



The relationship between success criteria and success factors in organisational event projects

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Abstract

Project success is a widely studied and discussed phenomenon of project management. Whilst certain success criteria and success factors are common across different project types, there are unique criteria and factors that apply only to specific projects. This paper presents the development and investigation of the attributes of the success criteria and factors of organisational event projects, as well as an analysis of the relationship between the criteria and factor areas. The study is based on a questionnaire survey of world and European championships. The findings of the study are of interest because they distinguish the success factors that represent relationship orientation and task focus. An analysis of the correlations suggests that relationship-oriented success factors, such as communication, co-operation and project leadership, play a crucial role in carrying out successful organisational event projects.

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1. Introduction

Approaches to project success have changed continuously over the past several decades from definitions of success and critical success factors to a more strategic, holistic view (Judgev and Müller, 2005). However, the evolution of project success frameworks alone cannot guarantee the successful implementation of project objectives. Several studies report that despite improvements in terms of project success, quite a large number of projects fail (KPMG International, 2008; The Standish Group, 1994). Conversely, it seems impossible to define a common approach to project success; it is a matter of which dimensions best represent project success (Baccarini, 1999; Thomas and Fernández, 2008). Different projects have specific characteristics that should be considered in terms of project context, such as objectives, stakeholders, environment and risks, which determine diverse combinations of success criteria and factors.

In recent years, international sport events have come to the fore because participants of the sporting world have engaged in even more, greater and more varied ones. The number and extent of international sport events are increasing; the crowds and the volume of investments are rising; competition for sporting organisations between cities and countries is becoming increasingly intense (Zeman, 2005). Organisational event projects have well-confined parameters, such as fixed deadlines, strict competition rules, numerous stakeholders and environmental aspects. Hosting a sport event, especially a large international event, takes several years. Such events generally require large construction projects, and they are mainly financed through public funds. The preparation and implementation of events are covered constantly by the media (Masterman, 2004; Rofner, 2009). The benefits created during the staging of these events, such as increased revenue, additional employment and social aspects, can have a positive impact on local economies, whilst positive lasting effects for the tourism industry can affect a wider region (Dreyer and Krüger, 1995).

The purpose of this paper is to identify the attributes of success criteria and factors for organisational event projects, as well as to reveal the relationships between them. This approach

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is vital for sport organisations that plan or produce international sport events because success can contribute to their financing and ensure a competitive advantage for the future. After the introduction, we structure our work in five sections. First, we compare the findings of previous studies about project success criteria and success factors. Next, we introduce the measures and methodology of the research. Then, in the most important section of the article, we present the results of the study: the identified attributes of success criteria and success factors of organisational event projects followed by an analysis of the relationship between them. In the last section, we interpret the results and background of our findings.

2. Background of the study

To understand the enigma of project success, researchers have analysed various areas of project management, including how projects are accomplished, the contexts in which they are executed (Papke-Shields et al., 2010) and how their outcomes should be evaluated. Most of the recent literature summarises the findings of previous studies and tries to understand the “real” success factors of projects (Cooke-Davies, 2002) as well as emphasise the strategic and holistic view of project success (Judgev and Müller, 2005; Kandelousi et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2011). In the following section, we synthesise the results of previous studies in terms of success criteria and factors as well as task and relationship approaches.

2.1. Project success criteria

Amongst the several project success criteria that are mentioned in the literature, ‘the iron triangle’ (Turner and Cochrane, 1993) constitutes the basis of the success approaches (Agarwal and Rathod, 2006; Fortune and White, 2006) because fulfilling the criteria for the completion of a project on time, within budget and according to performance specifications are easy to assess (Judgev and Müller, 2005). However, this conception does not satisfactorily evaluate project success because examining these parameters merely shows the direct contributions to profit, whereas it fails to take into account whether the project was implemented properly (Kerzner, 2006). Traditionally, project managers have not assumed that cost and time are not the exclusive criteria of their project’s success because these criteria are closely determined by a project’s stakeholders (Turner, 2000). Towards the strategic significance of projects makes it reasonable to investigate to what extent the reached results contribute to the effectuation of organisational strategy (Görög, 2003; Jarjabka, 2009; Judgev and Müller, 2005). A productive evaluation of project success should not only address project efficiency and the fulfilment of project aims, but it should also examine project effectiveness, the support of corporate strategy and stakeholders’ interests (Deák, 2006; Szabó and Gaál, 2006).

The distinction of task and psychosocial-related criteria reflect the importance of stakeholders’ satisfaction; task-related aspects are mainly based on the ‘iron triangle’, whereas psychosocial-related criteria include the satisfaction of customers and end users, the happiness of project team and the opinion of other

project stakeholders (Pinto and Pinto, 1991). Researchers have relied more on measurable aspects rather than attempting to divide criteria into groups of objectively measureable aspects such as schedule, cost, performance, safety, disputes, accident rate, and a set of subjective evaluation criteria such as quality, client, contractor, project team and other stakeholders’ satisfaction (Chan and Chan, 2004; Jha and Iyer, 2007). Studies that have been carried out in certain industries, especially in information technology and construction practice, have identified technical success, environmental impact and the effects on business operations as the most important criteria (Agarwal and Rathod, 2006; Ahadize et al., 2008; Thomas and Fernández, 2008). Most of the recent studies have tended to emphasise that project success criteria should include benefits to an organisation and preparing for the future in terms of innovations and competence development (Judgev and Müller, 2005; Papke-Shields et al., 2010).

2.2. Project success factors

Project success factors require special and permanent attention to guarantee a strong likelihood of project’s success; otherwise, if these factors are not taken seriously, it could contribute to the failure of a project (Kandelousi et al., 2011). Early studies (Baker et al., 1988; Pinto and Slevin, 1988) concentrated on revealing the factors that influence a project’s success or failure and defined success in terms of achieving the objectives of adhering to a schedule, keeping costs within an established budget and achieving a high level of performance. Based on empirical surveys, Pinto and Slevin identified coordination, communication and relationships, structure and control, monitoring and feedback, a project’s significance and publicity, and management support as well as the predetermination and acceptance of success criteria as the factors that have a positive impact on a project’s outcome. Other publications (Belassi and Tukel, 1996; Cooke-Davies, 2002; Lechler, 1997) have attempted to classify these factors and to create a consistent model for success factors. Belassi and Tukel (1996) grouped them into four categories: factors that are related to a project, to a project manager and team, to an organisation and the factors that are related to the external environment. Their classification facilitates an overview of where the cause of success or failure can be located and an understanding of the intra-relationships between the factors in the different groups. Similarly, based on the comparative analysis of the earlier empirical success factor studies, Lechler (1997) elaborated on a conceptual success factor model in which he grouped factors into categories such as context, participants and functions. In relation to this framework, an extensive survey was carried out in which the qualities of top management and the project team as well as communications were identified as the factors that exerted a considerable impact on project success (Gemünden and Lechler, 1997). Cooke-Davies (2002) studied so-called real success factors at three different levels: the success of project management activity, project success and consistent project success. Summarising the results of several studies and outlines, Judgev and Müller (2005) suggested four necessary conditions for project success, including the agreement on success criteria with

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