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Project-based Evaluation of Stakeholders in Digital Platforms and Services

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Abstract: Digital platforms such as Uber, Skype, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube have become a defining infrastructure of today's society, fundamentally transforming everyday life, communication, entertainment and work. These services share the common feature of offering fast, convenient and personalised solutions to users, while bridging geographical and cultural distances through their global reach. The above platforms are not only technological innovations, but also have a significant social and economic impact to this day: they facilitate the rapid flow of information and support creative self-expression. At the same time, they also pose challenges, such as the protection of privacy, digital inequalities and content moderation. Uber, Skype, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube form a digital ecosystem that is dynamically shaping the framework for social coexistence, learning, entertainment and work, contributing to the improvement of individual quality of life and the development of global social relations. The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive stakeholder analysis through a project-based evaluation of five major digital platforms and services: Uber, Skype, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube. The research explores how individuals perceive the importance of different stakeholder groups in the projects based on their own individual assessments and opinions. The study highlights that the success and sustainability of digital platforms largely depend on the alignment of stakeholder needs and expectations, from the image formed by individual users to the rapidly changing digital environment. The research and study thus aim to provide project managers and stakeholders with a mirror image of individual opinions so that, when planning similar projects, they can better align needs and expectations to ensure project success.

Keywords: Project success, Stakeholder, VUCA, Digitalisation

Introduction

It is commonly said in the project management profession that every project is a change that moves the organisation out of its existing situation, creating better operational quality, market position and higher customer satisfaction. In recent decades, project orientation has become increasingly prevalent in the economy and everyday life. In line with this, organisations and institutions are increasingly trying to manage change and challenges through projects, striving to meet the expectations of a rapidly changing world. This approach helps economic actors to actively manage change rather than being swept along by it, using appropriate methods and tools (Wagner, 2022). From this perspective, project success, i.e. the alignment of change management with expectations, deserves special attention.

Literature Review

In professionally oriented organisations, the measure of project success is typically reflected in business results (van der Waldt, 2011). It is important to mention two basic concepts and interpretations in relation to success factors and success criteria (Lamprou & Vagiona, 2022). Factors are the circumstances and events that contribute to the success of a project, while criteria are the metrics used to evaluate success. The active role of stakeholders is important in both dimensions: on the one hand, they influence the success factors (e.g. by providing resources, making decisions), and on the other hand, they determine which criteria are relevant. It is

generally accepted that stakeholder involvement is essential at all stages of the project life cycle (Usmani, 2019) in terms of acceptance and project success. The importance of stakeholders lies in their ability to influence the progress and success of the project. The definition of project success has been at the centre of discourse for many years. When evaluating the success of projects, we generally think in terms of the "iron triangle" – cost, time and quality – and link the assessment of project success to this (Zid et al., 2020). However, due to the limited nature of these dimensions, this approach does not take into account the different perspectives and expectations of stakeholders, which emphasise the contextual nature of project success. The concept of project success has also undergone a significant transformation thanks to digital transformation (Correani et al., 2022). In today's digital age, the definition of project success often clashes between the parties involved, as project participants, including stakeholders, work with different success criteria, and the elements of the project triangle often conflict with customer value and innovation (Nelson, 2024).

The elements and dimensions of project success vary from project to project, organisation to organisation, and even within the same project. They are viewed differently during planning, but the implementation may change, and even after the lessons learned following completion. The success of a project depends to a large extent on the ideas of the many stakeholders involved in the project – whether they are sponsors or users – about what constitutes success, as well as on the timing and project phase at which success is measured (Turner et al., 2009). External and internal stakeholders may have different ideas about what makes a project successful, both in terms of the importance of the criteria and the quality of the project results (Atkinson, 1999). The same project element may be perceived as a success by one stakeholder (whether internal or external), while others may perceive it as a disadvantage due to their different perspectives, interests and goals. The role of key stakeholders remains throughout the entire project life cycle, although their needs and expectations may and do change. These needs relate to information, processes and decision-making, but the central goal is always the successful implementation of the project (Gifford & Lesser, 2016). It is also important to bear in mind that the concept of project success is always subjective, stemming from the individual assessments of stakeholders and the team in terms of project performance and satisfaction with it (Cooke & Davies, 2002).

Based on the work of Davis (2014), the assessment of success depends largely on the perceptions of stakeholders, the criteria they individually consider important, and the actual performance parameters of the project. This means that project managers must take into account not only objective indicators, but also the subjective assessments of various stakeholders and groups (Cserháti – Schimmer, 2025). According to newer concepts of project success, such as the theory of Sociotechnical Systems (STS), project success does not depend solely on the mere installation of technological tools, but rather on the successful connection of dynamic interactions between technological systems, human actors and organisational structures (Mumford, 2006). Today's project environment encompasses both digital and physical platforms. As a result, evaluation criteria are increasingly shifting from exclusive financial indicators to broader indicators such as customer experience and cultural adaptability (Goncalves et al., 2023). This is increasingly true for almost all projects, emphasising the decisive role of stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement is key to defining project success criteria and selecting project management practices for long-term effectiveness (Rosenberger & Tick, 2021; Csiszárik-Kocsir, 2024).

The environment in which projects are carried out today is increasingly characterised by VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) factors (Kostalova et al., 2024), which further increases the role of stakeholders in ensuring flexibility and adaptation. The success of a project can be negatively affected by an unfavourable project environment, which can best be described by the VUCA model. Each element of this model can have a detrimental effect on project success (Pells, 2019). The aim of VUCA is to understand and interpret the characteristics of today's business and social environment at the project level, which is characterised by rapid technological development, social transformations, climate change, high connectivity and risk (Minciu et al., 2020), so the dimensions of the model pose a serious challenge to project management, both individually and collectively. Volatility is nothing more than rapid and unpredictable changes in the environment, which require a flexible and adaptive approach to project management. Uncertainty means a lack of predictability, which makes planning difficult and increases risks. Complexity encompasses the multitude of factors and interactions that arise in projects, which affects the complexity of decision-making and requires agile tools. Ambiguity refers to the inaccuracy and inconsistency of information, which makes it difficult to clarify goals and requirements. Together, these factors create an environment in which traditional project management methods often fail, making it essential to make projects agile and incorporate agile principles into the entire project process (Hübner et al., 2018; Blaskovics et al., 2021). In a rapidly changing environment, new expectations may arise in addition to the initial goals, so the definition of success is constantly being reinterpreted and reevaluated (Thomas & Fernandez, 2008). Therefore, project managers and stakeholders must jointly define a framework that takes into account changing circumstances and the needs of different interest

groups. It is crucial for the success of projects that the chosen project management standard and methodology be capable of handling the challenges posed by VUCA (Moura et al., 2023).

Material and Method

The research presented in this study focused on the assessment of stakeholders in projects related to digital platforms. The study was conducted as primary research, in which 568 individual respondents evaluated the stakeholder perspectives of five landmark digital projects (Uber, Skype, Facebook, Spotify, and YouTube). The central question of the research was how respondents assess the importance of different stakeholder groups (users, project owners, implementers, financiers) in terms of the success of projects related to a given platform. Data collection was carried out using the snowball method. The chosen method was justified by its essential elements: the initial participants in the research recommend additional people, thus gradually expanding the sample. The advantage of the snowball method is that it provides the appropriate number of elements quickly and cost-effectively, but its disadvantage is that it rejects the principle of representativeness. Data collection was carried out using an online questionnaire in which respondents rated the importance of stakeholder groups in relation to the project under study on a four-point Likert scale. The lower end of the scale represented low importance, while the higher end represented higher priority. During the survey, each respondent rated five different projects (Uber, Skype, Facebook, Spotify, YouTube), thus allowing for a comparative analysis between the platforms. I analysed the collected data using statistical methods. In the first step, I prepared descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) on the importance ratings of the stakeholder groups. I then used variance analysis to examine the extent to which the respondents' overall project evaluation influenced their assessment of the stakeholders. Anonymity and voluntary participation were ensured during the research. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and, by completing the questionnaire, gave their consent to the processing of their data.Due to the snowball method, the sample cannot be considered fully representative, so the results primarily reflect the opinions of the group examined. At the same time, the large number of respondents (568) and the examination of five different platforms provide an opportunity to identify trends. Figure 2 shows the respondents' opinions on the projects examined.

Table 1. User assessment of the five projects examined

	Spotify	YouTube	Skype	Facebook	Uber
Insufficient	0.7	3.2	0.7	2.1	4.2
Sufficient	5.6	4.9	5.3	6.7	4.2
Medium	18	13	24.6	17.6	14.1
Good	31.7	31.3	34.2	37.7	29.6
Excellent	44	47.5	35.2	35.9	47

Source: own research, 2025, N = 568

Results

The Spotify project is a milestone in human history in terms of the digitisation of the music industry, giving users all over the world access to a music library anywhere, anytime, according to their own preferences. The importance of the project lies in the fact that it has transformed the way music is consumed through legal means. The Spotify project is not only a technological innovation, but also a cultural foundation, inspiring other similar initiatives. Based on the respondents' opinions, users were rated as the most important (3.549). Project owners (3.127) are also of particular importance, with the averages for implementers and financiers being almost identical (approx. 2.99) based on the results obtained. The responses make it clear that users directly influence revenue and the popularity of the platform, while implementers and financiers tend to play a background role, so their ratings are less visible. The intermediate position of project owners stems from their role in strategic decisions.

Table 2. Evaluation of Spotify stakeholders based on averages and standard deviations

	User	Project owner (owner, developer, etc.)	Financier (owner, bank, etc.)	Implementer (contractors, subcontractors)
Average	3.549	3.127	2.993	2.996
Standard deviation	0.947	1.048	1.158	1.168

Source: own research, 2025, N = 568

The YouTube project is a global video-sharing platform that has fundamentally changed the practice of media consumption and content production. It can be considered a significant milestone because it democratised content creation: anyone can be a creator and reach a global audience. Its importance lies in the fact that it has launched new business models (e.g. influencer marketing, advertising revenue) and plays a decisive role in education, entertainment and social dialogue alike. Figure 4 shows that users also received the highest average score here (3.592), confirming that the key to the platform's success lies in the user experience. Project owners (3.306) are also prominent players, while the averages for implementers and financiers are again the lowest and identical (3.151). The message that can be gleaned from the results is that, in the case of YouTube, content producers and users directly influence the value of the platform, while financiers and implementers tend to play a background role, which is also reflected in the responses received.

Table 3. Evaluation of YouTube stakeholders based on averages and standard deviations

	User	Project owner (owner, builder, etc.)	Financier (owner, bank, etc.)	Implementer (contractors, subcontractors)
Average	3,592	3.306	3.151	3.151
Standard deviation	0.882	0.917	1.047	1.033

Source: own research, 2025, N = 568

Skype is one of the pioneers of internet communication, enabling voice and video calls worldwide, free of charge or at low cost, with internet access. The project is a significant milestone because it has eliminated geographical barriers and added a new dimension to personal and business communication. Its importance lies in the fact that it paved the way for the spread of digital collaboration and remote working, which has become indispensable, especially in times of global crisis, as we have seen during the coronavirus pandemic. Figure 5 shows that users again received the highest average score (3.511), indicating that the end-user experience is also key here. Project owners (3.176) also received a high score, indicating the importance of strategic decisions and development directions. The averages for implementers (2.989) and funders (2.930) are again the lowest here, so it can be said that opinions are divided on these actors.

Table 4. Skype stakeholders' ratings based on averages and standard deviations

	User	Project owner (owner, builder, etc.)	Financier (owner, bank, etc.)	Implementer (contractors, subcontractors)
Average	3.511	3.176	2.930	3.511
Standard deviation	0.945	1,024	1,168	0.945

Source: own research, 2025, N = 568

Facebook ushered in a new and previously unknown era of social media, transforming the way people connect, share information and market themselves. It can be considered a significant milestone in its own right, as it created a global platform connecting billions of users from all over the world and opened up new business opportunities through advertising. At the same time, it has generated social and political impacts, influenced public opinion, and brought new challenges in the areas of data protection and ethics. In this case, it is not surprising that users received the highest average score (3.465), which once again confirms that the end-user experience is key to the platform's success. Project owners (3.387) also received a high score, indicating the importance of strategic management and development decisions. The averages for funders (3.148) and implementers (3.095) are almost identical, as we have seen before.

Table 5. Evaluation of Facebook stakeholders based on averages and standard deviations

	User	Project owner (owner, developer, etc.)	Financier (owner, bank, etc.)	Implementer (contractors, subcontractors)
Average	3,465	3.387	3.148	3.095
Standard deviation	1.006	0.938	1.114	1.096

Source: own research, 2025, N = 568

The Uber project revolutionised urban transport by connecting passengers and drivers via a digital platform. The project created a new business model for motoring and transformed passenger transport services globally by offering a flexible, user-friendly solution. In this case, it is not surprising that users again received the highest average score (3.563), which shows that the end-user experience was also considered key here. Project owners (3.116) and implementers (3.127) scored almost identically, indicating the importance of both strategic

management and implementation. Financiers (2.894) received the lowest average, assuming that capital raising is less visible from the perspective of users and project rating.

Table 6. Evaluation of Uber stakeholders based on averages and standard deviations

	User	Project owner (owner, builder, etc.)	Financier (owner, bank, etc.)	Implementer (contractors, subcontractors)
Average	3.563	3.116	2.894	3.127
Standard deviation	0.957	1.081	1.168	1.075

Source: own research, 2025, N = 568

Conclusions

Stakeholders are individuals or groups who have an interest in the outcome of a project and can greatly influence its success. They may be customers, project team members, suppliers, users or other interested parties whose needs and expectations must be taken into account during the planning and implementation of the project. From the point of view of the success of the project, it is particularly important to keep key players who have great power or influence on our side, as they can play a decisive role in supporting or hindering the project. The results of this study clearly show that the success of digital platforms is closely linked to the perceptions and roles of different stakeholder groups. A comparison of the five projects examined (Spotify, YouTube, Skype, Facebook, Uber) shows that users are of paramount importance in all cases, confirming that the end-user experience is one of the most critical factors in the success of a project. The role of project owners is also decisive, especially in terms of strategic management and development decisions. The importance of implementers and financiers varies from platform to platform, but in all projects they appear as background players, although in some cases – such as Uber – the influence of financiers is stronger.Based on the variance analysis, it was evident that the project rating showed a significant correlation with stakeholder assessments in all cases, indicating that the success of projects depends not only on technological factors but also on the perceptions of those involved. The research presented here confirms that flexibility and coordination of stakeholder needs are key in a VUCA environment. The practical message of the study is that project management must pay special attention to user experience, stakeholder communication and adaptive methodologies in order to achieve project success. Continuous dialogue and harmonisation of interests in line with the expectations of a constantly changing environment are essential for success.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

* The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the author.

Conflict of Interest

* The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest

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