the how”, meaning the details of how activities should be carried out in practice.	R1, R3, R4, R5, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12
End-to-end process guidance	Users need guidance that follows the process by showing what happens before and after an activity, so they can understand how each step connects to the wider process.	R2, R4, R5, R7, R10
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	Users need to easily identify what information is general and what applies to their own role and operational category.	R2, R4, R6, R7, R9, R10, R11, R12
Fast and easy access to information	Users need to find the right information quickly, especially in urgent or supplier-related situations. They also need the documentation environment to work more like a tool and be better connected to systems they already use.	R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12
Simple language with clear explanations	The documentation should be written in a direct and practical way, with clear explanations of terminology, including jargon and acronyms, and a clear description of what is required to carry out operations.	R5, R7, R8, R9
Visual support and exemplification	Users need different support formats, such as visualizations, screenshots, videos, shorter document versions, and examples that show how to act in different situations.	R1, R2, R3, R5, R7, R8, R9, R11
Up-to-date and reliable information	Users need a trustworthy source of guidance with valid and updated information, as well as clear communication when changes have been made.	R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11, R12

users need a more consistent way to be informed about changes, so they can understand when information has been updated and how it affects their work.

Based on the results from the conducted user interviews, Table 4.1 provides a summary of the identified user *needs*. These are described so that they reflect what users need to perceive in the documentation environment so it is useful for them and that it supports their daily work within the PPurchasing Operations Process . Appendix D provides a more detailed overview of how each user *need* was supported

by the interview summaries. Overall, the results indicate that users do not question the value of having documented ways of working. In fact, the documentation environment is generally viewed as a necessary tool. This necessity was highlighted by all respondents, particularly for situations where users are new to their roles, need to verify organizational alignment, or must carry out activities that are not performed regularly. However, the interviews demonstrate that the current system is not fully fulfilling user *needs* as they need the documentation environment to function actively as practical support in their daily work, rather than acting merely as a static place where information is stored.

4.2 Management *needs*

In presenting the empirical findings from the management perspective, it is important to note a distinct pattern in the responses. Although the interviews and workshops were structured to capture what management *needs* the documentation environment to reflect, participants often expressed these *needs* by describing current challenges in the documentation environment. Rather than always stating their *needs* directly, management described situations where the documentation environment does not fully meet their expectations. This section therefore presents these descriptions and shows how they were interpreted as management *needs* for the documentation environment.

Strategic alignment. To establish a baseline, it was necessary to understand how the organization defines strategy and strategic alignment. Through both the workshops and interviews, management described how long-term ambitions, expressed through Business Plans, are translated into short-term and actionable goals through Action Plans. They emphasized that the daily operations handled by users directly influence the organization's broader ambitions. For example, in relation to the sustainability priorities raised in Workshop 1, a high-level strategic goal such as becoming a zero-emission organization by 2030 needs to be translated into actions such as aligning the supplier portfolio with emission standards or initiating joint efforts to compensate for operational emissions. Management therefore described a *need* for the documentation environment to make this connection clearer for users. As noted during Workshop 2, the ways of working show the activities that users have to perform, while the action plans are written at a more business-strategic level. One manager explained that the documentation environment should make it clearer how daily operations affect the organization's strategy. Hierarchical managers, who are accountable for executing these action plans, expressed the same expectation. They emphasized that the documentation environment should help translate strategy into users' specific activities, thereby supporting direction and decision-making in daily work.

Usable documentation environment. As explained during Workshop 2, these managers operate based on a foundational set of pillars: Range strategy, Supply strategy, Sustainability strategy, People strategy, and Process and Tools. The documentation environment supporting the PPurchasing Operations Process is connected

to the Process and Tools pillar. Management described an expectation that this pillar should provide a stable foundation for users' ways of working. At the same time, the discussions showed a *need* to make the role of the documentation environment more explicit, rather than treating it as something that users will naturally align with. Management clarified that this is not a lack of desire to improve the current environment, but rather a historical expectation that the baseline system should already function effectively. Respondent 17 described this as a burden connected to the expectation that the documentation environment should already be working as intended. Matrix managers from Workshop 1 shared this expectation, while also expressing a stronger awareness of the documentation environment's current challenges.

Single source of truth. Due to the cross-functional roles of matrix managers, operational compliance and control were frequently discussed during Workshop 1. Management referred to terms such as “compliance”, “mandatory”, “legal”, “business-critical”, and “regulatory”. These discussions showed a *need* for clearer definitions of what constitutes external compliance, such as legal and regulatory requirements, and what constitutes internal organizational rules. Participants also noted that the word “mandatory” is used broadly within the organization. From a management perspective, the documentation environment therefore needs to make these distinctions clearer, so that ways of working can be interpreted more consistently across the organization.

Explicit knowledge foundation. Management from both workshops also discussed the relationship between standardized ways of working and the organization's cultural emphasis on flexibility and networking. Participants highlighted that flexibility and networking are valued behaviors, but that users still need a stable and explicit foundation for how work should be carried out. Respondent 17 and participants in Workshop 1 emphasized that users should not rely only on personal networks or historical experts for basic process guidance. From a management perspective, the documentation environment therefore needs to provide a reliable explicit knowledge foundation, while still allowing users to handle deviations or situations where operations do not go as planned.

Platform structure. Management also described a *need* for a clearer platform structure. Respondent 17 and participants in Workshop 1 pointed to the importance of navigation, updated information, and clear business process ownership. Because ownership is not clearly assigned, managers may receive questions about the structure of the documentation environment itself, rather than only about the content. The management sessions also showed a *need* for clearer communication of updates, so that users can more easily understand when procedures or ways of working have changed.

Based on the empirical findings from the management interviews and workshops, a clear set of management *needs* emerged. Table 4.2 summarizes these *needs*, shows how they were interpreted from management pain points, and indicates the empirical source supporting each point. A more detailed overview of the empirical support

for each management *need* is provided in Appendix E.

Table 4.2: Management *needs* for the documentation environment

Management pain point	Management <i>need</i>	Description	Empirical source
Missing “bridge” that connects long-term planning to short-term planning	Strategic alignment	The documentation environment should support the translation of business plans into operational logic. It should clearly link high-level strategies, such as sustainability goals and category plans, to the specific steps within the PPurchasing Operations Process . Users need to see how their daily operational decisions and KPI fulfillment impact the total process and broader organizational goals.	Workshop 1, Workshop 2, R17, R33
The documentation environment already exists and hence users should be aligning	Usable documentation environment	The documentation environment should be used on a regular basis by users and should not itself represent a burden for strategic and operational alignment.	Workshop 2, R17, R33
Various interpretations of “true compliance” and “internal rules”	Single source of truth	The documentation environment should act as a single source of truth that standardizes ways of working and reduces fragmented or local interpretations. It should also make a clear distinction between strict compliance, such as legal and regulatory requirements, and internal organizational rules.	Workshop 1, Workshop 2

Continued on next page...

Table 4.2 – continued from previous page

Management pain point	Management <i>need</i>	Description	Empirical source
Difficulty to balance flexibility and networking with following “strict rules”	Explicit knowledge foundation	The documentation environment should provide a stable and reliable explicit knowledge foundation that users can turn to first for basic process guidance. This should reduce over-reliance on informal networks and historical experts, while still providing clear directions for handling deviations or situations where operations do not go as planned.	Workshop 1, Workshop 2, R17
The current setup is hindering what the documentation environment should be providing	Platform structure	The documentation environment requires a clearer structure with defined ownership, maintenance routines, content validity, and communication of updates. Changes to processes should be clearly communicated and easy to identify within the environment.	Workshop 1, R17

4.3 The documentation environment

The documentation environment currently functions as the central system through which users are expected to access the organization’s established ways of working for the PPurchasing Operations Process . Both management and user respondents confirmed that its primary purpose is to provide documented guidance to support daily operations. It is widely perceived as particularly valuable for onboarding new coworkers, or for situations where users must verify legal and compliance-related working methods.

In addition to simply making ways of working available, the interviews highlighted that the environment must bridge the gap between initial training and ongoing operational support. Respondent 13 emphasized that documentation should not only serve users during their onboarding phase but must remain highly functional as they execute their daily tasks. Furthermore, it was suggested that daily documentation would be significantly more effective if it were accessible directly from the digital platforms where users actively work, rather than requiring them to navigate away to search through the full documentation environment. In this sense, the documentation is viewed as a tool that must continuously support both learning and practical application over time.

To fully understand the current state of this environment, it is critical to address its ownership and responsibility. Through snowball sampling, Respondent 16 was identified to provide a "solution owner perspective." However, upon beginning the interview, this respondent clarified that they do not formally hold this title. Historically, the solution had a designated formal owner, and Respondent 16 assisted strictly with application development. When the former owner resigned, Respondent 16 temporarily assumed support duties due to their technical familiarity with the system. Unfortunately, this temporary arrangement became permanent, yet it was never formalized. This represents a critical finding for the thesis: today, there is no formal business ownership of the documentation environment. As Respondent 16 explained, a clear distinction must be made between administrative coordination and business ownership. Currently, the system operates solely on maintenance and coordinating tasks, but a formal business owner responsible for the strategic direction of the platform does not exist.

In the absence of business ownership, the environment is maintained through practical, manual coordination. As detailed by Respondents 16 and 17, this involves reminding Process Developers and other stakeholders to review their working methods, collecting documents, checking formatting, and uploading material to the intranet. Respondent 16 noted that a dedicated Teams channel and a document list are utilized to organize this material and track changes.

However, this manual process was described as highly time-consuming. Before a document can be published, the coordinator must verify its alignment with strict formatting rules. When documents are not prepared correctly, they must be sent back, creating multiple feedback loops. Furthermore, Respondent 16 explained that publishing material on the website requires specific technical competence, which places a heavy burden on the coordinating role and creates operational bottlenecks. This lack of business ownership is compounded by the *need* for clear content accountability. Respondents 14, 15, and 16 emphasized that Process Developers and Process Owners must be the ones accountable for the validity of the content within the ways of working, as this requires specialized contextual knowledge. For example, Respondent 15 described a recent process development project where a new working method was created through extensive workshops, pilots, and steering group reviews before being documented. Because content creation is heavily reliant on process experts, the respondents argued that the formal ownership of the documentation environment itself should focus strictly on platform mechanics—such as publishing protocols, communication methods, and visual web-related elements—rather than content generation.

Structurally, the current setup of the documentation environment was described as difficult to control. Ways of working are documented with varying levels of detail and inconsistent formats. The interviews revealed that a high degree of freedom in how documents are written has led to information silos; documents are frequently disconnected from related materials. Consequently, if a change occurs in one area, it does not automatically update or reflect in related documents, making it exceedingly difficult to ensure that interconnected information remains current.

These control issues are exacerbated by a rigid, formal update cycle. The documentation environment follows a fixed schedule of four update windows per year,

meaning finalized documents cannot always be uploaded immediately. In the process development project described by Respondent 15, the new way of working was implemented operationally before the formal working method could be published on the platform. Consequently, the project team had to rely on ad-hoc communication channels to distribute the new guidelines. This highlights that systemic communication and visibility are weak within the current setup.

Furthermore, Respondent 16 and management participants noted a lack of structured mechanisms to collect user and management feedback regarding either the platform's usability or its content. This stagnation leads to a specific pain point noted by Respondents 16, 17, and several users: technically valid but older documents create uncertainty, as users frequently doubt the reliability of files displaying old publication dates.

Another critical aspect regarding the documentation structure is language and terminology. Echoing the findings from the user sphere, Process Developers and Solution Owners also highlighted the acute *need* for a clear business glossary. The organization utilizes numerous abbreviations and internal terms that carry different meanings depending on the context or specific operational category. Standardizing terminology was identified as a necessary improvement that would greatly assist both the authors writing the ways of working and the users reading them.

Finally, Respondent 17 and management interviewees emphasized that the documentation environment is currently part of an ongoing organizational transformation. The overarching goal is to establish a standardized method for documenting processes and ways of working. Respondent 15 elaborated that because the current array of manuals and documents is disconnected and hard to manage, the organization recognizes the *need* for a new setup intended to serve as the definitive "source of truth" for business processes. In this future landscape, the current documentation environment might be repurposed temporarily as a communication layer, though its long-term role remains unclear. While some future responsibilities have been mapped out (such as determining who creates and approves content), critical structural areas, including overall platform ownership, methodologies for communicating updates, and strategies for filtering role- and category-specific *needs* remain unresolved and require further definition.

Based on the interviews, the current documentation environment situation was identified. As shown in Table 4.3 these characteristics describe the purpose of the documentation environment, how it is viewed, and its structure.

Table 4.3: Summary of the current state of the documentation environment

Characteristic	Description	Empirical source
Purpose	Provides documented guidance to support daily operations.	R16, R17
Management's expectation	A highly functional tool that continuously supports both learning and practical application over time.	R13, R17
Users' perceived use	Used for onboarding new coworkers, or in situations where users need to verify legal and compliance-related working methods.	R16
Ownership	No formal business ownership is clearly assigned; instead, the documentation environment relies on temporary coordination work.	R16, R17
Maintenance	Manual coordination work, including sending reminders to Process Developers and other stakeholders to review, update, and share documentation.	R16, R17
Documentation format standardization	The coordinator manually verifies that new or updated documents follow the required formatting rules before publication.	R15, R16
Content verification	Content validity is connected to Process Owners and Process Developers, since they hold the process-specific knowledge needed to verify the ways of working.	R14, R15, R16
Process management	Documents are often created separately, with limited connection to related documents or process links. Changes in one area are not automatically reflected in connected documents.	R14, R15
Update time-frame	The documentation environment follows four fixed update windows per year. Updates outside these windows need to be communicated through ad-hoc methods.	R15, R16

Continued on next page...

Table 4.3 – continued from previous page

Characteristic	Description	Empirical source
Feedback collection	There is no structured mechanism for collecting feedback regarding either environment usability or content.	R16, R17
Language and terminology	Documents use internal terms and abbreviations that can differ across contexts, while no centralized business glossary is provided within the documentation environment.	R14, R15, R16
Future state	The documentation environment is part of an ongoing transformation toward a more standardized setup and a clearer source of truth, but areas such as ownership, update methods, and role-specific filtering still require further definition.	R14, R15, R17

Throughout this chapter, the current situation of the documentation environment in connection with user and management *needs* were identified. First, the thesis presented the user *needs* in Table 4.1 which described what are the users expectations of what it be should provided through the documentation environment. Later, the management *needs* were presented in Table 4.2 that interpreted what managers provided as pain points into *needs* for the documentation environment to act as the "single source of truth" for users when requiring information according to all related activities to the Purchasing Operations Process. In the end, Table 4.3 presented how the documentation environment looks like today and, how its purpose is perceived by both managers and users.

5

Analysis

Building upon the empirical findings presented in the previous chapter, this chapter analyzes the current documentation environment through the theoretical framework to conceptualize the TO BE situation. Using the AS IS state as a foundation, the chapter explores how value is defined for each sphere and establishes the theoretical connection between the documentation environment and KMS. Ultimately, it introduces a TO BE service platform framework designed to integrate the *needs* of both spheres and secure value creation.

5.1 AS IS situation

The analysis begins by theoretically examining what constitutes value for both users and management within the documentation environment, demonstrating why their identified *needs* currently manifest as operational gaps. Furthermore, it analyzes the documentation environment through a knowledge management lens, evaluating its empirical characteristics against theoretical KMS definitions to determine whether the current system functions as a KMS.

5.1.1 User needs and current value-in-use gaps

The user needs identified within the current documentation environment can be understood as different analytical value-in-use gaps (Grönroos, 2015) from how they are expecting to use the service. As shown in Table 5.1, the gaps are related to missing information, how knowledge is made available, how users interact with the documentation environment, and how the service is experienced in practice. These gaps are explained by theoretical foundations.

First, the user needs of practical guidance and end-to-end process guidance can be understood through the lens of tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). Users explained that they do not only need formal descriptions of what should be delivered; but also practical knowledge about how activities are actually carried out and how they connect to subsequent steps. This is a challenge that Nonaka (1994) explained because tacit knowledge, since built through practice, is difficult to articulate, while explicit knowledge can be easier to document and share. This was a challenge found in the organization since users mentioned that practical know-how exists, but this is mostly among experienced employees and not always documented in a way that users can consult and then apply directly. This indicates a gap in knowledge transformation from the SECI model (Nonaka, 1994), more specific about

externalization because tacit operational knowledge is not fully converted to explicit knowledge in the documentation environment (Nonaka, 1994). Additionally, when documentation lacks end-to-end visibility, users struggle with internalization, since they cannot connect how the knowledge acquired from documents directly impacts daily work practices (Tsai & Lee, 2006).

Second, role- and operational category-specific relevance is connected to the service design’s focus on designing the service around the user’s actual context and how the service is utilized in practice (Andreassen et al., 2016; Plattner et al., 2011). The findings reveal that general, overarching documentation does not create equal value for all users, as different roles require distinct types of support. From a S-D Logic perspective, the documentation environment only creates true value when users can seamlessly apply it to their specific work situations (Grönroos, 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This represents a critical point for users in terms of what value-in-use (Grönroos, 2015) means to them for a service platform.

Third, fast and easy access to information showcases the challenge Alavi and Leidner (2001) discussed about how a KMS should not merely store information but actively support users in retrieving and applying knowledge efficiently in their daily routines. The findings show that while information may exist within the environment, users struggle to access it when faced with urgent or supplier-related tasks. This also directly relates to SERVQUAL and GAP 5, because it is seen a gap between the users expected service of having the accessibility to an immediate support, and their current perceived service with slow accessibility and complicated searching methods (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Table 5.1: User *needs* as analytical gaps

User need	Value-in-use gaps
Practical guidance & End-to-end process guidance	Gap between tacit operational know-how and explicit procedural guidance
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	Gap between general service content and individualized value-in-use
Fast and easy access to information	Gap in expectations when retrieving and applying knowledge through the service
Simple language with clear explanations	Gap in the clarity and interpretation of explicit knowledge
Visual support and exemplification	Gap in supporting learning-by-doing through practical contextualization
Up-to-date and reliable information	Gap between expected service reliability and perceived accuracy

Fourth, simple language with clear explanations reflects a gap in the clarity of explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge must be codified in a way that the target

audience can comprehend and utilize without friction (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The empirical results show that the organization's heavy reliance on internal jargon and acronyms without a centralized glossary makes the explicit knowledge difficult to decode. This creates a service quality issue, as unclear communication directly diminishes the usability and perceived value of the documentation environment (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Fifth, visual support and exemplification builds further on the problem of how the organization facilitates internalization within the SECI model (Nonaka, 1994). The findings indicate that users need more practical formats, such as applicable case studies, videos, and visual process mapping, to understand how written knowledge translates to real-world scenarios. This aligns with the learning-by-doing logic (Tsai & Lee, 2006) that internalization promotes where users develop a deeper understanding by seeing documented knowledge applied in practical contexts (Nonaka, 1994; Tsai & Lee, 2006). Additionally, it clearly showcases the difficulty, but most importantly, that users need "stickiness" (Argote, 2024) so that the knowledge can be adapted to their different contexts and have the capacity to not only absorb the knowledge but understand the value of the new knowledge itself (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990).

Sixth, and last, up-to-date and reliable information reflects a critical service quality gap. In the SERVQUAL model, reliability is a core dimension representing the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The empirical findings show that users often doubt the validity of the documentation due to uncommunicated updates and old publication dates. From a KMS perspective, this is detrimental; if users cannot trust that the stored knowledge is current and accurate, the system fails its primary objective, driving users to rely on risky, informal workarounds instead (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Haug, 2024).

5.1.2 Value facilitation from a management *need* perspective

Similarly as with user *needs*, management *needs* can be argued from the perspective of their role as service providers. In that role, they facilitate value by supplying the documentation environment and its foundational knowledge, while users create value-in-use when applying that service (Grönroos, 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). As seen in Table 5.2, management *needs* from a conceptual perspective can be understood as gaps in their value facilitation role.

Looking into their *need* for strategic alignment, management explicitly needs the environment to bridge the gap between high-level strategic ambitions and daily purchasing work. This is the foundation of the expectations that management has regarding what the service should offer (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Seen through the S-D logic lens (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015), this showcases how the documentation environment requires a design where the service provider actively participates to secure value facilitation (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015).

Regarding the *needs* for an explicit knowledge foundation and a "single source of truth," (Nonaka, 1994) the empirical findings show management's acute *need* for the environment to act as a standardized reference point. This is necessary to mitigate

Table 5.2: Management *needs* as value facilitation gaps

Management need	Value facilitation gaps
Strategic alignment	Gap between the expected service offering and the provider's ability to actively bridge strategic ambitions with daily operational work.
Explicit knowledge foundation & "Single source of truth"	Gap between the intended KMS knowledge codification and the actual reliance on internal networks
Usable documentation environment	Gap in user-centric service design, failing to capture user expectations for effortless knowledge retrieval.
Platform structure (Ownership, communication, standardization)	Gap in structural accountability and maintenance, hindering service reliability.

the risks of users relying on fragmented tacit knowledge, which is currently bound to informal user networks connected to specific roles and operational categories. This concern connects directly to what KMS are intended to resolve when functioning properly. Alavi and Leidner (2001) explained that a KMS supports creating networks of knowledge, and Haug (2024) added that KMS are systems that allow knowledge to be shared by providing the setup that enables knowledge codification and, consequently, tacit knowledge exchange. However, the organization currently does not fully reflect this KMS design, as the AS IS setup does not direct users to the platform when they need specific expertise (Haug, 2024). Furthermore, there are blurred boundaries between mandatory compliance and internal rules, leading to varying interpretations across the organization. When users prefer to consult their informal networks for certain matters rather than the documentation environment, the lack of a "single source of truth" directly affects service quality. This widens Gap 1 of the SERVQUAL model, as management expects the service to be used as the primary knowledge source, but in reality, the service creates confusion (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

When managers state that they need a usable documentation environment, a connection with the conceptualization of a service platform is revealed. It was noted in the theory that service design aims to secure that the interaction between the provider (management) and the customer (user) functions effectively (Andreassen et al., 2016). The findings reveal that management recognizes the current AS IS environment as difficult to navigate, highlighting a clear lack of user-centricity, as the platform fails to capture what truly makes it usable for the users. This further exacerbates Gap 1 (Parasuraman et al., 1985), as management is unable to meet the users' expectations for the service. This *need* for usability is grounded not only in service design but also in KMS theory, which dictates that these systems must ensure users can locate knowledge without unnecessary effort (Maglio & Spohrer,

2008; Nambisan, 2017); otherwise, the platform fails its value facilitation role. According to Grönroos (2015), the provider is responsible for developing and maintaining the resources required for the service process. Management notes a *need* for a robust platform structure to secure critical aspects such as ownership, communication, and standardization. However, the empirical findings highlight a critical lack of formal business ownership, resulting in manual, burdensome coordination work. Without clear accountability for content validity, the reliability dimension of service quality is directly compromised (Parasuraman et al., 1985), as neither users nor managers can guarantee the accuracy of the platform’s knowledge. From a KMS perspective, Argote and Fahrenkopf (2016) mentioned that knowledge transfer requires a structure, and organizational members share the responsibility of enabling this transferability. Furthermore, a KMS must support the continuous lifecycle of knowledge, including its dynamic updating (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Without formal ownership, combined with a fixed schedule of four update windows per year and weak standardization of both documentation content and format, effective knowledge transfer is constantly hindered. This current situation negatively impacts service quality, as management is unable to secure and facilitate a reliable service (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

5.1.3 The documentation environment as a KMS

The analysis of the AS IS situation reveals that the documentation environment serves as the designated platform for housing organizational knowledge, specifically the established operational ways of working supplied and shared by the management sphere. Because knowledge is the primary asset managed within this platform, its fundamental purpose aligns with the theoretical concept of a KMS. Alavi and Leidner (2001) define a KMS as an information system designed to support organizational processes by facilitating the creation, storage, retrieval, transfer, and application of knowledge through technological solutions. Given this definition, the documentation environment should inherently function as the organization’s KMS. However, the empirical results demonstrate that the current system operates primarily as a static documentation repository (Balco & Drahošová, 2016; Haug, 2024), rather than fulfilling its necessary role as a dynamic network of knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

According to Alavi and Leidner (2001), a true KMS must support not only the creation and storage of knowledge, but fundamentally its retrieval, transfer, and application. The findings highlight that while explicit knowledge (documented ways of working) exists within the environment, the retrieval and application of that knowledge are failing. Characteristics identified in the ASIS results such as siloed documentation structures, inconsistent terminology, and lack of role-specific relevance, create barriers that prevent users from easily retrieving the guidance they need. Furthermore, the rigid update time-frames and the absence of structured feedback collection hinder the continuous transfer of knowledge by lacking a clear platform structure to maintain knowledge relevance over time (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016), and by that it results in a passive storage unit rather than an active facilitator of daily work.

Consequently, the current KMS setup is failing to actively support the knowledge transformation processes defined in the SECI model (Nonaka, 1994). On one hand, externalization, the process of capturing the tacit know-how of experienced employees and Process Owners into standardized, explicit formats is not occurring effectively. Because the platform lacks this practical contextualization, users are frequently forced to bypass the KMS entirely, relying instead on their informal networks outside the system.

Equally important, internalization is highly difficult for users. This is clearly evidenced by their expressed *needs* for explicit knowledge to be translated through visual support, simpler language, and contextual examples. This connects directly with the "learning by doing" mentality described by Tsai and Lee (2006). In a functional knowledge management context, users must be provided with formats that allow them to effortlessly absorb explicit information and transform it back into practical, daily action.

Therefore, recognizing the documentation environment as a KMS is critical. It cannot be treated merely as documentation repository where management deposits compliance rules; it must be managed as a comprehensive system designed to bridge the gap between management's explicit standards and the users' tacit operational realities. By treating it as a true KMS, the organization can provide the necessary structure to ensure knowledge is continuously codified, accurately retrieved, and successfully applied (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Haug, 2024).

5.2 TO BE situation

With the AS IS situation theoretically established, this section explores how the identified *needs* can be translated into active value creation. It achieves this by overlapping user *needs*, management *needs*, and the characteristics of the documentation environment to identify shared dependencies. By assessing these overlaps through the concepts of service quality and KMS quality, the analysis highlights critical performance gaps in the current provision. Finally, it conceptualizes the organization's KMS as a holistic service platform framework, integrating both spheres and addressing value creation from all directions to secure a user-centric service.

5.2.1 Identifying value co-creation

Although data was collected separately for each sphere, summarizing the results revealed that management and users share overlapping *needs*, directly connected to the current documentation environment. Even if the two groups perceive and label these *needs* from their own perspectives, they share a common conceptualization of what is required. Table 5.3 presents these similarities as overlapping *needs*.

Table 5.3: Overlapping *needs* in the AS IS documentation environment

Overlapping need	User <i>needs</i>	Management <i>needs</i>	Documentation environment characteristic
Process visibility with strategic translation: The platform must translate macro-level strategic objectives into daily operational activities, providing end-to-end visibility of process interdependencies, inputs, and outputs to clarify the broader impact of individual tasks.	Practical guidance End-to-end process guidance	Strategic alignment	Process management
System accessibility and usability: The platform must facilitate seamless and intuitive retrieval of information, ensuring it is actively utilized as the primary support system for daily routines rather than a passive repository.	Fast and easy access to information	Usable documentation environment	

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Table 5.3 – continued from previous page

Overlapping <i>needs</i>	User <i>needs</i>	Management <i>needs</i>	Documentation environment characteristic
Reliability and continuous feedback: The platform must function as a trustworthy "single source of truth." Establishing this reliability requires integrated, two-way feedback mechanisms allowing both users and management to flag misalignments and maintain knowledge accuracy.	Up-to-date and reliable information	"Single source of truth"	Feedback collection
Knowledge transformation and practical contextualization: The platform must effectively convert tacit organizational expertise into explicit, actionable knowledge. By incorporating real-world scenarios and visual aids, it should become the primary resource for execution.	Visual support and exemplification	Explicit knowledge foundation	
Continued on next page...			

Table 5.3 – continued from previous page

Overlapping <i>needs</i>	User <i>needs</i>	Management <i>needs</i>	Documentation environment characteristic
Standardized documentation: To accommodate a diverse user base, the platform must employ accessible language and demystify internal jargon through standardized explanations, ensuring consistent interpretation.	Simple language with clear explanations		Language and terminology
Platform structural accountability: The platform requires a robust framework that defines clear business ownership, standardized maintenance protocols, rigorous content verification, and structured communication channels for updates.		Platform structure	Ownership Maintenance Content verification Update time-frame Documentation format standardization
			Continued on next page...

Table 5.3 – continued from previous page

Overlapping <i>needs</i>	User <i>needs</i>	Management <i>needs</i>	Documentation environment characteristic
Contextual relevance and personalization: The platform must incorporate filtering mechanisms to dynamically present role- and operational category-specific information, mitigating information overload and enhancing efficiency.	Role- and operational category-specific relevance		

Each sphere has distinct *needs*, and the previous sections demonstrated how these currently manifest as gaps. However, as noted in Table 5.3, both user and management *needs* share common ground regarding what the service should provide in relation to the current documentation environment. This overlap hints that the organization's KMS, in its current AS IS situation, is hindering both spheres, and that connecting these *needs* is required to secure true "KMS use" (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Haug, 2024). This necessary connection is exactly what service design argues: a functional service platform is not designed in isolation; it must support and secure value co-creation between spheres (Grönroos & Voima, 2013), while simultaneously acknowledging the independent *needs* that the platform must accommodate.

The overlap *need* of reliability and continuous feedback serves as a primary instance for value co-creation. Management requires a "single source of truth" to secure organizational alignment, while users require up-to-date, reliable information to execute their daily tasks safely. From a knowledge management perspective, achieving this mutual goal requires an integrated feedback loop (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). When users can easily flag outdated documents or suggest practical improvements based on their tacit experiences, and management can systematically verify and update that explicit knowledge, value is actively co-created. By providing this functionality, the platform ceases to be a static documentation repository and becomes a dynamic ecosystem for knowledge conversion (Gadola et al., 2026).

In the same line, process visibility with strategic translation acts as the bridge for value co-creation as the mechanism through which management shares the strategic direction they need users to follow, while users simultaneously gain visibility into the broader impact of their daily operations. By linking long-term strategy to daily tasks (noted in the AS IS characteristic of process management), the KMS secures that explicit knowledge actually provides operational value (Haug, 2024).

However, knowledge must not only be shared; both spheres are in deep need of knowledge transformation and practical contextualization. From management's side, the expectation is that the KMS functions as the primary explicit knowledge foundation rather than users depending on fragmented, informal networks. For that to happen, users require that the needed tacit knowledge be presented in a practical, visual way. This intersection represents the core of the SECI model; management's *need* for internalization meets the users' *need* for externalization, allowing both spheres to co-create an applicable knowledge base (Nonaka, 1994).

Similarly, system accessibility and usability represents a shared dependency. Management requires a structured platform to distribute strategic action plans and standardized ways of working. Users require fast and easy access to apply those procedures. If the platform is not designed with user-centric service design principles (Andreassen et al., 2016), management's attempt at value facilitation fails because the users cannot realize value-in-use (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). The platform acts as the integration mechanism, ensuring the structural accountability needed by management translates into the practical use needed by users (Argote, 2024).

While these shared expectations drive value co-creation, it is crucial to highlight the rows in Table 5.3 that do not overlap. These independent expectations demonstrate that a KMS cannot rely solely on co-creation; it must also support independent value generation for each sphere. For instance, platform structural accountability is exclu-

sively a management need. It represents pure value facilitation, where management independently establishes the necessary responsibilities, ownership, and maintenance required for the service to exist at all (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Conversely, expectations like standardized documentation (simple language) and contextual relevance (role-specific filtering) are exclusively user-driven. These represent pure value-in-use, as they define the individualized parameters required for a user to extract utility from the service (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This highlights that the KMS not only integrates value co-creation, but also the independent value streams as value-in-use and value facilitation to function as a holistic system.

5.2.2 Value gaps between user and management *needs*

Because the core asset being exchanged within this platform is knowledge, evaluating the system requires analyzing it strictly as a service. While overlapping *needs* establish a foundation for value co-creation, Table 5.4 shows how these *needs* are currently performing as value gaps. In that sense, analyzing the empirical data through the lens of the SERVQUAL Gap Model reveals distinct divergences that actively degrade the platform's "KMS quality."

The first major divergence relates to GAP 1 (Parasuraman et al., 1985) which occurs when management's perception of user expectations does not align with the users' actual operational *needs*. The empirical findings show that management holds a historical expectation that the documentation environment should naturally align users with mandatory compliance and standardized ways of working. Management views the KMS primarily as an explicit knowledge foundation where ways of working containing rules, compliance documents, and overarching processes are stored. Conversely, users view the KMS as a daily operational support tool. They expect granular, step-by-step practical guidance, visual examples, and clear explanations of internal jargon to support knowledge internalization (Nonaka, 1994).

This fundamental misalignment creates severe friction. Because management assumes the documentation "just exists" as a baseline documentation repository, they have historically overlooked the platform's usability and the contextual mechanisms (like examples and end-to-end impact visibility) required to make explicit knowledge actionable. Furthermore, the organizational culture heavily promotes flexibility and networking. When the static repository fails to meet the dynamic, practical expectations of the users, employees leverage this culture to bypass the system entirely, relying instead on informal networks. Thus, to close GAP 1, management must shift their perception from merely managing a static documentation repository to actively facilitating a user-centered service platform.

However, GAP 1 is not the only analytical gap present. The empirical data strongly highlights the severe presence of GAP 5 showing the discrepancy between the expected service and the perceived service from the users' perspective (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In the context of a KMS, this gap is particularly critical. Both service quality theory and KMS theory emphasize that quality is paramount, but when intersecting the two, it becomes clear that the quality of the service delivery directly dictates the reliability of the knowledge itself (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Users approach the documentation environment expecting high KMS quality: they ex-

Table 5.4: Integration of overlapping needs and gaps

Overlapping needs	Value-in-use gaps	Value facilitation gaps
Process visibility with strategic translation	Tacit operational know-how and explicit procedural guidance	Expected service offering and the provider's ability to actively bridge strategic ambitions with daily operational work
System accessibility	Expectations when retrieving and applying knowledge through the service	User-centric service design, failing to capture user expectations for effortless knowledge retrieval (SERVQUAL Gap 1)
Reliability and continuous feedback	Expected service reliability and perceived accuracy	Intended KMS knowledge codification and the actual reliance on internal networks
Knowledge transformation and practical contextualization	Supporting learning-by-doing through practical contextualization	
Standardized documentation	Clarity and interpretation of explicit knowledge	
Platform structural accountability		Structural accountability and maintenance, hindering service reliability
Contextual relevance and personalization	General service content and individualized value-in-use	

pect fast and easy access to up-to-date, reliable information, presented in simple language that clarifies complex purchasing processes. They expect the service to act as a trustworthy "single source of truth" that seamlessly supports their daily routines. Conversely, their perceived service is drastically different. In practice, users experience a fragmented documentation repository burdened with inconsistent terminology, siloed structures, and outdated publication dates that breed deep uncertainty. They perceive the KMS not as a dynamic knowledge network, but as an administrative hurdle. When the perceived service falls this far below the expected service, users fundamentally lose trust in the KMS's explicit knowledge. Consequently, the platform fails its primary KMS objective of knowledge application because users will not apply knowledge they do not trust or cannot easily retrieve (Haug, 2024). This proves that within a the provision of knowledge in a service, service quality and KMS quality are inextricably linked; resolving GAP 5 is essential to ensure that the service (the KMS) is actually utilized to create value-in-use.

5.2.3 The KMS transformed into a user-centered service platform

As previously noted, the organization's KMS requires a transformation from a static documentation repository into a dynamic knowledge transfer system. Building on the analysis by Gadola et al. (2026), understanding the KMS as a service platform provides the final theoretical integration of this thesis. Drawing upon the service logic conceptualization by Grönroos (2015), the KMS must be designed to recognize and support three distinct value spheres: the provider (management) sphere, the customer (user) sphere, and the joint sphere.

Throughout this chapter, it has been demonstrated how the intersection of *needs* translates into tangible value within the KMS. Building directly on the theoretical integration established in Chapter 2, which merged KMS theory with S-D Logic and service design, Figure 5.1 visualizes this theoretical synthesis applied to the empirical findings. The framework illustrates how the proposed TO BE service platform captures and categorizes value facilitation, value-in-use, and value co-creation within the context of organizational knowledge.

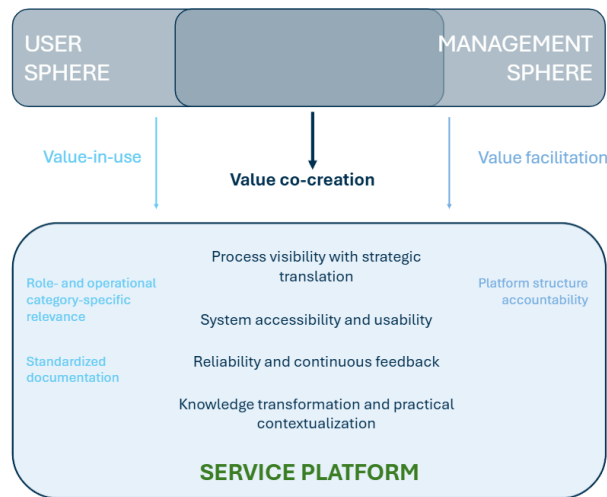


Figure 5.1: KMS as a service platform framework

1. The service platform: value co-creation

The service platform must capture the joint sphere, where management and user *needs* directly interact. It is not enough for the platform to merely identify these interactions; due to its dynamic nature, it must actively drive them to allow value co-creation to occur. This is achieved through integrated, two-way feedback mechanisms. For instance, when a user identifies an outdated process and flags it, and the Process Owner or Service Owner collaborates with a Process Developer to subsequently update the explicit knowledge based on that tacit operational insight, value is actively co-created. The platform ceases to be a one-way communication channel and becomes a collaborative ecosystem.

2. The user sphere: value-in-use

The service platform must recognize that alongside co-creation, independent value

generation is critical. For users to successfully apply knowledge and thereby extract value-in-use from the service, they must be able to operate independently within their own specific contexts. Value is not created simply when management uploads a document; it is realized when a user successfully executes a purchasing activity utilizing that document. To enable this value-in-use, the platform must be highly user-centered, addressing what truly makes the system usable for its final audience. It must offer role- and operational category-specific filtering, fast searchability, and practical, step-by-step guidance tailored to daily tools. Simultaneously, it must present this standardized documentation using simple language and clear explanations, supported by a comprehensive glossary for internal jargon. By fulfilling these independent user *needs*, the platform ensures that explicit knowledge is actually internalized and applied.

3. The management sphere: value facilitation

Equally, the service platform must support management's independent *need* for platform structural accountability. This is the domain of value facilitation. Management utilizes the platform to share strategic knowledge, but they must also establish the prerequisites for the service to function consistently. By defining clear ownership, maintenance protocols, rigorous content verification, fixed update time-frames, and format standardization, management facilitates the service. This structured governance ensures that the communication is secure, the explicit knowledge foundation is reliable, and the service remains functional for everyone involved over time.

This framework highlights a critical conclusion: because knowledge is the core asset being exchanged in this context, a KMS must be treated with rigorous service design principles. Aligning these three spheres is the way to achieve true "KMS quality" and ensure the system functions as intended.

In conclusion, the TO-BE documentation environment, understood as a comprehensive KMS, is a user-centered service platform designed to support organizational knowledge and drive continuous value creation. It secures management's *need* for structural accountability and value facilitation, while seamlessly delivering the practical, contextualized guidance required for users to achieve value-in-use. Ultimately, this integration bridges the gap between high-level strategic intent and daily operational reality.

In practical terms, approaching the KMS as a service platform directly benefits the organization by ensuring the system captures both the structural foundations required for the platform to work and the functional usability demanded by users. By balancing this necessary managerial control with a strictly user-centered design, the organization empowers employees not merely to access the service, but to fully internalize and externalize the documented knowledge in their daily operations.

6

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the main findings in relation to the three research questions. The chapter also presents the study's limitations and discusses the theoretical and practical contributions of the proposed service platform framework.

RQ1: What are the users' needs regarding the documentation environment within the PPurchasing Operations Process ?

The first research question concerned what users need from the documentation environment in their daily work. The findings show that users do not only need access to documented operational ways of working. They need the documentation environment to support how purchasing activities are actually carried out in practice. This means that the documentation should be easier to understand, easier to search in, and more clearly connected to the user's role and operational context.

A central finding is that users experience a gap between the information that is formally available and the guidance they need when performing daily tasks. The current documentation environment provides general process descriptions, but users often need more practical support to understand how to act in specific situations. As a result, users often rely on support from experienced users or on material they have saved themselves, rather than using the documentation environment as their first source of guidance.

The findings also show that trust is important for user value. When information appears outdated, is difficult to find, or is not clearly linked to the user's situation, the documentation environment becomes less useful. Therefore, the user *needs* can be summarized as a *need* for a documentation environment that works more as an active support tool than as a passive collection of documents.

RQ2: What does management need to be reflected in the documentation environment for the PPurchasing Operations Process to support alignment with the organization's strategy?

The second research question focused on the management perspective. The findings show that management needs the documentation environment to support alignment between the organization's operational ways of working and daily purchasing activities. This means that the documentation environment should make it clearer how operational work connects to broader organizational expectations.

Management also needs the documentation environment to function as a reliable

common reference point. This is particularly important when the documentation concerns requirements that users are expected to follow, as well as responsibilities for keeping the content updated. In connection with this, they need that the documentation environment holds a clear ownership, has update routines, and always communicates changes in a structured way.

Another important finding is that management need that the users follow the documented operational ways of working. However, they understand that the current environment does not always make this easy and that the environment should be user-centric in that way. Therefore, management's *needs* are not only about control or standardization. They are also connected to creating the conditions for users to understand and apply the expected operational ways of working in practice.

RQ3: How can the documentation environment for the PPurchasing Operations Process be developed as a service platform that integrates users and management *needs*?

The third research question brought the user and management perspectives together. The findings show that the documentation environment can be developed as a service platform by shifting its role from storing information to supporting knowledge use. In the current AS IS situation, the documentation environment mainly functions as a static documentation repository. In the proposed TO BE situation, it should instead act as a user-centered service platform where purchasing-related knowledge is made accessible, relevant, and applicable.

The proposed service platform framework shows that user *needs* and management *needs* partly overlap. Users need practical and reliable support for daily work, while management needs a common foundation that supports alignment and consistent operational ways of working. These *needs* meet in the service platform, where knowledge can be structured, updated, and communicated in a way that supports both sides.

To support this shift, the service platform needs clear responsibility for content and updates, while also being better adapted to different roles and operational contexts. It should also make the connection between management expectations and daily purchasing work easier to understand. In this way, the service platform can help bridge the gap between management's intended operational ways of working and users' practical work situations.

Overall, the thesis concludes that the current documentation environment should not be treated only as a Knowledge Management System where information is stored. It should be understood as an internal service platform that enables knowledge transfer and value co-creation between management and users. By doing so, the organization can better support the Purchasing Operations Process and strengthen the connection between documented operational ways of working and daily purchasing practice.

6.1 Transferability

Although the findings of this thesis are derived from a specific case study within the Purchasing Operations Process of a retail enterprise, the underlying principles are not exclusively confined to purchasing operations. The insights regarding user *needs* for knowledge internalization and externalization, and management's need for strategic alignment reflect broader organizational phenomena. This study suggests that any organization seeking to optimize a KMS must address the fundamental human-centric *needs* for both internalizing and externalizing knowledge, as well as the necessity of designing the service environment accordingly.

While existing literature has extensively explored the relationship between KMS and service-oriented perspectives, much of this research has primarily emphasized the technical implications and implementation of digital platforms focusing on functionalities such as storage capacity, standardized creation, retrieval speed, and collaborative features. This thesis contributes a distinct conceptual shift by examining the foundational *needs* of the two primary actors within the KMS: users and management. Rather than concentrating solely on the platform's modular architecture, this study delineates how these actors define and co-create value through the service's performance.

Consequently, this framework serves as a transferable foundation for organizations aiming to design or transform an internal service platform intended to facilitate knowledge transfer. The proposed approach allows organizations to adapt the framework to their specific priorities, application contexts, and scalability requirements, provided that they maintain a user-centered design focus. By highlighting the integration of user and management *needs*, this study provides a framework that can be utilized to evaluate and align internal knowledge services across various organizational functions.

6.2 Future Research

Future research could build on this study by testing the proposed service platform framework in practice. For example, future studies could develop and evaluate a prototype of the service platform with users from different roles and operational categories.

Further research could also investigate how ownership, feedback, and maintenance should be organized to keep documentation environments reliable over time. In addition, future studies could explore whether the framework can be applied to other processes or organizations, since this thesis was limited to the Purchasing Operations Process in one retail enterprise.

6.3 Limitations

A limitation of the study is that the participants were selected based on relevance and availability. This means that some perspectives may have been more represented than others. Even though the study included people from different roles, it is

still possible that other users would have described the documentation environment differently.

Another limitation is that the study was carried out in one specific retail enterprise and focused only on the Purchasing Operations Process . Therefore, the findings are shaped by this company context and this specific process. This makes it difficult to say whether the same *needs* and problems would appear in other processes or organizations.

Although the empirical context of the study was the Purchasing Operations Process, the findings were not mainly connected to purchasing-specific activities. Instead, the identified *needs* were mainly about making documented ways of working useful in daily work. The Purchasing Operations Process was therefore used as an organizational context for studying the documentation environment, rather than as the main object of analysis. Future research could examine whether similar *needs* appear in other processes or organizational settings.

The study is also limited because the proposed service platform framework was not tested in practice. The suggestions and potential benefits are based on the current situation, the empirical findings, and the theoretical framework, but no prototype or implementation was evaluated. Because of this, it is not possible to know exactly how users would experience the proposed solution in their daily work and if the claimed benefits would turn out to be real.

Furthermore, the findings are mainly based on how users and management described the current documentation environment. This is useful for understanding how the documentation environment is experienced in daily work, but it also means that the results reflect participants' own views rather than measured system performance. Therefore, the study can show what kinds of problems exist, but not exactly how widespread they are among all users.

Finally, the organization is already planning changes to the documentation environment, such as moving work methods to the cloud. These future changes were only considered at a general level. As a result, some findings may need to be reconsidered if the documentation environment changes significantly after the study.

6.4 Theoretical and practical contribution

This thesis contributes theoretically by combining knowledge management and service management to understand the documentation environment as an internal service platform. Previous literature explains KMS as tools for storing, sharing, and transferring knowledge, while service management emphasizes value creation through interaction between providers and users. By bringing these perspectives together, this thesis shows how a documentation environment can be understood as more than a static documentation repository of information. Instead, it can be analyzed as a service platform where knowledge transfer is supported through the interaction between management and users.

The theoretical contribution also lies in applying the concepts of value facilitation, value-in-use, and value co-creation to an internal documentation environment. In this thesis, management is understood as the provider sphere, since it facilitates knowledge through documented operational ways of working. Users are understood

as the customer sphere, since value is created when they apply the documentation in daily purchasing work. The service platform contains the joint sphere where these two perspectives meet. This contributes to a deeper understanding of how internal Knowledge Management Systems can be designed and analyzed from a service perspective.

The practical contribution of the thesis is the proposed service platform framework for the studied organization. The framework helps identify how user *needs*, management *needs*, and the current documentation environment are connected. It shows that improving the documentation environment is not only a matter of adding more information, but of making purchasing-related knowledge easier to access, understand, trust, and apply in daily work.

For the organization, the framework can support future development of the documentation environment by highlighting key improvement areas. These include clearer ownership, better maintenance routines, structured feedback mechanisms, role- and category-specific filtering, simpler language, and stronger connection between strategic expectations and operational activities. By addressing these areas, the organization can move from a static documentation environment toward a more user-centered service platform.

In practical terms, the proposed framework benefits the organization by ensuring that operational ways of working are shared in a format that clearly articulates how activities should be executed in practice, directly reflecting actual user needs. Furthermore, it supports reducing users' dependence on informal networks by ensuring that the explicit knowledge housed within the KMS is both reliable and highly usable. Ultimately, this approach creates mutual value: it benefits users who require practical, step-by-step guidance for their daily tasks, while simultaneously serving management needs by utilizing the documentation environment to drive alignment with overarching strategic expectations.

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A

Main interview structure for users and selected management participant

Introduction

Each interview started with a brief introduction to the purpose of the study and the scope of the interview.

Background and role

- Could you briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities?
- How are your responsibilities connected to the PPurchasing Operations Process ?
- What types of supporting tools or information do you use in your daily work, and for what purpose?
- Follow-up: How frequently do you use them?

Part I. Current ways of working

- Why do you use these tools or sources of information?
- Did you receive any training on how to use these tools and where to find the information you need?
- Do you ask others for guidance when carrying out these activities?
- Follow-up: If yes, how often and in what types of situations?

Part II. Perceived gaps in the current information environment

- What is your opinion of the availability of these tools and sources of information?
- What is your opinion of their accessibility? Are they easy to follow and use?
- Follow-up: Can you give some examples?

- How relevant is the information you find there? Do you experience any gaps in the information?
- Are there any documents or information sources that you feel you need to double-check before using?
- Follow-up: Why do you think they need to be double-checked?

Part III. Improvement needs

- Is there any documentation or information that you think should be shared but is currently not available?
- Do you experience any overlapping information across different tools or sources?
- What would you change in the design of the system to make it easier to use in your daily work?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?

B

Workshop structures

Workshop 1

Purpose

To gather management perspectives on how strategy is connected to the PPurchasing Operations Process and how related documents are handled in practice.

Main questions

- What parts of the company's sustainability strategy are most relevant for aligning employees with the PPurchasing Operations Process ?
- How has this strategy been shared with employees, and why in that way?
- How do you align with the BDMs?
- How are you allowed to upload, update, or create new documents?

Workshop 2

Purpose

To explore how strategy and governance-related information can be understood, translated into daily purchasing work, and communicated to employees.

Structure

- Short introduction to the purpose of the workshop and its connection to the thesis
- Initial discussion of what strategy means in relation to daily work
- Individual brainstorming followed by joint discussion
- Grouping and connecting ideas into broader categories
- Final reflection and closing comments

Main questions

- What parts of the company's strategy are most relevant to share with employees in relation to the PPurchasing Operations Process ?

- What do employees need to understand from these strategic factors in order to perform their activities and make good decisions in purchasing operations?
- What governance, in terms of rules, guidelines, or processes, must employees follow in purchasing operations to support the company's strategy?
- What is the best way to communicate this governance-related information to employees?

C

Interview summary structure

Purpose of the summary

To make the empirical material more focused in relation to the purpose of the thesis, each interview was summarized using the same structure. The structure is presented below.

1. **Respondent role**
The respondent's role in the organization.
2. **Responsibilities**
The respondent's main responsibilities and how they are connected to the PPurchasing Operations Process .
3. **Role-specific needs**
Needs described by the respondent in relation to their work.
4. **Tools and information sources**
Tools, systems, documents, or other information sources used in daily work.
5. **Positive aspects**
What the respondent described as working well in the current information environment.
6. **Support and training**
Support and/or training used or received by the respondent.
7. **Problems or gaps**
Problems, challenges, or missing information described by the respondent.
8. **Improvements**
Suggestions or improvement needs mentioned by the respondent.

D

Empirical support for identified user *needs*

This appendix shows how the user *needs* in Section 4.1 were identified from the interview summaries. Each row connects one user *need* to one respondent and summarizes the part of the summary that supports it.

Table D.1: Empirical support for identified user needs

User need	Respondent	Empirical support from interview summaries
Practical guidance	R1	Suggested adding more real-life scenarios and adapting examples to current situations.
Practical guidance	R4	Described a need for more details about processes and how to carry them out in practice.
Practical guidance	R5	Needed input on how to do tasks in practice, like example and guidance on what to do when something goes wrong.
Practical guidance	R8	Needed simpler instructions that are more direct and more relevant to actual operations.
Practical guidance	R10	Needed support when doing something unfamiliar and more clarity in processes.
Practical guidance	R11	Needed working methods that better reflect the reality of actual cases.
Practical guidance	R12	Needed templates and guidance for quality-related and problem-solving activities.
End-to-end process guidance	R2	Needed documentation that explains the process behind specific tasks and what needs to be done before moving to the next system phase.
End-to-end process guidance	R4	Needed information in chronological order, with clarity about what must happen before the next step.

User need	Respondent	Empirical support from interview summaries
End-to-end process guidance	R5	Needed to understand why tasks are done, how they connect to other processes, and who is affected.
End-to-end process guidance	R7	Needed the steps to be easier to follow, including the order of the work and the documents connected to each step.
End-to-end process guidance	R10	Needed more coherence in how processes are carried out and clearer responsibility for activities.
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	R2	Needed support that is relevant for the Y-category area, since not everything in the Purchasing Manual is applicable.
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	R4	Needed information connected to specific needs according to categories and roles.
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	R6	Needed support in understanding what is applicable to their own role within a broad documentation environment.
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	R7	Needed filtering by categories and roles.
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	R9	Needed category-specific filtering and clearer information about what applies to specific teams and categories.
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	R11	Needed easier ways to find what applies to the respondent's role and category.
Role- and operational category-specific relevance	R12	Needed documentation that is relevant to the respondent's category and not overloaded with information for other categories.
Fast and easy access to information	R1	Suggested making the documentation environment more like a tool than a book, with a direct search function and integration into tools such as Teams.
Fast and easy access to information	R3	Suggested a folder or logistics hub where all links are stored and can be reached easily.
Fast and easy access to information	R4	Described that it takes time to understand the manual and find the needed information.

User need	Respondent	Empirical support from interview summaries
Fast and easy access to information	R5	Needed faster access to urgent step-by-step procedures.
Fast and easy access to information	R6	Needed a structure that helps when the exact information needed is not already known.
Fast and easy access to information	R7	Suggested adding a search engine and summaries based on the user's situation.
Fast and easy access to information	R8	Needed documentation that is easy to search and precise in urgent situations.
Fast and easy access to information	R10	Needed documentation that is easier and faster to understand and classified in a more user-friendly way.
Fast and easy access to information	R11	Suggested easier search for specific words connected to working methods.
Fast and easy access to information	R12	Suggested improving the structure and the searching method.
Simple language with clear explanations	R5	Needed simpler language because organizational terms and acronyms made the manual harder to use.
Simple language with clear explanations	R7	Described that internal language and lingo make the information harder to understand.
Simple language with clear explanations	R8	Needed language that is easier to understand for users who use English as a second language.
Simple language with clear explanations	R9	Needed information written in a direct way, with clearer descriptions of systems and tools.
Visual support and exemplification	R1	Suggested adding real-life scenarios and adapting examples to current situations.
Visual support and exemplification	R2	Appreciated the process wheel and suggested more visual presentations for internal parts of the process.
Visual support and exemplification	R3	Suggested video training and an audio version as reference options.
Visual support and exemplification	R5	Needed more examples, like screenshots and formats beyond text, including videos and shorter step-by-step instructions.

User need	Respondent	Empirical support from interview summaries
Visual support and exemplification	R7	Needed summaries or search support that can guide users based on their situation.
Visual support and exemplification	R8	Suggested examples or cases to connect information to real work situations.
Visual support and exemplification	R9	Preferred training over reading because training includes examples and feels easier to follow.
Visual support and exemplification	R11	Needed working methods that better reflect the reality of actual cases.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R1	Described uncertainty about whether the information is still valid and emphasized the need to trust the information unless other updates are communicated.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R2	Did not always know whether information had been updated and reflected before trusting information if it appeared old.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R3	Described the Purchasing Manual as updated and trusted.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R4	Described the Purchasing Manual as not always updated or current and noted uncertainty about trust.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R5	Noted discrepancies in screenshots, which may indicate outdated information.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R6	Explained that updates discussed during engineering meetings strengthen trust in the documents used.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R7	Described outdated, imprecise, or irrelevant documents and the need to trust the documentation because there may not be another source.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R8	Described delayed updates and the need for information to be updated and maintained continuously.
Up-to-date and reliable information	R9	Described a general need to double-check information and noted that updates often come by email.

User need	Respondent	Empirical support from interview summaries
Up-to-date and reliable information	R12	Described problems with saved desktop documents when updates happen without the respondent being aware of them.

E

Empirical support for identified management *needs*

This appendix shows how the management *needs* in Section 4.2 were identified from the interview and workshop summaries. Each row connects one management *need* to one empirical source and summarizes the part of the summary that supports it.

Table E.1: Empirical support for identified management *needs*

Management <i>need</i>	Empirical source	Empirical support from management summaries
Strategic alignment	Workshop 2	Highlighted that strategy should be translated into users' daily work and that users need to understand how strategic pillars, KPIs, compliance, and operational work are connected.
Strategic alignment	R17	Emphasized the need to translate strategic input into operations and to help users understand how their work contributes to the broader process and business picture.
Strategic alignment	R33	Described the importance of category strategic alignment, sourcing setup, supplier capabilities, and how operational information supports decision-making.
Usable documentation environment	Workshop 2	Described the Purchasing Manual as a source for ways of working, but also showed a need for clearer communication of how strategy and governance information should support daily work.
Usable documentation environment	R17	Described accessibility as a core issue and emphasized that users need to know what to use, how to use it, and where to find it.

Management need	Empirical source	Empirical support from management summaries
Usable documenta- tion environment	R33	Explained that the Purchasing Manual is not the main tool used in this area and suggested making information easier and simpler to retrieve.
Single source of truth	Workshop 1	Emphasized the need for one common base- line for information and clearer distinc- tions between what is mandatory, business- critical, legal, and optional guidance.
Single source of truth	Workshop 2	Highlighted the need to distinguish between mandatory steps, supportive guidance, and category- or process-specific information.
Single source of truth	R17	Explained that the Purchasing Manual is no longer the only place where information is stored, creating a need for clearer structure and guidance on where information should be found.
Explicit knowledge foundation	Workshop 1	Highlighted that users should rely less on personal networks and instead have access to a stable foundation that supports correct ways of working.
Explicit knowledge foundation	Workshop 2	Emphasized that users need to understand what must be followed from a legal, compli- ance, and internal governance perspective.
Explicit knowledge foundation	R17	Explained that users should have a clear frame for what to do and how to do it, in- cluding guiding and steering documents that support safe and correct work.
Platform structure	Workshop 1	Described the need for clearer ownership, scope, governance, control over who can up- load and update documents, and stronger maintenance standards.
Platform structure	R17	Emphasized the need to strengthen business process ownership, clarify who owns what, and move from unclear ownership toward of- ficially recognized process ownership.

Management <i>need</i>	Empirical source	Empirical support from management summaries
Platform structure	R33	Indicated that operational information is often shared through email and meetings rather than through one structured source, showing a need for clearer structure and access.
