

IS OPEN SOURCE ABOUT INNOVATION? WHETHER AND HOW
INTERACTIONS WITH THE OS COMMUNITY ENABLE INNOVATION
PROCESSES BY ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES

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Abstract

Although scholars have extensively examined the main aspects of the interaction between software firms and the OSS community, only a handful of recent studies have investigated the effects of this interaction on firms' economic and innovation performances. This paper aims at redressing this unbalance and explores the impact of OSS community interactions on the innovation performances of entrepreneurial ventures operating in the software sectors. Specifically, we aim at answering the following research questions: does the interaction with OSS community enable innovation processes by entrepreneurial ventures? If yes, (i) does OSS involvement promote certain types of innovations (i.e. incremental vs. radical innovation, innovation in products vs. innovation in services)? (ii) does the OSS interaction strategy chosen by a firm shape its innovation processes? To answer these questions, we use an original dataset developed within the "Survey of the characteristics and innovative performance of Emilia-Romagna firms belonging to the IT sector", a project which has been conducted by the Emilia-Romagna Open Source Survey (EROSS) workgroup of the Emilia-Romagna Regional Administration. Our findings present clean evidence in favour of the existence of a strict relationship between interaction with OSS community and innovative performances of entrepreneurial ventures. This research also provides valuable contribution that improves our understanding of the mechanics which lay at the basis of this relationship.

Key words: Open Source, innovation, entrepreneurial ventures.