

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF  
FREE AND OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE (FOSS)  
AMONG SRI LANKAN ORGANISATIONS**

**MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**



**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

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**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF  
FREE AND OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE (FOSS)  
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**By**

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The Dissertation was submitted to the Department of Computer Science & Engineering of the University of Moratuwa in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Business Administration.

Department of Computer Science and Engineering

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December 2004

**Supervised**

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## DECLARATION

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To the best of my knowledge, the above particulars are correct.

.....  
Supervisor

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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This dissertation is submitted to the Department of Computer Science and Engineering of University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Business Administration in Information Technology.

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Nishan Weerasooriya  
Colombo  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

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BSD	Berkeley Software Design
CIO	Chief Information Officer
EU	European Union
FLOSS	Free / Libre Open Source Software
FOSS	Free / Open Source Software
FSF	Free Software Foundation
FUD	Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt
GNU	GNU's Not Unix
GPL	General Public Licence
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTA	ICT Agency
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IT	Information Technology
LGPL	Lesser General Public Licence
LKLUG	LanKa Linux User Group
LSF	Lanka Software Foundation
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
OSI	Open Source Initiative
OSS	Open Source Software
TCO	Total Cost of Ownership
TOE	Technology, Organisation and Environment
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



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## ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the perception of Free and Open Source (FOSS) products among IT professionals within the business community of Sri Lanka.

Until recently FOSS has been branded as a hobbyist interest and as a playground for computer geeks. However, in recent years, this concept has been intensively discussed and many organisations and governments have become keen promoters and users of FOSS. These governments and businesses are now realising the dangers of locking themselves in to a single monopolistic supplier for all their software needs. In addition, the premise of high quality software with low deployment costs and the ability to customise and distribute without infringing copyrights has made FOSS products highly attractive to organisations.

The FOSS community currently has two flagship products. The *Apache web server*, which is the market leader in the web server products category, commanding over 70% of the current deployments, and the *Linux operating system* that has been having a phenomenal success in adoption rates recently. This success of FOSS products has now caught the attention of proprietary software giants like Microsoft who have started special campaigns targeted at the business community to bring fear, uncertainty and doubt, popularly known as FUD, regarding FOSS products.

Although FOSS offers many advantages, Sri Lankan IT professionals in the business community have not shown a great interest in adopting FOSS products in their organisations. This study examines the role of perception for this phenomenon.

In order to develop a framework for the study, the author studied established theories used in previous studies such as the Diffusion of innovations theory and the TOE framework, which has been used extensively to understand the technology perceptions and adoption in organisations. Informal interviews of several key IT decision makers in larger organisations helped to develop the boundaries of the project. A questionnaire, primarily based on these inputs, was developed and was sent to IT department staff at selected medium and large private sector organisations.

The study primarily followed quantitative research methodology. Qualitative techniques were used to supplement and elaborate the findings. These were primarily the interviews with key IT decision makers, which were held in the second phase.

The findings of the study suggest that there is a probable relationship between the perception of FOSS (in product technology and vendor support) and the level of usage of FOSS products. With the use of FOSS products, the organisations' perception of FOSS appears to be getting better.

Therefore, it can be argued that the most important issue to address is to correct the perception of FOSS products of non FOSS users. The FOSS community should develop strategies to build confidence levels of non FOSS users. Once organisations start using these products, they appear to change the way they perceive FOSS.

The study also invited respondents to give their strategies and plans in reducing the total cost of ownership and in handling licensing issues. This part of the study attempted to identify the role FOSS products are expected to play in their organisations in managing such challenges. By using this information, the FOSS community, especially vendors, can identify the needs and opportunities in the today's organisations and focus their activities accordingly.



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