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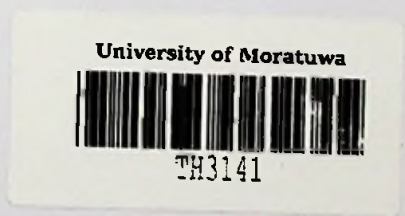
**EFFECTIVE USE OF ONLINE PROFESSIONAL  
NETWORKS FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING  
IN  
SRILANKAN SOFTWARE INDUSTRY**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master  
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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

Knowledge is a key asset of the software development companies. Software companies 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 categorized as either tacit or explicit knowledge. Capturing knowledge is more critical and knowledge sharing will aid for such activities.

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

The literature mainly discusses the theories and concepts used for knowledge sharing through online communities. Mainly four theories are described in the literature part i.e Social Capital Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Habitual Domain Theory. Based on these theories, main dimensions were identified 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 professional 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:** Knowledge, Knowledge Sharing, Tacit and Explicit Knowledge, Online Professional Networks, Social Capital Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Habitual Domain Theory

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## LIST OF ABBRIVATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
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