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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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*Software Product Line Engineering (SPLE) is an approach with an aim to move the software industry away from developing each system from scratch. The fundamental idea in SPLE is building systems from the common features rather than building new systems, because systems in a certain software domain have more commonalities than uniqueness. SPLE helps to identify common features among similar family of products into core assets and then reuse these core assets to develop subsequent applications. SPL development needs a collaborative process whereby organizations can balance the conflicting interests between high reusability demand and lower cost. This process needs to focus on how to achieve the required reusability level; and handle the uncertainties during the product line core asset development. Despite the large number of research and studies that touched SPL, there is a gap in the study of uncertainty associated with features selection in the core asset development. The main objective of this thesis is to address this issue by handling that uncertainty using the Real option Theory (ROT) concepts, which offers a systematic approach to identify and assess the issues that have an effect on the real options value, and help managers to make a decision under uncertainty. In this thesis we develop Software Product Line Engineering Management Framework (K-SPLEMF) for core asset development. Our framework identifies a method to classify an SPL features into features sets based on their dependencies relations; introduces a new matrix to calculate features and Features Sets Reuse Opportunities; prioritizes features and features sets in the SPL core asset development process by using ROT concepts. Furthermore, we analyze and discuss the results of the framework application on the SPL core asset development through case studies.*

## ملخص الرسالة

الإسم الكامل : خالد محمد حسين الكحسه  
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هندسة خط إنتاج البرمجيات (SPLE) هي نهج يهدف الى نقل صناعة البرمجيات بعيدا عن تطوير كل نظام من نقطة البداية. الفكرة الأساسية في (SPLE) هي بناء أنظمة برمجيات من السمات (Features) المشتركة بينها بدلا من بناء أنظمة جديدة، وذلك لأن الأنظمة في مجال برمجيات معين لديها قواسم مشتركة أكثر مما يتفرد به كل نظام عن الآخر (يقصد بالسمات في هذه الدراسة المتطلبات الوظيفية؛ المتطلبات الغير وظيفية؛ الخدمات؛ متطلبات خط الانتاج القابلة لاعادة الاستخدام؛ و مميزات النظام).  
هندسة إنتاج خطوط البرمجيات تساعد على تعريف السمات المشتركة بين مجموعة متماثلة من المنتجات كأصول أساسية (Core Assets) والتي يمكن إعادة استخدامها لتطوير و انتاج تطبيقات لاحقة. إن تطوير خط انتاج البرمجيات (SPL) يتطلب عملية تعاونية بحيث يمكن للمؤسسات تحقيق توازن بين تضارب المصالح لمطالب إعادة استخدام مرتفعة و تكلفة أقل. هذه العملية تحتاج للتركيز على كيفية تحقيق المستوى المطلوب من إعادة الاستخدام، و التعامل مع عدم التيقن (Uncertainty) خلال تطوير الاصول الاساسية لخط الانتاج. بالرغم من ان كثير من البحوث و الدراسات تناولت خطوط انتاج البرمجيات لايزال هناك فجوة في الدراسات التي تعالج مشكلة عدم التيقن المرتبطة باختيار السمات عند تطوير الاصول الاساسية. الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة هو تناول هذه المسألة لمعالجة مشكلة عدم التيقن عند اختيار السمات لخط انتاج البرمجيات باستخدام مفاهيم نظرية الخيارات الحقيقية (Real Options Theory (ROT)) و التي تقدم نهجا نظاميا لتحديد و تقييم المسائل التي يكون لها تأثير على القيمة الحقيقية للخيارات و مساعدة المسؤولين على اتخاذ القرارات في حالات عدم التيقن.  
في هذه الدراسة قمنا ببناء اطار عمل ادارة هندسة خط انتاج البرمجيات (Software Product Line Engineering Management Framework (K-SPLEMF)) لتطوير الاصول الاساسية. اطار العمل المقدم في هذه الدراسة يعرف طريقة لتقسيم سمات خط انتاج البرمجيات الي مجموعات سمات (Features Sets) بناء على علاقات الاعتمادية بينها؛ و يقدم مصفوفة جديدة لحساب فرص إعادة الاستخدام (Reuse Opportunities) للسمات او مجموعات السمات في خط انتاج البرمجيات؛ ايضا يعرف اولويات السمات او مجموعات السمات عند تطوير الاصول الأساسية لخط انتاج البرمجيات باستخدام مفاهيم نظرية الخيارات الحقيقية. علاوة على ذلك قمنا بتحليل و مناقشة نتائج تطبيق اطار العمل المقدم في هذه الرسالة على عملية تطوير الاصول الاساسية لخط انتاج البرمجيات من خلال حالات دراسية.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VI
LIST OF TABLES .....	X
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XII
THESIS ABSTRACT.....	XIV
ملخص الرسالة.....	XV
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Motivation.....	3
1.2 Research Objectives .....	4
1.3 Research Contribution .....	5
1.4 Thesis Organization .....	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE SURVEY .....	7
2.1 Background: Definitions and Overview.....	8
2.1.1 Software Product Lines (SPL).....	8
- Feature.....	11
- Feature Model: .....	11
2.1.2 Real Option Theory (ROT).....	13
- Option .....	14
- Options Analysis .....	14
2.2 Literature review and related work .....	15
2.2.1 Software Product Line .....	15
- Software Product Line Implementation Approaches .....	15
- SPL Features Modeling.....	17
- Feature Binding .....	20
- Marketing and Product Plan (MPP) .....	22
- Feature Dependency analysis.....	24

- Operational Dependencies .....	24
- Activation Dependencies .....	25
2.2.2 Real Option Theory .....	27
- The Black-Scholes Option Pricing Formula.....	28
- Chooser Option (basic Chooser) .....	30
- Real Option & IT.....	31
- Real option and SPL .....	32
2.2.3 Summary of related works .....	32
2.3 Summary .....	34
CHAPTER 3: SPLE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK ( <i>K-SPLEMF</i> ) .....	35
3.1 SPLE Management Framework Phases .....	37
3.1.1 Features Dependency Analysis.....	37
- Operational Dependency Analysis.....	38
- Activation Dependency Analysis.....	39
3.1.2 Features Classification .....	41
- Dependencies Relations Weighting:.....	42
- Classification Process .....	45
3.1.3 Reuse Opportunity Computing.....	48
- Feature Model Factor (FMF): .....	49
- MPP Factor (MPPF): .....	50
- Dependency Factors (DF): .....	52
- Feature Set Reuse Opportunity .....	53
3.1.4 Options Analysis.....	54
- Reuse Opportunity Valuation .....	54
- Features Sets Development Priority .....	56
3.2 Summary .....	57
CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES .....	58
4.1 Elevator Control System (ECS) .....	59
4.1.1 ECS Features Description.....	59
4.1.2 Marketing Product Plan (MPP) of ECS Product Line .....	62
4.2 Scientific Calculator System (SCS) Product Line .....	63
4.2.1 SCS Features Description.....	63

4.2.2	Marketing Product Plan (MPP) Of SCS Product Line.....	67
4.3	Summary.....	68
CHAPTER 5: RESULT DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....		69
5.1	Elevator Control System (ECS).....	70
5.1.1	ECS Features Dependency Analysis.....	70
-	ECS Feature Model Analysis.....	70
-	ECS Features Operational Dependency Analysis.....	71
-	ECS Features Activation Dependency Analysis.....	72
5.1.2	ECS Features Classification.....	78
-	ECS dependencies Relations Weighting.....	78
-	ECS Features Classification Process.....	79
5.1.3	ECS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity Computing.....	86
-	Computing ECS Features Sets Feature Model Factor (FSFMF).....	86
-	Computing ECS Features Sets MPP Factor (FSMPPF).....	86
-	Computing ECS Features Sets Dependency Factor (FSDF).....	87
-	Computing ECS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity (FSRO).....	87
5.1.4	ECS Features Sets Options Analysis.....	92
-	ECS Features Sets Reuse Opportunities Valuations.....	92
-	ECS Features Sets Development Priorities.....	93
5.2	Scientific Calculator System (SCS).....	98
5.2.1	SCS Features Dependency Analysis.....	98
-	SCS Feature Model Analysis.....	98
-	SCS Features Operational Dependency Analysis.....	100
-	SCS Features Activation Dependency Analysis.....	101
5.2.2	SCS Features Classification.....	117
-	SCS dependencies Relations Weighting.....	117
-	SCS Features Classification Process.....	117
5.2.3	SCS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity Computing.....	127
-	Computing SCS Features Sets Feature Model Factor (FSFMF).....	127
-	Computing SCS Features Sets MPP Factor (FSMPPF).....	127
-	Computing SCS Features Sets Dependency Factor (FSDF).....	128
-	Computing SCS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity (FSRO).....	128

5.2.4	SCS Features Sets Options Analysis .....	133
-	SCS Features Sets Reuse Opportunities Valuations.....	133
-	SCS Features Sets Development Priorities.....	134
5.3	Results Summary .....	143
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK .....</b>		<b>145</b>
6.1	Summary of the work .....	145
6.2	Discussion .....	147
6.3	Future work .....	152
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>		<b>153</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: ELEVATOR SYSTEM CONTROL (ESC) .....</b>		<b>157</b>
	ESC Features Description .....	157
	ECS Features Marketing Product Plan Attributes.....	158
	ECS features Dependencies information Adjustment .....	159
	ECS Features and Features Relations Weights .....	163
	Pajek ECS Features Classifications .....	164
	ECS Features Reuse Opportunity.....	170
	ECS Features Sets Options Analysis .....	172
	ECS Features Options Analysis.....	174
<b>APPENDIX B: SCIENTIFIC CALCULATOR SYSTEM (SCS) .....</b>		<b>176</b>
	SCS Features Description .....	176
	SCS Features Marketing Product Plan Attributes .....	180
	SCS Features Marketing Product Plan Attributes (continue) .....	181
	SCS features Dependencies information Adjustment.....	182
	SCS Features and Features Relations Weights .....	192
	Pajek SCS Features Classifications .....	193
	SCS Features Reuse Opportunity.....	202
	SCS Features Sets Options Analysis .....	206
	SCS Features Options Analysis.....	208
	Vitae.....	213



## LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 3.1: Features relations and weights for figure 3.5's example</i> .....	43
<i>Table 3.2: Features relations and weights for figure 3.5's example</i> .....	44
<i>Table 3.3: Result of classification process for example in figure 3.5, using Pajek</i> .....	46
<i>Table 4.1: ECS product line MPP Attributes</i> .....	62
<i>Table 4.2: SCS product line MPP Attributes</i> .....	67
<i>Table 4.3: Summary of Product Line Case Studies Characteristics</i> .....	68
<i>Table 5.1: ECS Operational Features and Features Types</i> .....	70
<i>Table 5.2: ECS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies</i> .....	76
<i>Table 5.3: ECS Features Dependencies Values</i> .....	77
<i>Table 5.4: ECS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Process</i> .....	81
<i>Table 5.5: ECS Features Relations Weights</i> .....	82
<i>Table 5.6: ECS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek</i> .....	83
<i>Table 5.7: Pajek's Clustering Results for ECS product line Features</i> .....	84
<i>Table 5.8: ECS Features Sets</i> .....	85
<i>Table 5.9: FSFMF of Features Sets in ECS</i> .....	88
<i>Table 5.10: ECS Features Sets MPP Factors Values and FSMPPF Values</i> .....	89
<i>Table 5.11: Features Sets Dependencies Factors in ECS</i> .....	90
<i>Table 5.12: FSRO of Features Sets in ECS</i> .....	91
<i>Table 5.13: Options Prices of ECS's Features Sets</i> .....	95
<i>Table 5.14: Development Priority of ECS Features Sets</i> .....	96
<i>Table 5.15: Options Prices and Development Priorities of ECS's Features</i> .....	97
<i>Table 5.16: SCS Operational Features and Features Types</i> .....	99
<i>Table 5.17: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies</i> .....	107
<i>Table 5.18: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	108
<i>Table 5.19: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	109
<i>Table 5.20: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	110
<i>Table 5.21: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	111
<i>Table 5.22: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	112
<i>Table 5.23: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	113
<i>Table 5.24: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	114
<i>Table 5.25: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i> .....	115
<i>Table 5.26: SCS Features Dependencies Values</i> .....	116
<i>Table 5.27: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek</i> .....	119
<i>Table 5.28: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i> .....	120
<i>Table 5.29: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i> .....	121
<i>Table 5.30: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i> .....	122
<i>Table 5.31: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i> .....	123
<i>Table 5.32: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i> .....	124
<i>Table 5.33: Pajek's Clustering Errors and numbers of solutions for SCS Features</i> .....	125

<i>Table 5.34: SCS Features Sets</i> .....	126
<i>Table 5.35: FSFMF of Features Sets in SCS</i> .....	129
<i>Table 5.36: SCS Features Sets MPP Factors Values and FSMPPF Values</i> .....	130
<i>Table 5.37: Features Sets Dependencies Factors (FSDF) in SCS</i> .....	131
<i>Table 5.38: FSRO of Features Sets in SCS</i> .....	132
<i>Table 5.39: Options Prices of SCS's Features Sets</i> .....	136
<i>Table 5.40: Development Priority of SCS Features Sets</i> .....	137
<i>Table 5.41: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> ....	139
<i>Table 5.42: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> ..	140
<i>Table 5.43: A Brief Compursion between case studies</i> .....	144
<i>Table A.1: ECS Features MPP Attributes</i> .....	158
<i>Table A.2: ECS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Transferring Process</i> .....	161
<i>Table A.3: ECS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Removing Process</i> .....	162
<i>Table A.4: ECS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO</i> .....	171
<i>Table A.5: Options Prices and Development Priorities of ECS Features Sets</i> .....	172
<i>Table A.6: Options Prices and Development Priorities of ECS Features</i> .....	174
<i>Table B.1: SCS Features MPP Attributes (features 1 to 42)</i> .....	180
<i>Table B.2: SCS Features MPP Attributes (features 43 to 86)</i> .....	181
<i>Table B.3: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes</i> .....	183
<i>Table B.4: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	184
<i>Table B.5: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	185
<i>Table B.6: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	186
<i>Table B.7: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	187
<i>Table B.8: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	188
<i>Table B.9: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	189
<i>Table B.10: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	190
<i>Table B.11: SCS Features Dependencies Values after Adjustiment processes</i> .....	191
<i>Table B.12: Part of Pajek's Clustering Results for SCS Features (features 1 to 30)</i> .....	199
<i>Table B.13: Part of Pajek's Clustering Results for SCS Features (features 31 to 60)</i> .....	200
<i>Table B.14: Part of Pajek's Clustering Results for SCS Features (features 61 to 86)</i> .....	201
<i>Table B.15: SCS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO (features 1 to 30)</i> .....	203
<i>Table B.16: SCS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO (features 31 to 60)</i> .....	204
<i>Table B.17: SCS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO (features 61 to 86)</i> .....	205
<i>Table B.18: Development Priority of SCS Features Sets</i> .....	206
<i>Table B.19: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 1st to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> ..	209
<i>Table B.20: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> .	210

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.1: SPLE cost and time to market analysis [7]</i> .....	2
<i>Figure 2.1: The two-life-cycle model of software product line engineering [13].</i> .....	10
<i>Figure 2.2: A Feature Model of Mobile Phone Software Product Line [21]</i> .....	12
<i>Figure 2.3: Uncertainty Increases Value [26]</i> .....	14
<i>Figure 2.4: A feature model example: PBX product line [20]</i> .....	18
<i>Figure 2.5: A feature model of the HSR product line and its binding unit identification [48]</i> .....	21
<i>Figure 3.1: SPLE Management Framework (K-SPLEMF)</i> .....	36
<i>Figure 3.2: K-SPLEMF Features Dependency Analysis Phase</i> .....	40
<i>Figure 3.3: K-SPLEMF Feature Classification Phase</i> .....	41
<i>Figure 3.4: Dependency Relations Weight Procedure</i> .....	42
<i>Figure 3.5: Example of dependency relations between features</i> .....	43
<i>Figure 3.6: Procedure and Conditions of the Classification Process using Pajek</i> .....	45
<i>Figure 3.7: Feature Sets for the example in figure 3.5; using Pajek</i> .....	47
<i>Figure 3.8: K-SPLEMF Reuse Opportunity Computing Phase</i> .....	53
<i>Figure 3.9: K-SPLEMF Options Analysis Phase</i> .....	56
<i>Figure 4.1: Feature Model of ECS Product Line</i> .....	61
<i>Figure 4.2: Feature Model of SCS Product Line</i> .....	66
<i>Figure 5.1: Features Operational Dependency in the ECS product line</i> .....	73
<i>Figure 5.2: Features Activation Dependency in the ECS product line</i> .....	74
<i>Figure 5.3: Exclusive- Activation Dependency in the ECS product line</i> .....	75
<i>Figure 5.4: ECS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	96
<i>Figure 5.5: ECS Features Options Analysis</i> .....	97
<i>Figure 5.6: Features Operational Dependency in the SCS (Usage Dependency – Part 1)</i> .....	102
<i>Figure 5.7: Features Operational Dependency in the SCS (Usage – Part 2 &amp; Modification)</i> ...	103
<i>Figure 5.8: Features Activation Dependency in the SCS (Subordinate-Activation)</i> .....	104
<i>Figure 5.9: Features Activation Dependency in the SCS (Exclusive-Activation)</i> .....	105
<i>Figure 5.10: Features Activation Dependency in the SCS (Concurrent &amp; Sequential)</i> .....	106
<i>Figure 5.11: SCS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	138
<i>Figure 5.12: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 1<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> .....	141
<i>Figure 5.13: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> .....	142
<i>Figure A.1: Input Text file for Pajek of ECS Features and Features Relations Weights</i> .....	163
<i>Figure A.2: ECS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 1)</i> .....	164
<i>Figure A.3: Pajek Result Report for ECS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 1</i> ...	165
<i>Figure A.4: ECS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 15)</i> .....	166
<i>Figure A.5: Pajek Result Report for ECS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 15</i> .	167
<i>Figure A.6: ECS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 25)</i> .....	168
<i>Figure A.7: Pajek Result Report for ECS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 25</i> .	169
<i>Figure A.8: ECS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	173
<i>Figure A.9: ECS Features Options Analysis</i> .....	175

<i>Figure B.1: Input Text file for Pajek of SCS Features and Features Relations Weights</i> .....	192
<i>Figure B.2: SCS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 1)</i> .....	193
<i>Figure B.3: Pajek Result Report for SCS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 1</i> ...	194
<i>Figure B.4: SCS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 27)</i> .....	195
<i>Figure B.5: Pajek Result Report for SCS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 27</i> .	196
<i>Figure B.6: SCS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 86)</i> .....	197
<i>Figure B.7: Pajek Result Report for SCS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 86</i> .	198
<i>Figure B.8: SCS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	207
<i>Figure B.9: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 1<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> .....	211
<i>Figure B.10: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> .....	212

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BY

**Khalid Mohammed Hussein Al-Kahsah**

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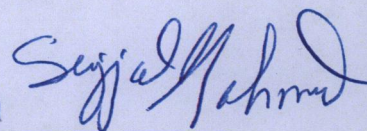
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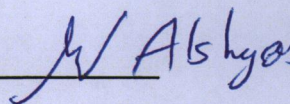
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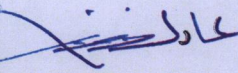
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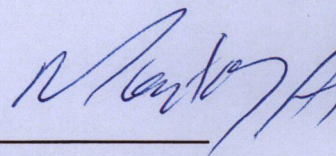
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*I dedicate this modest work to Allah Almighty for his grace and blessing*

*I ask him to accept this work and to make it useful*

*Then I dedicate it to:*

*Saba the homeland and the human .. The love and the hope*

*My parents sourcing tender and the reason of my being*

*My brothers who I relied on them when adversity*

*My sisters' the headwaters of love and kindness*

*My wife my life partner at the moments of happiness and sadness*

*My daughter which gives me the Permanent smile*

*My teachers who guide me to the right way*

*My friends the meaning of Permanent Fidelity*

*To all of them I dedicate this work with all of my love and appreciation.*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VI
LIST OF TABLES .....	X
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XII
THESIS ABSTRACT.....	XIV
ملخص الرسالة.....	XV
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Motivation.....	3
1.2 Research Objectives .....	4
1.3 Research Contribution .....	5
1.4 Thesis Organization .....	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE SURVEY .....	7
2.1 Background: Definitions and Overview.....	8
2.1.1 Software Product Lines (SPL).....	8
- Feature.....	11
- Feature Model: .....	11
2.1.2 Real Option Theory (ROT).....	13
- Option .....	14
- Options Analysis .....	14
2.2 Literature review and related work .....	15
2.2.1 Software Product Line .....	15
- Software Product Line Implementation Approaches .....	15
- SPL Features Modeling.....	17
- Feature Binding .....	20
- Marketing and Product Plan (MPP) .....	22
- Feature Dependency analysis.....	24

- Operational Dependencies .....	24
- Activation Dependencies .....	25
2.2.2 Real Option Theory .....	27
- The Black-Scholes Option Pricing Formula.....	28
- Chooser Option (basic Chooser) .....	30
- Real Option & IT.....	31
- Real option and SPL .....	32
2.2.3 Summary of related works .....	32
2.3 Summary .....	34
CHAPTER 3: SPLE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK ( <i>K-SPLEMF</i> ) .....	35
3.1 SPLE Management Framework Phases .....	37
3.1.1 Features Dependency Analysis.....	37
- Operational Dependency Analysis.....	38
- Activation Dependency Analysis.....	39
3.1.2 Features Classification .....	41
- Dependencies Relations Weighting:.....	42
- Classification Process .....	45
3.1.3 Reuse Opportunity Computing.....	48
- Feature Model Factor (FMF): .....	49
- MPP Factor (MPPF): .....	50
- Dependency Factors (DF): .....	52
- Feature Set Reuse Opportunity .....	53
3.1.4 Options Analysis.....	54
- Reuse Opportunity Valuation .....	54
- Features Sets Development Priority .....	56
3.2 Summary .....	57
CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES .....	58
4.1 Elevator Control System (ECS) .....	59
4.1.1 ECS Features Description.....	59
4.1.2 Marketing Product Plan (MPP) of ECS Product Line .....	62
4.2 Scientific Calculator System (SCS) Product Line .....	63
4.2.1 SCS Features Description.....	63

4.2.2	Marketing Product Plan (MPP) Of SCS Product Line.....	67
4.3	Summary.....	68
CHAPTER 5: RESULT DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....		69
5.1	Elevator Control System (ECS).....	70
5.1.1	ECS Features Dependency Analysis.....	70
-	ECS Feature Model Analysis.....	70
-	ECS Features Operational Dependency Analysis.....	71
-	ECS Features Activation Dependency Analysis.....	72
5.1.2	ECS Features Classification.....	78
-	ECS dependencies Relations Weighting.....	78
-	ECS Features Classification Process.....	79
5.1.3	ECS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity Computing.....	86
-	Computing ECS Features Sets Feature Model Factor (FSFMF).....	86
-	Computing ECS Features Sets MPP Factor (FSMPPF).....	86
-	Computing ECS Features Sets Dependency Factor (FSDF).....	87
-	Computing ECS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity (FSRO).....	87
5.1.4	ECS Features Sets Options Analysis.....	92
-	ECS Features Sets Reuse Opportunities Valuations.....	92
-	ECS Features Sets Development Priorities.....	93
5.2	Scientific Calculator System (SCS).....	98
5.2.1	SCS Features Dependency Analysis.....	98
-	SCS Feature Model Analysis.....	98
-	SCS Features Operational Dependency Analysis.....	100
-	SCS Features Activation Dependency Analysis.....	101
5.2.2	SCS Features Classification.....	117
-	SCS dependencies Relations Weighting.....	117
-	SCS Features Classification Process.....	117
5.2.3	SCS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity Computing.....	127
-	Computing SCS Features Sets Feature Model Factor (FSFMF).....	127
-	Computing SCS Features Sets MPP Factor (FSMPPF).....	127
-	Computing SCS Features Sets Dependency Factor (FSDF).....	128
-	Computing SCS Features Sets Reuse Opportunity (FSRO).....	128

5.2.4	SCS Features Sets Options Analysis .....	133
-	SCS Features Sets Reuse Opportunities Valuations.....	133
-	SCS Features Sets Development Priorities.....	134
5.3	Results Summary .....	143
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK .....</b>		<b>145</b>
6.1	Summary of the work .....	145
6.2	Discussion .....	147
6.3	Future work .....	152
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>		<b>153</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: ELEVATOR SYSTEM CONTROL (ESC) .....</b>		<b>157</b>
	ESC Features Description .....	157
	ECS Features Marketing Product Plan Attributes.....	158
	ECS features Dependencies information Adjustment .....	159
	ECS Features and Features Relations Weights .....	163
	Pajek ECS Features Classifications .....	164
	ECS Features Reuse Opportunity.....	170
	ECS Features Sets Options Analysis .....	172
	ECS Features Options Analysis.....	174
<b>APPENDIX B: SCIENTIFIC CALCULATOR SYSTEM (SCS) .....</b>		<b>176</b>
	SCS Features Description .....	176
	SCS Features Marketing Product Plan Attributes .....	180
	SCS Features Marketing Product Plan Attributes (continue) .....	181
	SCS features Dependencies information Adjustment.....	182
	SCS Features and Features Relations Weights .....	192
	Pajek SCS Features Classifications .....	193
	SCS Features Reuse Opportunity.....	202
	SCS Features Sets Options Analysis .....	206
	SCS Features Options Analysis.....	208
	Vitae.....	213

## LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 3.1: Features relations and weights for figure 3.5's example</i>	43
<i>Table 3.2: Features relations and weights for figure 3.5's example</i>	44
<i>Table 3.3: Result of classification process for example in figure 3.5, using Pajek</i>	46
<i>Table 4.1: ECS product line MPP Attributes</i>	62
<i>Table 4.2: SCS product line MPP Attributes</i>	67
<i>Table 4.3: Summary of Product Line Case Studies Characteristics</i>	68
<i>Table 5.1: ECS Operational Features and Features Types</i>	70
<i>Table 5.2: ECS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies</i>	76
<i>Table 5.3: ECS Features Dependencies Values</i>	77
<i>Table 5.4: ECS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Process</i>	81
<i>Table 5.5: ECS Features Relations Weights</i>	82
<i>Table 5.6: ECS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek</i>	83
<i>Table 5.7: Pajek's Clustering Results for ECS product line Features</i>	84
<i>Table 5.8: ECS Features Sets</i>	85
<i>Table 5.9: FSFMF of Features Sets in ECS</i>	88
<i>Table 5.10: ECS Features Sets MPP Factors Values and FSMPPF Values</i>	89
<i>Table 5.11: Features Sets Dependencies Factors in ECS</i>	90
<i>Table 5.12: FSRO of Features Sets in ECS</i>	91
<i>Table 5.13: Options Prices of ECS's Features Sets</i>	95
<i>Table 5.14: Development Priority of ECS Features Sets</i>	96
<i>Table 5.15: Options Prices and Development Priorities of ECS's Features</i>	97
<i>Table 5.16: SCS Operational Features and Features Types</i>	99
<i>Table 5.17: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies</i>	107
<i>Table 5.18: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	108
<i>Table 5.19: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	109
<i>Table 5.20: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	110
<i>Table 5.21: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	111
<i>Table 5.22: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	112
<i>Table 5.23: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	113
<i>Table 5.24: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	114
<i>Table 5.25: SCS Features Operational and Activation Dependencies (Cont...)</i>	115
<i>Table 5.26: SCS Features Dependencies Values</i>	116
<i>Table 5.27: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek</i>	119
<i>Table 5.28: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i>	120
<i>Table 5.29: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i>	121
<i>Table 5.30: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i>	122
<i>Table 5.31: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i>	123
<i>Table 5.32: SCS features Dependencies Weights for Pajek (Cont...)</i>	124
<i>Table 5.33: Pajek's Clustering Errors and numbers of solutions for SCS Features</i>	125

<i>Table 5.34: SCS Features Sets</i> .....	126
<i>Table 5.35: FSFMF of Features Sets in SCS</i> .....	129
<i>Table 5.36: SCS Features Sets MPP Factors Values and FSMPPF Values</i> .....	130
<i>Table 5.37: Features Sets Dependencies Factors (FSDF) in SCS</i> .....	131
<i>Table 5.38: FSRO of Features Sets in SCS</i> .....	132
<i>Table 5.39: Options Prices of SCS's Features Sets</i> .....	136
<i>Table 5.40: Development Priority of SCS Features Sets</i> .....	137
<i>Table 5.41: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> ....	139
<i>Table 5.42: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> ..	140
<i>Table 5.43: A Brief Compursion between case studies</i> .....	144
<i>Table A.1: ECS Features MPP Attributes</i> .....	158
<i>Table A.2: ECS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Transferring Process</i> .....	161
<i>Table A.3: ECS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Removing Process</i> .....	162
<i>Table A.4: ECS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO</i> .....	171
<i>Table A.5: Options Prices and Development Priorities of ECS Features Sets</i> .....	172
<i>Table A.6: Options Prices and Development Priorities of ECS Features</i> .....	174
<i>Table B.1: SCS Features MPP Attributes (features 1 to 42)</i> .....	180
<i>Table B.2: SCS Features MPP Attributes (features 43 to 86)</i> .....	181
<i>Table B.3: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes</i> .....	183
<i>Table B.4: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	184
<i>Table B.5: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	185
<i>Table B.6: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	186
<i>Table B.7: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	187
<i>Table B.8: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	188
<i>Table B.9: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	189
<i>Table B.10: SCS Features Dependencies after Adjustment Processes (cont...)</i> .....	190
<i>Table B.11: SCS Features Dependencies Values after Adjustiment processes</i> .....	191
<i>Table B.12: Part of Pajek's Clustering Results for SCS Features (features 1 to 30)</i> .....	199
<i>Table B.13: Part of Pajek's Clustering Results for SCS Features (features 31 to 60)</i> .....	200
<i>Table B.14: Part of Pajek's Clustering Results for SCS Features (features 61 to 86)</i> .....	201
<i>Table B.15: SCS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO (features 1 to 30)</i> .....	203
<i>Table B.16: SCS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO (features 31 to 60)</i> .....	204
<i>Table B.17: SCS Features FT, MPPF, DF, IDF, and FRO (features 61 to 86)</i> .....	205
<i>Table B.18: Development Priority of SCS Features Sets</i> .....	206
<i>Table B.19: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 1st to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> ..	209
<i>Table B.20: Options Prices and Development Priorities of SCS's Features (from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> .	210



## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.1: SPLE cost and time to market analysis [7]</i> .....	2
<i>Figure 2.1: The two-life-cycle model of software product line engineering [13].</i> .....	10
<i>Figure 2.2: A Feature Model of Mobile Phone Software Product Line [21]</i> .....	12
<i>Figure 2.3: Uncertainty Increases Value [26]</i> .....	14
<i>Figure 2.4: A feature model example: PBX product line [20]</i> .....	18
<i>Figure 2.5: A feature model of the HSR product line and its binding unit identification [48]</i> .....	21
<i>Figure 3.1: SPLE Management Framework (K-SPLEMF)</i> .....	36
<i>Figure 3.2: K-SPLEMF Features Dependency Analysis Phase</i> .....	40
<i>Figure 3.3: K-SPLEMF Feature Classification Phase</i> .....	41
<i>Figure 3.4: Dependency Relations Weight Procedure</i> .....	42
<i>Figure 3.5: Example of dependency relations between features</i> .....	43
<i>Figure 3.6: Procedure and Conditions of the Classification Process using Pajek</i> .....	45
<i>Figure 3.7: Feature Sets for the example in figure 3.5; using Pajek</i> .....	47
<i>Figure 3.8: K-SPLEMF Reuse Opportunity Computing Phase</i> .....	53
<i>Figure 3.9: K-SPLEMF Options Analysis Phase</i> .....	56
<i>Figure 4.1: Feature Model of ECS Product Line</i> .....	61
<i>Figure 4.2: Feature Model of SCS Product Line</i> .....	66
<i>Figure 5.1: Features Operational Dependency in the ECS product line</i> .....	73
<i>Figure 5.2: Features Activation Dependency in the ECS product line</i> .....	74
<i>Figure 5.3: Exclusive- Activation Dependency in the ECS product line</i> .....	75
<i>Figure 5.4: ECS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	96
<i>Figure 5.5: ECS Features Options Analysis</i> .....	97
<i>Figure 5.6: Features Operational Dependency in the SCS (Usage Dependency – Part 1)</i> .....	102
<i>Figure 5.7: Features Operational Dependency in the SCS (Usage – Part 2 &amp; Modification)</i> ...	103
<i>Figure 5.8: Features Activation Dependency in the SCS (Subordinate-Activation)</i> .....	104
<i>Figure 5.9: Features Activation Dependency in the SCS (Exclusive-Activation)</i> .....	105
<i>Figure 5.10: Features Activation Dependency in the SCS (Concurrent &amp; Sequential)</i> .....	106
<i>Figure 5.11: SCS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	138
<i>Figure 5.12: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 1<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> .....	141
<i>Figure 5.13: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> .....	142
<i>Figure A.1: Input Text file for Pajek of ECS Features and Features Relations Weights</i> .....	163
<i>Figure A.2: ECS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 1)</i> .....	164
<i>Figure A.3: Pajek Result Report for ECS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 1</i> ...	165
<i>Figure A.4: ECS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 15)</i> .....	166
<i>Figure A.5: Pajek Result Report for ECS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 15</i> .	167
<i>Figure A.6: ECS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 25)</i> .....	168
<i>Figure A.7: Pajek Result Report for ECS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 25</i> .	169
<i>Figure A.8: ECS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	173
<i>Figure A.9: ECS Features Options Analysis</i> .....	175

<i>Figure B.1: Input Text file for Pajek of SCS Features and Features Relations Weights</i> .....	192
<i>Figure B.2: SCS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 1)</i> .....	193
<i>Figure B.3: Pajek Result Report for SCS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 1</i> ...	194
<i>Figure B.4: SCS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 27)</i> .....	195
<i>Figure B.5: Pajek Result Report for SCS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 27</i> .	196
<i>Figure B.6: SCS Features Classification (Pajek Result at Number of clusters = 86)</i> .....	197
<i>Figure B.7: Pajek Result Report for SCS Features Classification at Number of Clusters = 86</i> .	198
<i>Figure B.8: SCS Features Sets Options Analysis</i> .....	207
<i>Figure B.9: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 1<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup>)</i> .....	211
<i>Figure B.10: SCS Features Options Analysis (Features from 44<sup>th</sup> to 86<sup>th</sup>)</i> .....	212

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Full Name : *Khalid Mohammed Hussein Al-Kahsah*  
Thesis Title : *Management Framework of Software Product Line Engineering:  
Real Options Perspective*  
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*Software Product Line Engineering (SPLE) is an approach with an aim to move the software industry away from developing each system from scratch. The fundamental idea in SPLE is building systems from the common features rather than building new systems, because systems in a certain software domain have more commonalities than uniqueness. SPLE helps to identify common features among similar family of products into core assets and then reuse these core assets to develop subsequent applications. SPL development needs a collaborative process whereby organizations can balance the conflicting interests between high reusability demand and lower cost. This process needs to focus on how to achieve the required reusability level; and handle the uncertainties during the product line core asset development. Despite the large number of research and studies that touched SPL, there is a gap in the study of uncertainty associated with features selection in the core asset development. The main objective of this thesis is to address this issue by handling that uncertainty using the Real option Theory (ROT) concepts, which offers a systematic approach to identify and assess the issues that have an effect on the real options value, and help managers to make a decision under uncertainty. In this thesis we develop Software Product Line Engineering Management Framework (K-SPLEMF) for core asset development. Our framework identifies a method to classify an SPL features into features sets based on their dependencies relations; introduces a new matrix to calculate features and Features Sets Reuse Opportunities; prioritizes features and features sets in the SPL core asset development process by using ROT concepts. Furthermore, we analyze and discuss the results of the framework application on the SPL core asset development through case studies.*

## ملخص الرسالة

الإسم الكامل : خالد محمد حسين الكحسه  
عنوان الرسالة : إطار عمل إدارة هندسة خط إنتاج البرمجيات: منظور الخيارات الحقيقية  
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هندسة خط إنتاج البرمجيات (SPLE) هي نهج يهدف الى نقل صناعة البرمجيات بعيدا عن تطوير كل نظام من نقطة البداية. الفكرة الأساسية في (SPLE) هي بناء أنظمة برمجيات من السمات (Features) المشتركة بينها بدلا من بناء أنظمة جديدة، وذلك لأن الأنظمة في مجال برمجيات معين لديها قواسم مشتركة أكثر مما يتفرد به كل نظام عن الآخر (يقصد بالسمات في هذه الدراسة المتطلبات الوظيفية؛ المتطلبات الغير وظيفية؛ الخدمات؛ متطلبات خط الانتاج القابلة لاعادة الاستخدام؛ و مميزات النظام).  
هندسة إنتاج خطوط البرمجيات تساعد على تعريف السمات المشتركة بين مجموعة متماثلة من المنتجات كأصول أساسية (Core Assets) والتي يمكن إعادة استخدامها لتطوير و انتاج تطبيقات لاحقة. إن تطوير خط انتاج البرمجيات (SPL) يتطلب عملية تعاونية بحيث يمكن للمؤسسات تحقيق توازن بين تضارب المصالح لمطالب إعادة استخدام مرتفعة و تكلفة أقل. هذه العملية تحتاج للتركيز على كيفية تحقيق المستوى المطلوب من إعادة الاستخدام، و التعامل مع عدم التيقن (Uncertainty) خلال تطوير الاصول الاساسية لخط الانتاج. بالرغم من ان كثير من البحوث و الدراسات تناولت خطوط انتاج البرمجيات لايزال هناك فجوة في الدراسات التي تعالج مشكلة عدم التيقن المرتبطة باختيار السمات عند تطوير الاصول الاساسية. الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة هو تناول هذه المسألة لمعالجة مشكلة عدم التيقن عند اختيار السمات لخط انتاج البرمجيات باستخدام مفاهيم نظرية الخيارات الحقيقية (Real Options Theory (ROT) و التي تقدم نهجا نظاميا لتحديد و تقييم المسائل التي يكون لها تأثير على القيمة الحقيقية للخيارات و مساعدة المسؤولين على اتخاذ القرارات في حالات عدم التيقن.  
في هذه الدراسة قمنا ببناء اطار عمل ادارة هندسة خط انتاج البرمجيات (Software Product Line Engineering Management Framework (K-SPLEMF)) لتطوير الاصول الاساسية. اطار العمل المقدم في هذه الدراسة يعرف طريقة لتقسيم سمات خط انتاج البرمجيات الي مجموعات سمات (Features Sets) بناء على علاقات الاعتمادية بينها؛ و يقدم مصفوفة جديدة لحساب فرص إعادة الاستخدام (Reuse Opportunities) للسمات او مجموعات السمات في خط انتاج البرمجيات؛ ايضا يعرف اولويات السمات او مجموعات السمات عند تطوير الاصول الأساسية لخط انتاج البرمجيات باستخدام مفاهيم نظرية الخيارات الحقيقية. علاوة على ذلك قمنا بتحليل و مناقشة نتائج تطبيق اطار العمل المقدم في هذه الرسالة على عملية تطوير الاصول الاساسية لخط انتاج البرمجيات من خلال حالات دراسية.

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

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Over the last decade, the extensive uses of software have placed new demands on the software industry to enhance development productivity and reduce associated costs [1]. These expectations have led software engineers to apply the idea of reuse [2]. *Software Product Line Engineering (SPLE)* is an approach with an aim to move the software industry away from developing each system from scratch. Building systems from the common features rather than building new systems is the key idea in *SPLE* that is because in a certain software domain, systems have more commonalities features than private ones which give companies the ability to release product variants by adding new features [3]. *SPLE* helps to identify common features among similar family of products into core assets, and subsequent applications are developed by reusing these core assets [4, 5].

*SPLE* has potential to improve productivity and reduce time to market [6, 7]. As shown in *Figure 1.1*; fundamental to *SPLE* success is the need for a core asset which has high degree of reusability [8]. The organization can assemble the core asset base all at once before building any products (a proactive strategy) or incrementally as it introduces products (a reactive strategy) [9]. The reactive approach is like the agile approaches to conventional software where one or more product variations are analyzed and implemented on each development spiral [10].

A key challenge in *SPLE* is to find a right balance between reusability and cost involved in core asset development. The core asset development process needs to maximize the coverage of a product line domain within a budget and a given time frame. We believe that for *Software Product Lines (SPL)* to be a part of mainstream software engineering culture, organizations need strategies with low adoption barriers. There is a need that required a small upfront effort, incremental transition from current practices, and a rapid return on investment [10].

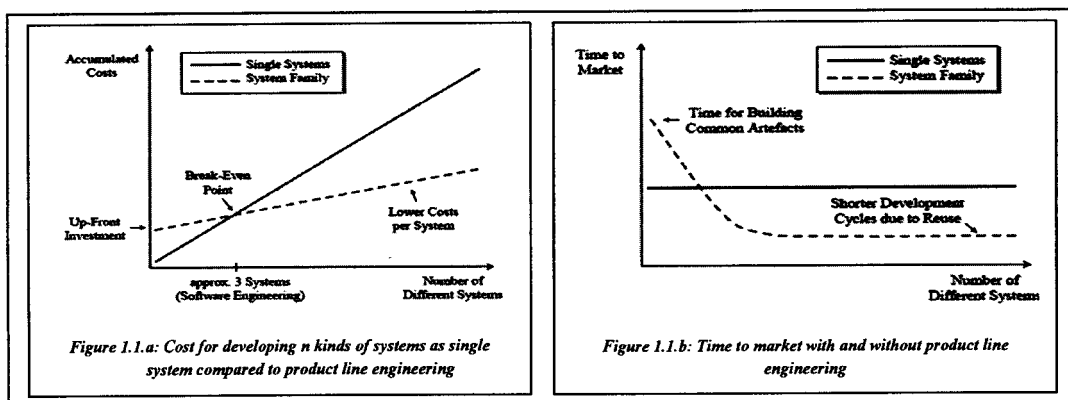


Figure 1.1: *SPLE* cost and time to market analysis [7]

In this thesis, we present a management framework for *SPLE* that provides quantitative information to evaluate reuse opportunity of software features. The framework helps in handling the uncertainties associated with software feature selection.

## 1.1 Motivation

*SPL* development needs a collaborative process whereby organizations can balance the conflicting interests between high reusability demand and lower cost. This process needs to focus on how to achieve the required reusability level; and handle the uncertainties during the product line core asset development.

In this thesis, we develop a management framework for *SPL* core asset development which helps a system analyst to (a) understand feature relationships and their dependencies; (b) quantifies *Reuse Opportunity* of features; and (c) handles the uncertainties within features selection by estimating the potential benefits of including features at different core asset development spirals. Furthermore, we consider the management of *SPL* core asset development from the perspective of *Real Option Theory* (*ROT*), which addresses uncertainty over time and handles selection of features during the development process.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of the thesis is to address the key challenges associated with the *SPL* core asset development process by handling the uncertainty on *SPL* features selection. This main objective can be broken down into number of smaller objectives steps as follow:

- Analyze *SPL* features dependencies relations to classifying these features into a number of *Features Sets*.
- Develop a process to identify *Reuse Opportunities* for the *Features Sets* based on *SPL Marketing Product Plan (MPP)* and *Features Sets* dependencies relations.
- Identify *Development Priority* for *SPL Features Sets* in core asset development based on their *Reuse Opportunities*.
- Manage *Software Product Line* core asset development uncertainty based on the *Real Options Theory* concept.
- Analyze the impact of the framework on the *SPL* development based on case studies.



### 1.3 Research Contribution

As part of this thesis, we develop *Software Product Line Engineering Management Framework (K-SPLEMF)* for *SPL* core asset development. The main contributions of our work are:

- Identify a method to classify an *SPL* features into *Features Sets* based on their dependencies relations.
- Introduce a new matrix to calculate *SPL* features and *Features Sets Reuse Opportunities*.
- Prioritize features and features sets in the *SPL* core asset development process using *ROT* concepts.
- Analyze and discuss the results of the framework application on the *SPL* core asset development through the case studies.

## 1.4 Thesis Organization

The remainder of the thesis is organized into the following chapters:

- **Chapter 2: Literature Survey**

This chapter will go over the body of work that is relevant to our thesis by first covering the basic ideas and general concepts followed by a discussion of the related work.

- **Chapter 3: SPLE Management Framework**

*Chapter 3* presents the management framework (*K-SPLEMF*) for *SPL* core asset development, and illustrates the framework phases in details.

- **Chapter 4: Case Studies**

In this chapter *SPL* case studies that were used in the thesis are presented.

- **Chapter 5: Result Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter presents results and discussions for the application of our framework phases on the case studies shown in *Chapter 4*.

- **Chapter 6: Conclusions and Future Work**

The thesis is concluded by summarizing the thesis work as well as discusses the strengths and potential limitations of this work. Furthermore, it provides number of suggestions for further work directions on the topic.

# CHAPTER 2

## Literature Survey

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*The research done for writing this thesis can be broken down to two major components, Software Product Line (SPL) and Real Option Theory (ROT). There is a wealth of information on both of these topics individually. But it is their common area which is of particular interest to this thesis, and that area remains relatively unexplored.*

*The goal of this chapter is to provide some background information on the concepts being discussed in this thesis, as well as offer a comprehensive discussion of the related works.*

## 2.1 Background: Definitions and Overview

In this section, an introduction about *SPL* and *ROT* is presented. The key concepts used in this thesis are illustrated briefly to make the reader more familiar with these concepts.

### 2.1.1 Software Product Lines (SPL)

The *Software Engineering Institute (SEI)* defines *SPL* as “a set of software-intensive systems that share a common, managed set of features satisfying the specific needs of a particular market segment or mission and that are developed from a common set of core assets in a prescribed way” [11].

*SPL* is a family of software applications in a common purpose domain, allocating with a set of common features. Product line variability determines the variety from one application to another [6].

In the early 1990s, software families and product lines concepts came into view. The *Feature-Oriented Domain Analysis (FODA)* method description is one of the first contributions in that field [12]. Also, many companies began to deal with this matter more methodically at the same time [13]. This concept (*SPL*) helps companies to develop their products from a core asset instead of starting from the scratch. On the other hand, such as software engineering the development of these assets should utilize the commonality and deal with variability management. Therefore *FODA* approach was become a way to commonality and variability analysis that is used by many researchers in industry and academic [4].

Product line engineering has become an important and widely used approach for efficiently developing portfolios of software products [9]. It is one of the recent and effective reuse approaches [5]. Software product line engineering has gained a broad interest in academic as well as in industry over the past decade [14]. Using *SPL* seeks to maximize reusable variation and eliminate wasteful generic development of components used only once [15]. A number of authors have described the potential benefits that may accrue from using *SPL* techniques in the requirements, architecture, design, coding and testing phases [6, 7, 16].

Variability management is the basic rule in *SPL* that is classified product line components into three types: common, optional and alternative components or features and manage them in the development process. Common features are shared for all products in the family however, alternative is for specific products and optional features could be or not be parts from the products [15].

The reuse of the same assets containing clear variability is the main difference between software product line engineering and other reuse techniques. An example of this is the requirement representations perhaps include a clear description of specific needs which is not applicable to a certain subgroup of products [13].

*SPLE* is a technique for developing and maintaining products family, taking advantage of their common features and signed variable ones [17]. The commonality and variability exist between the products in a family is the basic structure in the product line [18]. Using *SPLE* in developing product families decreases time and cost, also increases product quality and helps to get customer satisfaction [7, 14].

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