EFFECTIVE USE OF ONLINE PROFESSTIONAL NETOWRKS FOR KNOWLDEGE SHARING IN SRILANKAN SOFTWARE INDUSTRY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for Degree or Diploma in any other University or institute of higher learning and the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text. Also, I hereby grant to University of Moratuwa the non-exclusive right to reproduce and distribute my thesis, in whole or in part in print, electronic or other medium. I retain the right to use this content in whole or part in future works (such as articles or books)

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(Mr. Chandana Weerasinghe)

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge is a key assest of the software development companies. Software comapanies are considered as knowledge intensive companies.The software industry is dependent to a great extent on intellectual capital, as opposed to physical capital in order to compete in this competitive industry. Knowledge can be categerozied as either tacit or explicit knowldege. Capturing knowledge is more crtical and knowledge sharing will aid for such activities.

This research invetigates how IT professtionals in Sri Lankan Software Industry use their online professtional networks for knowledge sharing behaviour. After the rising of 2.0 technologies, online participations have increased tremendously among the knowldege workers. The success of the online professtional networks depends on the participation, engagement and social interaction of peers, which leads to knowldege sharing. Without frequent interaction and persistent interaction, it is uncertain whether knowldege sharing can take place. Online professtional networking provides a shared work place that allow peer workes to interact with each other, provides transparent discussion forums and continues exposure to best practices and learning by observations. Online networks provide centalized meeting places for community building.

The literature mainly discusses the theroies and concepts used for knowdege sharing through online communities. Mainly four theories are described in the litrature part i.e Social Capital Theory, Social Cognative Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Habitual Domain Theory. Based on these theories, main dimensions were indetified for knowledge sharing behaviour through online virtual communities. The Conceptual Model was derived from these factors for determining the quality and quantity of the shared knowledge through online professtional networks.

Information was gathered by distributing questionnaires over a target population of 370. All questionnaires were based on the theories and concepts discussed under chapter 2. Factors related to virtual communities were identified as independent variables and knowledge sharing behavior was identified as dependent variables. Data obtained from each of the research instruments was then statistically analyzed. The Pearson Correlation analysis showed there are positive relationships between social interaction ties, identification, self related experience, personal and community related expectation, norm of reciprocity, trust and privacy with the knowledge sharing behavior in the online professional communities and there was a negative relationship with the organizational level support.

Key Words: Knowldege, Knowldege Sharing, Tacit and Explicit Knowldege, Online Professional Networks, Social Capital Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Habitual Domain Theory

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBRIVATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
PN	Professional Network
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTA	Information and Communication Technology Agency
SLASSCOM	Sri Lanka Association of Software and Service Companies
ITES	IT/IT Enabled Companies
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HD	Habitual Domain
SECI	Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization
CWE	Company Working Environment
SNT	Social Network Ties
TRU	Trust
NOR	Norm of Reciprocity
IDN	Identification
PVC	Privacy
SRE	Self-rated Expertise
MPE	Personal Outcome Expectation
MCE	Member's community related outcome expectation
IDH	Individual Habit
QLK	Quality of Knowledge
QUK	Quantity of Knowledge
TCK	Tacit Knowledge

EXK	Explicit Knowledge
US	United States
VC	Virtual Community
SE	Software Engineering
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
PNS	Professional Networking Systems
QA	Quality Assurance
UI	User Interface
KS	Knowledge Sharing
PD	Potential Domain
AD	Actual Domain
AP	Activation Probabilities
RD	Reachable Domain