İş ve İnsan Dergisi | The Journal of Human and Work
Yıl | Year: Ekim | October 2020
Cilt-Sayı | Volume-Issue: 7 (2)
ss | pp: 171-187
doi: 10.18394/iid.737089
e-ISSN 2148-967X
http://dergipark.gov.tr/iid/

Research Article

Assessment of Critical Success Factors for Strategic Planning: A Case Study of the Residential Construction Company in Kosovo

Stratejik Planlama için Kritik Başarı Faktörlerinin Değerlendirilmesi: Kosova Konut İnşaatı Şirketleri Örneği

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Critical Success Factors, Strategic Planning, Kosovo Construction Sector, Residential Construction Industry.

Article history:
Received 13 May 2020
Received in revised form
29 June 2020
Accepted 8 July 2020

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to investigate the critical success factors for strategic planning in the residential construction industry in Kosovo from both organizational and customers perspectives and how they are applied in the residential construction context. This study used the case study strategy and in-depth interviews to collect primary data, which were analyzed qualitatively using data reduction and data display analysis technique. The findings revealed that 17 factors were identified as critical to success for residential construction companies in Kosovo. Moreover, a descriptive analysis is provided for 11 factors that were considered as important from both groups of stakeholders. These factors include after sales service, brand, customer service, design and architecture, differentiation strategy, financial strength, infrastructure, location, marketing, price, and quality of construction. These findings are discussed in the context of the established literature and within the context of the residential construction industry in Kosovo.

MAKALE BİLGİSİ

Anahtar Kelimeler:
Kritik başarı faktörleri, Kosova inşaat sektörü, Konut inşaatı sektörü, Stratejik planlama

Tarihler :
Geliş 13 Mayıs 2020
Düzeltme geliş
29 Haziran 2020
Kabul 8 Temmuz 2020

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, örgüt ve müşteri bakış açılarıyla Kosova konut inşaatı endüstrisinde stratejik planlama için kritik başarı faktörlerini ve konut inşaat bağlamında nasıl uygulandığını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada nitel yöntem kullanılarak birincil verilerin toplanması için örnek olay üzerinden derin görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar Kosova konut inşaatı şirketleri için 17 kritik başarı faktörü ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ayrıca, tanımlayıcı istatistikler pay sahibi grupları için önemli olarak değerlendirilen 11 faktörünü belirlemiştir. Bu faktörler satış sonrası hizmet, marka, müşteri hizmetleri, tasarım ve mimari, farklılaşma stratejisi, finansal güç, altyapı, konum, pazarlama, ücret ve yapı kalitesini içermektedir. Bulgular ilgili literatür ve Kosova konut inşaatı sektörü bağlamında tartışılmıştır.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The construction industry is one of the biggest industries in the world contributing 13 percent of global GDP (McKinsey & Company, 2020) and employing around seven percent of global working population (McKinsey & Company, 2017). During the recent years, construction industry has become one of the most important sector contributing to Kosovo's economic growth with about 15.5 percent of county's GDP (Cojocaru, 2017). Despite the economic downturn during the recent years, the industry has been experiencing growth, employing significant number of architects, civil engineers, project managers, skilled technicians and laborers. Hence, the industry remains potential for the economic growth of Kosovo.

The demand for improved roads, highways and new residential homes accelerated the growth in construction activity and other related industries. This potential growth has not only increased the domestic competition, but also incentivized foreign companies to invest in Kosovo construction industry. In such a competitive industry, it is very important for companies to identify the significant factors that result in the construction project success. These factors are usually referred to as the Critical Success Factors (CSFs). Identification of the CSF's in any industry help organizations to focus more on those areas in order to differentiate their projects from those of their competitors and to sustain their competitive advantage. Therefore, this research attempts to identify those CSFs that help residential construction firms in Kosovo to achieve successful performance. In addition, this research aims to study those CSF's that customers value in evaluating the company's performance.

Moreover, identification of CSF's has been considered to be part of Strategic Planning process (Gates, 2010; Jenster, 1987). It is evident from the fact that Strategic Planning focuses on the mission, objectives and vision of the company. In order for the company to achieve its goals and objectives, it should focus on certain key areas that are unique to the industry in which it competes (Caralli, Stevens, Willke, & Wilson, 2004). Hence, it is of vital importance to review the concept of Strategic Planning in the research of CSF's.

The main aim of this research is to investigate the CSFs for residential construction industry, from company and customers perspectives. This is done by conducting a case study on one of the residential construction companies with foreign capital and experience from the European Union (EU) countries (hereinafter referred as the Construction Company). This particular case study based research is chosen as it is generally assumed that foreign companies, particularly those with experience in EU market, have advanced quality levels and are usually more experienced in strategic planning and implementation. Therefore, it is believed that foreign construction companies would have more sophisticated approach to a CSF identification in comparison with local construction companies with limited experience, because they operate in a highly competitive and well established residential construction industries. Based on this aim, the following research objectives have been set:

- To identify the CSFs for the Construction Company, from company's and customers perspective.
- To understand the criticality and applicability of each CSF from both customers and company's perspectives.
- To make an attempt to contextualize the CSFs derived from this study to the Kosovo residential construction industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Strategic Planning

Strategy has been defined as the direction and scope of an organization in a changing business environment through the configuration of its resources to meet the growing demand of stakeholders (Johnson, Whittington, & Scholes, 2011). Strategy helps an organization to move towards an attractive business position and achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Thompson & Strickland, 1998). Strategic planning is the process of defining the organization's plans for achieving its desired objectives and business position (Cassidy, 2006). In addition, Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong (2005) suggest that strategic planning enables the company to take advantage of the opportunities to match with the company's goals and future vision. Furthermore, Lynch (2005) adds that, strategic planning sets the stage for various process improvements like definition of mission and objectives, generic strategies, enterprise architecture, risk management and change management initiatives.

Moreover, Peng (2001) highlights the importance of resources and capabilities in a firm's strategic planning. He further adds that the context in which

the firm operates also controls the firm's strategic planning (Meyer & Peng, 2005). Although the purpose of strategic planning is straightforward, the process is complex and dynamic. Two techniques, namely CSF's and future scenario planning are considered to enhance the process of strategic planning (Gates, 2010). Daniel (1961) suggests that organizational planning should focus on the CSF's that determine the success of the company. Furthermore, he describes the CSF's as the key jobs that must be done exceedingly well for a company to be successful. In line with this, Gates (2010) argues that CSF's have direct relationships to an organizations' mission and goals as they shape strategy through their effect on the organization's achievement of it goals and their ability to enable the success of the mission.

2.2. Critical Success Factors

The concept of CSF's has its roots from the conceptual framework developed for success factors (Daniel, 1961). In his study, Daniel (1961) asserted that organizational planning should focus on five to six factors, which he termed as 'success factors' that determine the success of the company. Moreover, Daniel (1961) suggests the success factors at industry level that can be shared across the organizations in that particular industry. On the other hand, Anthony, Dearden, and Vancil (1972) argue that success factors could differ from company to company and developed organizational success factors and managerial level success factors.

Based on the success factors approach from Daniel (1961), Rockart (1979) developed the CSF's method to help organizations to identify the issues that are critical to the successful operation of their business. In his study, Rockart (1979) defines CSF's as the limited number of areas in which results, if they are satisfactory, will ensure successful competitive performance for the organization. Thierauf (1982) supports this by stating that if the results in these key areas are not satisfactory, the organization cannot achieve the desired performance and will be less competitive. Sousa de Vasconcellos e Sa (1988), also suggests that CSF's are the key areas in which organizations should perform well in order to sustain the competitive advantage. Likewise, Peffers, Charles, and Tuure (2003) argues that senior managers have found the CSF's approach to be appealing for Strategic Planning processes of the organization. In addition, Zawawi, et al. (2011) suggests that the CSF's are essential in identifying the cause of failure in an organization as well as improving the system. They further add that these factors can strengthen the management strategy and are directed towards achieving overall success of the company.

In the existing literature of CSF's, there were many efforts to identify and compare the CSF's across various industries. Several studies were conducted to investigate and identify the success components and why some organizations are more successful than others. In an attempt to understand how organizations can enhance their performance, Umble, Haft, and Umble (2003) and discuss the importance of CSF's. As part of their study, they identified eight success factors as critical for successful implementation of ERP. Moreover, Shan and Marn (2013) identified and examined seven CSF's that are crucial in successful development of tourism industry in Malaysia. Likewise, Dawson and Van Belle (2013) examined and identified three key CSFs for financial services industry in South Africa.

More recently, various studies were conducted to identify CSF's in different industries. Based on the critical review of literature, Luthra, Garg, and Haleem (2015) identified 26 CSFs for achievement of sustainable supply chain management practices, and determined their importance through the survey in Indian automobile industry. Their findings revealed 10 CSFs as the most important for this industry. Similarly, Wibowo and Alfen (2015) examined 30 CSFs in public-private partnership infrastructure development projects. They measured the importance of these CSFs within the Indonesian context and determined the top five important CSFs. Likewise, Lande, Shrivastava, and Seth (2016) identified and analyzed 22 CSFs of Lean Six Sigma framework affecting and influencing quality, operational and financial performance of small and medium Indian enterprises. Analyzing data from various studies and sorting CSFs in descending order according to the frequency of occurrences, they determined 12 CSFs as most critical to implement LSS in an effective manner. Furthemore, leveraging case studies of seven large organizations Yeoh and Popovic (2015) examined the organization, process, and technology CSFs impacting business intelligence systems implementation. Their findings revealed that seven CSFs play the most crucial role in determining success in implementation of business intelligence system. In addition, the list of CSFs identified in various industries are summarized and depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of CSFs Identified in Various Industries.

Author(s)	Industry & country	Critical Success Factors Identified
Umble et al. (2003)	ERP implementation (USA)	• Clear understanding of strategic goals • Commitment by top management • Excellent project management • Organizational change management • A great implementation team • Data accuracy • Extensive education and training • Focused performance measures
Shan & Marn (2013)	Turism Industry (Malaysia)	• Extent of Product Differentiation • Service Quality • Tourism Infrastructure • Tourism Marketing and Promotion • Tourism Planning and Policy • Strategic Alliances and Industrial Cooperation • Economic Sustainability.
Dawson & Van Belle (2013)	Financial services (South Africa)	• Management support • Business vision • User involvement
Luthra et al. (2015)	Automobile Industry (India)	• Top management initiation and commitment • Central government legislations • International environment agreements • State government legislations • Scarcity of natural resources • Support from customers • Societal issues • Supportive company policies • Enhanced brand image Encouragement from customers
Wibowo & Alfen (2015)	PPP Infrastructure Development Projects (Indonesia)	• Sound legal basis • Irrevocable contract except through due process • Sensible and manageable risk-sharing arrangement • Clearly defined mechanisms of PPP needs Strong political support
Lande et al. (2016)	Lean Six Sigma in Small and Medium Enterprises (India)	• Training (employee involvement) • Management involvement and commitment • Customer satisfaction • Leadership • Project prioritization and selection • Cultural change • Understand LSS methodology • Strategic quality planning • Process management • Product design • Linking LSS to customers Linking LSS to business strategy
Yeoh & Popovic (2015)	Business Intelligence Systems (Australia)	• Committed Management Support and Sponsorship • A Clear Vision and a Well-Established Business Case • Business-Centric Championship and a Balanced Team Composition • Business-Driven and Iterative Development Approach • User-Oriented Change Management • Business-Driven, Scalable, and Flexible Technical Framework • Sustainable Data Quality and Integrity

2.1. Critical Success Factors in Construction Industry

The construction industry is one of the largest industries in any country and has become highly competitive with the increase in globalization (Kumaraswamy, Ling, & Miller, 2007). In addition, the industry has become highly dynamic in nature because of the innovations in technology and production processes (Miller, Packham, & Thomas, 2001). Strategic management theory within the construction industry implies that decisions made inside the firm are determined mainly by the flow of information and knowledge from the environment (Miller, Williams, & Daunton, 1998).

On the other hand, building construction projects has become more complex and difficult due to the unprecedented changes faced by the project teams (Saqib, Farooqui, & Lodi, 2008). Usually, success or performance in construction industry has been measured by the golden triangle parameters of time, cost and quality (Ojiako, Johansen, & Greenwood, 2008). However, the increase in project complexity and failures suggests the existence of underlying factors that can have a direct effect on success of construction project (Gudiene, Banaitis, & Banaitiene, 2013). Hence, it is evident that the construction industry should focus on those CSF's besides the golden triangle in order to sustain its competitive advantage (Yang, Shen, Ho, Drew, & Chan, 2009).

The distinctive nature of projects suggests that CSFs identified for one industry cannot be applicable to another industry (Yang et al, 2009). The term CSF's in construction industry generally refers to those factors predicting success of construction projects (Sanvido, Grobler, Parfitt, Guvenis, & Coyle, 1992). In this context, Garbharran, Govender, and Msani (2012) suggests that CSF's in construction industry are those factors that contribute towards successful completion of construction projects. Moreover, Pakseresht and Asgari (2012) add that identification of CSF's in construction industry could result in achieving reliability and accurate results in building the projects. Hence, it is increasingly important for construction companies to understand the CSFs in order to improve the effectiveness of construction projects.

Various CSFs have been identified by authors in different construction projects across the world. However, there is no consensus among the researchers about the importance and applicability of the CSFs for companies involved in construction industry. In the study of Butler Christofferson, and Hutchings (2003), carried out among small-volume residential construction companies in the United States, fifty-seven factors were identified as a critical to success for companies involved in the residential construction. Their study focused on the perceptions of different stakeholders for the success of their own residential construction companies. Among the factors of success that did rank high were quality workmanship, having good employees, location of the product, customer service, effective sales and marketing, company reputation, fair pricing/value, and cost control efforts.

Moreover, Saqib et al. (2008) conducted a research to determine the CSF's that lead to project success in Pakistani construction industry. The research administered a questionnaire to conduct personal interviews with representatives from 37 major contracting companies. The findings of this research identified the following CSF's of construction projects in Pakistan: Contractor Related Factors, Project Manager Related Factors, Procurement Related Factors, Design Team Related Factors and Project Management factors.

Al-Tmeemy, Abdul-Rahman, and Harun (2010) investigated the criteria for success of building projects in Malaysia. After a review of existing literature and carried out 151 surveys with participants who were involved in building construction, the following thirteen CSF's have been identified: cost, time, quality, safety, achieving scope, customer satisfaction, technical specifications, functional requirements, market share, competitive advantage, reputation, revenue and profits, and benefit to stakeholder. This is also confirmed by Jari and Bhangale (2013) who suggest that satisfying clients by providing projects on schedule within budgets is crucial for construction companies.

Furthermore, Stadelmann (2007) investigated the CSFs that should be considered before buying a property to live in the United States. He listed the following factors that are considered as critical by buyers: location, size, mortgage, living cost, school catchment area, public transport and others. Other comparable studies are presented in Table 2, which illustrates a summary of CSF's that have been identified in the prior studies in construction industry.

Table 2: Summary of CSFs Identified in Construction Industry

Author	Industry & Country	Critical Success Factors Identified
Hutchings & Christofferson (2001)	Residential Construction Industry (USA)	• Quality of workmanship • Honesty • Having good subcontractors • Customer communication • Reputation • Having good employees • Completing project on time
Hardcastle et al. (2006)	Construction Industry (UK)	• Effective procurement • Project implementability • Government guarantee • Favorable economic conditions • Available financial market
Arslan & Kivrak (2009)	Construction Industry (Turkey)	• Business management • Financial conditions • Owner-manager characteristics • Quality of work and workmanship • Sales and marketing • Market selection • Use of technology
Williams (2016)	Construction and Estate Industry (UK)	• Company culture • The single team • Project setup • Customer satisfaction • Subcontractors and the construction site • Post-handover
Neyestani & Juanzon (2016)	Construction Industry (Philippines)	• Customer focus • Leadership • Process management • Supplier quality management • Employee involvement • Information and analysis • Training
Almarri & Abu-Hijleh (2017)	Construction Industry (UAE and UK)	• Commitment of public and private parties • Appropriate risk allocation • Committed and competent public agency • Transparent procurement process • Strong private consortium • Competitive procurement process • Political support • Detailed cost/benefits assessment • Good governance
Banihashemi, Hosseini, Golizadeh, & Sankaran (2017)	Construction Industry (Iran)	• Role of clients in identification • Knowledge management in evaluation • Commitment to high quality workmanship • Strategic direction/ health and safety protocols • Project managers' knowledge, skills and abilities • Tighter control over construction activities
Mavi & Standing (2018)	Construction Industry (Australia)	• Project • Project management team • Organization • External environment • Sustainability

2.3. Kosovo Construction Industry

Kosovo is one of the Western Balkans countries that experienced solid economic growth since 1999 (IMF, 2018). Moreover, Kosovo's economic growth has outperformed its neighboring countries over the past decade (World Bank Group, 2020). The construction industry has become one of the most important sectors in Kosovo's economic growth. There has been a lot of investment in construction of roads, homes and commercial spaces in the past few years (Cojocaru, 2017).

Moreover, the Kosovo construction industry is highly attractive for both domestic and international investors. This is mainly due to the increase in private investment in infrastructure projects offered by international agencies. There has been an increase in reconstruction activities across the country after the war in 1999, which has damaged the majority of the country.

Although the construction industry seems to be very attractive in Kosovo, it is a very challenging industry for new entrants. According to the EYE report, as of 2015, there are over 3,500 construction companies registered and every year there are around 800 new entrants from domestic and foreign companies. The growth in reconstruction activities coupled with new construction opportunities which accelerated the competition. As a result, only those companies that provide competitive and sophisticated services can sustain their competitive advantage. Hence, it is crucial for construction companies to investigate and focus on their CSFs. Moreover, identification of CSF's allows the firms to focus on building their capabilities to meet those success factors. Hence, this study aims to elaborate on CSF's that could support the company's strategic vision. In order to achieve this aim, this research will focus on studying the CSF's from the perspective of both the management and clients of the Construction Company.

2.4. Research Gaps and Research Questions

The literature review focuses on the strategic planning and the link with CSFs, and also emphasizes the similarities and differences between different sectors where CSFs are applied. Furthermore, existing literature highlights several gaps about the CSFs for strategic planning in construction industry. First, there exists no consensus among the researchers regarding the most important CSF's in construction industry. Second, no study has been conducted which focuses on CSFs in construction sector of South-Eastern European developing countries like Kosovo. Finally, there exist very limited studies that focused on both company and clients perspectives of CSF's in construction industry. In order to fill these gaps and reach alternative conclusions by investigating the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders, the following research questions were derived and will be addressed in this study.

- What are the most important CSFs for the Construction Company from the management and customers' perspective?

- Why those factors are considered critical for various stakeholders (management and customers)?

3. METHOD

In line with constructivism paradigm, a qualitative case study was selected as appropriate strategy for this study since the research involved an in depth understanding about what the CSF's are and why those factors are critical from the perspectives of stakeholders. Data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 participants. The selection of participants for interviews was done by using non-probability sampling based on their power and interest to the company and they were divided into two stakeholder groups. Furthermore, as a case study research requires a small sample, the purposive heterogeneous sampling type was used to collect data and to explain the key themes that were observed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Five participants were selected from senior management of the Construction Company (CEO, Senior Project Manager, Marketing Manager, Operations Manager, and Sales Manager) since it was confirmed that these senior management members play a key role in the company's strategic decision making process and possess knowledge about the whole organization. On the other hand, 15 participants were selected from the list of existing customers from the company's client directory based on their availability and their readiness to participate in this study. The participants were given codes for the confidentiality reasons and for ease of reference. The participants from management side were given the codes from M1 to M5 whereas the participants from customers' side were given codes from C1 to C15.

During the interview procedure a special attention was given to data quality issues and preparation for the interview in order to have more reliable responses from all participants. The interview design was prepared in order to reveal and understand 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions. In

terms of ethical considerations, the participants were informed about the aims and proceudures of the study and they agreed to take part on the basis of that information. Moreover, the participants were informed about the interview voice recording, confidentiality of their information, and possibility to withdraw from the research at any time, without negative consequences for them. The pilot interview was conducted with two participants and it was determined that participants need to be acquainted with the definition of CSFs and sufficient time should be allocated for interview. Finally, the interviews were conducted on a non-standardized, face-to-face manner, where participants were asked only three basic questions about the CSF's: (1) What are the CSF's for construction companies in Kosovo; (2) Why do you consider these factors as a critical to success for the Construction Company; and (3) How applicable are these factors for the Construction Company. However, the interview direction was depended on the information from interviewees, and based on their answers we dug deeper into the relevant area. The interview outcomes resulted with identification of 17 CSFs from the participants.

3.1. Analytical Procedure

The qualitative data analysis of this study progressed through several steps process in order to derive the findings and answer the research questions. The first step of the data analysis involved the process of listening to the interview recordings and transcribing the conversations for each participant. The second step involved reiteration of the research questions to make sure that analysis is conducted in the appropriate way. The third step, data categorization, involved developing categories based on the actual terms used by participants during the interviews, and deriving the categories by using each CSF identified by the participants as a key theme. The fourth step was data reduction that was done by the following steps: (1) summarizing and simplifying the data collected from interviews and selectively focusing on some parts of data; (2) transforming the data from interview transcripts into a new word document and compressing long statements into briefer statements; (3) presenting each CSF identified by each individual stakeholder separately. The fifth step involved data display preparation by preparing 20 charts showing participants responses based on three main interview questions. The sixth step was data display analysis that involved the following procedure: (1) classification of CSF's; (2) selection of 11 CSF's for further analysis (only those CSF's identified by both groups of stakeholders); (3) preparing 11 charts showing quotations from all participants responses for each CSF in a summarized form; and (4) designing each chart in order to analyze participants' responses from three main interview questions (what, why, and how). The final step of the analytical procedure involved the following procedure: (1) interpretation and discussion of eleven CSF's; (2) presenting quotations from participants' responses and comparing the variations and dimensions between the perspectives of two groups of stakeholders; and (3) discussing the findings within the context of the established literature.

3.2. Results

Although seventeen CSFs were contributed by the participants, only 11 CSFs that were perceived as important by both groups of stakeholders were evaluated and discussed. The CSFs that were selected for further analysis are highlighted in Table 3.

Table 3: CSFs Derived From Interviews

Critical success factors derived from interviews	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 4	M 5	C 1	C 2	C 3	C 4	C 5	C 6	C 7	C 8	C 9	C 10	C 11	C 12	C 13	C 14	C 15
After sales service					✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓			
Brand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓						
Customer service	✓		✓	✓					✓		✓					✓		✓	✓	✓
Design and architecture		✓						✓	✓											
Differentiation		✓				✓														
Financial strength	✓												✓		✓					
Flexibility												✓								
Infrastructure					✓	✓		✓		✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	
Legal issues													✓		✓	✓				✓
Location	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
Marketing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓									
Organizational culture					✓															
Payment method									✓											
Price		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
Project timeline							✓													
Quality of construction			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trained sales team		✓																		

After Sales Service. After sales service is one of the factors identified by the stakeholders as a critical for the success of the Construction Company. Six participants from customers' side and one participant from management side identified after sales service as a CSF. From the management side, M3 believed that after sales service is highly valued by their customers and the company always takes care of its properties by providing all services required by their clients. On the other hand, C2, C4, C7, C9, C11, and C12 shared a common perception regarding the importance of after sales services in residential construction sector in Kosovo. They believed that after sales service is something that makes life easier for inhabitants and they were very much satisfied in terms of cleanliness and maintenance of the buildings.

Brand. Another important CSF identified by both groups of stakeholders was brand. Nine participants identified brand as a critical to success for construction companies in Kosovo. Interestingly, all participants from the management side believed that brand plays a key role in success of construction companies in Kosovo. M2 said that the company made a significant investment in their operations and marketing activities to enhance their brand. However, this investment and effort was worthy because the brand played a key role to differentiate the Construction Company from other competitors. Moreover, M4 and M5 considered that brand is important CSF for construction companies in Kosovo because most of apartments are sold before the project is completed and from the customers perspective it is hard to believe to a construction company that does not have a good brand. Furthermore, M1 and M3 believed that the people in the high-end market have confidence in the Company's brand. Similarly, from the customers' side, five participants identified brand as a CSF. Their views about the brand were quite similar with views of participants from the management's side. C7 and C8 suggested that the brand of the company tells about the security of the investment, particularly in the cases like in Kosovo where cash investment is made before the project is completed. Furthermore, C2, C6, and C9 associated the Construction Company with a good brand because as a foreign company they brought the experience and EU construction standards to Kosovo.

Customer Service. Customer service is one of the CSF's identified by nine participants. Three participants from management side and six participant from customers' side identified customer service as a critical to success for the Construction Company. M1, M3, and M4 believed that word of mouth is very important factor for improving company's reputation. On the other hand, C4 believed that company provided precise responses for all client queries. In addition, C6 and C14 said that the staff of the company showed high interest and provided correct information about the projects. Moreover, C12 and C13 said that the company was very pleasant and flexible to make changes as per their requests and preferences. Furthermore, C11 and C15 were satisfied with the company's pre-sales service but not much satisfied with after sales service.

Design and Architecture. Design and architecture have been identified as another CSF for the Construction Company. Two participants from customers' side and one participant from management side perceived design and architecture as a critical to success. M2 believed that design and architecture are increasingly important for the Construction Company mainly because their customer segment is educated and has access to various designs and architectural websites. On the other hand, C3 believed that apartments should be big enough to accommodate bigger families. However, C4 believed that the company differentiates its designs and offers its unique style construction that is its key success factor.

Differentiation. Only two participants identified differentiation as another CSF: one from the management side and one from customers' side. From the management side, M2 suggested that construction companies must offer unique products and services in order to succeed. He also said that the company is focused on how to do the construction better and uniquely. Moreover, he believed that differentiation helped the Construction Company to increase value for its clients and outperform the competition. On the other hand, from the customers' side, C1 considered that the Construction Company is different because it marketed itself as EU Company and offered apartments with unique style. Furthermore, he suggested that being different is not that simple, but companies need to have a combination of good quality, good marketing and affordable prices.

Financial Strength. Three participants identified financial strength as a CSF. One participant from the management side and two participants from the customers' side identified financial strength as a CSF for residential construction companies in Kosovo. From the management side, M1 said that financial strength is essential for the company to initiate and fund projects especially during the times of volatile economic conditions. In addition, from the customers' side, C8 and C10 believed that financial strength is a very important CSF for construction companies. Both management and clients believed that financial strength and cash

flow is one of the very important CSF's for the company. C10 said that in Kosovo construction sector there are some companies that bankrupted before their building project were completed.

Infrastructure. Infrastructure was another CSF identified by most participants. One participant from the management side and five participants from customers' side identified infrastructure as a critical to success for construction companies in Kosovo. From the management side, M5 identified infrastructure as one of the key factors for the Construction Company. He believed that infrastructure is one key factor for determining purchasing behavior of their customers. Moreover, he said that their clients are very concerned with infrastructure inside and outside the building area, which includes roads, entertainment and leisure facilities, green areas, security, etc. Likewise, from the customers' side, all participants shared the similar views about the importance of infrastructure for residential construction companies. They acknowledged that infrastructure is crucial for improving the quality of life. Their main issues related to infrastructure were parking areas, green areas around the buildings and entertainment and playground areas for kids.

Location. Location is another important CSF that was identified by 12 participants from both groups of stakeholders. From the management side, location was identified by M1 and from the customers' side 11 participants identified location as a CSF for the Construction Company. M1 believed that, although location is very important factor in Kosovo's construction industry, is not as critical as brand because reputable construction companies can make use of their brand and convince people about their location. On the other hand, from the customers' side, most of the participants shared the similar views about location. They believed that location is very important CSF for any construction company that operates in Kosovo. Most of the participants from the customers' side considered that location is more personal preference and their main concerns about the location were proximity and the access to the points of interest such as city center, kindergartens, schools, shopping malls, etc. Furthermore, from the customers' side, nine participants believed that the Construction Company was very successful when selecting location for building residential properties. They believed that the Construction Company offers apartments with accessible locations and environmentally friendly to live. However, C3 believed that some locations chosen by the Construction Company were crowded area to live, with lack of infrastructure and problems with sewage.

Marketing. Marketing is another CSF that was identified by 15 participants from both groups of stakeholders. The common perception of all participants from the management side was that marketing efforts helped the company to reach the target customer segments. Also, they agree that their integrated marketing efforts helped the company to achieve its targeted sales and achieve the desired reputation and image. Furthermore, M3 believed that the Construction Company adapts itself to changing customer needs and good marketing strategy helps the company to communicate this message to its customers. On the other hand, C4 said that although the company offers good quality services, they still have to improve their visibility through marketing efforts. However, C6 argued that the Construction Company is one of the most advertised companies and considers marketing to be critical for the company's success.

Price. Price was found as another important CSF for the Construction Company. Ten participants identified price as a CSF. From the management side, M2 identified price a CSF and they believed that price is becoming increasingly important due to the tough competition in Kosovo construction sector. Moreover, M3 said that the Construction Company is becoming more effective and efficient in its operations in order to have prices that are more competitive. Furthermore, he suggested that price of apartments should be reasonable and justified with good quality, design and customer service in order to convince customers that they are not wasting their money. On the other hand, from the customers' side, eight participants identified price as a CSF. Customers views about this factor were very much in line with the views of M2, as they believed that price of apartments should be considered as a value for money. Moreover, C9 considered price as a very important CSF because the supply of apartments is high and purchasing power is becoming low. However, when they expressed their views for the Construction Company prices, they all believed that prices of the Construction Company apartments are competitive and reasonable.

Quality of Construction. Majority of stakeholders has identified quality of construction as one of the most significant CSF's. 18 participants identified quality as a CSF for the Construction Company. From the management side, M3, M4, and M5 identified quality as one of the key factors to success for the company. They believed that the quality of construction helped the Construction Company to build the brand and reputation they have in the market. Further, they said that high quality of construction helped the company to

reduce its maintenance costs and improve its after sales service. On the other hand, from the customers' side, 15 participants shared the similar views about quality. They believed that quality of construction is most important CSF. Moreover, they considered that purchasing an apartment is a lifetime investment; thus, good quality of construction will certainly reduce their maintenance and repairing costs. Their main concerns for quality were building statics in case of earthquake and quality of isolation for energy saving. C1 said that the Construction Company is known for its qualitative and differentiated construction with high quality materials. C5 believed that the Construction Company buildings are one of the best quality buildings in town in terms of style, design and aesthetics. Furthermore, C7 said that he has not done any single repair in his apartment since eight years, which suggests the commitment of the company towards high quality construction.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that both groups of stakeholders agreed that after sales service is important for improving inhabitants' quality of life in residential buildings in Kosovo. There are no variations in their perceptions of why this factor is perceived as important. Both groups believed that the construction companies should take care of their properties by providing all the amenities and services required by their clients. These findings are consistent with findings of Williams (2016) who suggests that post-handover and after sales service provided by construction companies is one of the most CSFs and has major influence on customer satisfaction.

Brand was identified as an important CSF for determining the buyer's decision from both groups of stakeholders. Moreover, both groups agreed that the Construction Company has a strong brand in the market and is perceived as a different company because they apply the EU quality standards, they are dynamic and they deliver what they promise. This is consistent with findings of Luthra et al. (2015) who established that enhanced brand image is an important CSF for automobile industry in Indian. This is also consistent with findings of the studies of Hutchings and Christofferson (2001), and Butler et al. (2003), who found that company reputation is a key CSF for residential construction companies in the U.S. Moreover, Al-Tmeemy et al. (2010) identified reputation or brand as a CSF for building projects from the perspective of construction contractors and suggest that building a strong brand helps the construction company to gain competitive advantage among its competitors.

In addition, the findings of this study showed that both groups of stakeholders agreed that customer service is important to maintain the relationships between the company and its clients. They also believed that customer service can build brand equity and can help to differentiate a company from its competitors. Moreover, both parties believed that the Construction Company provided a good customer service. Consistent with these findings, Lande et al. (2016) found that customer satisfaction through excellent customer service is one of the key CSFs for Lean Six Sigma implementation in SMEs in India. This is also confirmed by the findings of other studies conducted in various construction industries (e.g. Al-Tmeemy et al., 2010; Butler et al., 2003; Williams, 2016) who found that customer satisfaction is key CSF for successful completion of construction projects.

In terms of design and architecture, the findings of this study are in line with the outcomes derived by Pankaj and Bhangale (2013) who suggest that building design and architecture acts as a CSF for all stakeholders including owners, designers and contractors. Furthermore, Saqib et al. (2008) argue that Designers play a vital role in construction projects as their work involves from inception to completion on a project. Product design was also found by Lande et al. (2016) as an important CSF for Lean Six Sigma implementation in SMEs in India.

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that differentiation strategy that the Construction Company is applying is highly valued by customers and makes them feel better and different. Differentiation strategy has been identified by Budayan (2008) as one of the key factors in construction industry to gain sustainable competitive advantage. Furthermore, he suggests that construction companies can differentiate either on quality or on productivity. Likewise, extent of product differentiation has been identified by Shan and Marn (2013) as one of the key factors in tourism industry in Malaysia.

Financial strength of the Construction Company has been identified as another CSF. Findings show that perceptions of participants from both groups of stakeholders, management and customers, are in line with Arslan and Kirvak (2009) who opined that factors of financial conditions are essential and critical for success of construction projects. Likewise, Nguyen, Ogunlana, and Lan (2004) identified adequate financial resource as one of the CSF's for project completion. They all recognized

that construction companies must be financially stable in order to complete the project in time and with quality.

Infrastructure was perceived as a CSF from both groups of stakeholders because it improves the inhabitants' quality of life and helps the Construction Company to achieve success over its competitors. Interestingly, infrastructure was not found to be an important CSF for any of the previous studies conducted in the context of construction industries. Perhaps this factor is perceived as important in Kosovo due to the lack of proper town planning and infrastructure provided by the local municipalities.

In addition, findings revealed that location plays a pivotal role in the competitiveness of companies involved in residential construction in Kosovo. This is consistent with the findings of Butler et al. (2003) who found that location is an important CSF for companies involved in the residential construction in the United States. Furthermore, this has been confirmed by Stadelmann (2007) who found that buyers consider location as an important CSF in order to make sure their investments returns more value for money. This is very much evident from that fact that, also in Kosovo context, any buyer would expect good return or value for the investment especially when it comes to construction projects like houses and apartments.

Marketing has been identified as an essential factor for companies' success. The findings of this study suggest that marketing helps companies to communicate more closely with their customers, understand their needs, tastes and preferences and most importantly increases sales during the volatile economic conditions. These findings are consistent with the previous findings identified in the literature (e.g. Arslan & Kivrak, 2009; Butler et al., 2003) who identified effective sales and marketing as one of the most important factors for construction companies. These include the company's success in achieving financial and non-financial targets and in satisfying the expectations of all stakeholders. Furthermore, consistent with these findings, marketing was found by Shan & Marn (2013) as an important factor in tourism industry in Malaysia.

Price was found to be another CSF for the Construction Company. This is consistent with the findings of Al-Tmeemy et al. (2010) who evaluated cost or price as the CSF in construction projects. Also, Butler et al. (2003) identified cost or price as one of the client satisfaction factors in construction industry.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that quality of construction is one of the most important CSFs from the perspectives of both management and clients. Both groups of stakeholders are in line with regards to quality as being the most significant success factor for the Construction Company. Also, these findings are consistent with the previous studies conducted in various construction contexts (e.g. Al-Tmeemy et al., 2010; Arslan & Kivrak, 2009; Banihashemi et al., 2017; Butler et al., 2003; Hutchings & Christofferson, 2001; Ojiako et al., 2008) who suggest that quality of construction and workmanship is one of major factors in the success of construction projects.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to investigate the CSF's for the Construction Company in Kosovo from company and customers' perspectives. The first objective of this study was to find out the CSF's from the management perspective. In order to meet this objective, five senior executives were interviewed. The participants from the management side identified 13 factors to be critical for the success of the company. However, the factors that were identified by all five executives include Brand and Marketing. Interestingly, five customers have also identified brand as a CSF for the company.

Marketing is another CSF identified by maximum number of respondents from the management side. All five key executives identified marketing as one of the CSF's for the Construction Company. Apart from these two factors, the executives also identified other CSF's for the Construction Company that include: after sales service, customer service, design and architecture, differentiation, financial strength, infrastructure, location, organizational culture, price, quality of construction and trained sales team.

Another objective of this study was to find out CSFs from customers' perspective, thus, 15 customers who purchased apartments from the Construction Company were interviewed. The customers identified 15 factors to be critical for the success of the Construction Company. These factors include after sales service, brand, customer service, design and architecture, differentiation, financial strength, flexibility, infrastructure, legal issues, location, marketing, payment method, price, project timeline and quality of construction.

Why these factors are considered critical by various stakeholders?

Although the stakeholders identified seventeen factors to be critical for success for the Construction Company, each group of stakeholders might have specific perspectives or reasons about why these factors are critical. For example, after sales service is one of the CSF's identified by both groups of stakeholders. The management believes that providing good after sales service is very important factor for ensuring proper building maintenance and better quality life for their clients. Similarly, customers expect regular maintenance of elevators, cleaning, removing of garbage and lighting in order for them to live a better quality life. As such, the company should provide the same quality of after sales service in the future in order to maintain its reputation.

Brand is one of the other factors identified by both groups of stakeholders. The management believes that customers pay more for stronger brands and hence the company tried to differentiate its brand from others that made customers from high-end market to rely on the Construction Company. In addition, customers perceive the company as one of the differentiators in providing high quality services in Kosovo and thus create a positive perception about the company. Hence, the company should continuously improve its services and offerings in order to differentiate its brand from competitors.

Moreover, the Construction Company is focused on providing excellent quality customer service that they consider critical for success of company. This is in line with customers' perspectives who believe that the Construction Company provides professional customer service. On the other hand, both groups of stakeholders also consider design and architecture, differentiation, financial strength, infrastructure, location, marketing, price and quality as critical. As such, it can be concluded that continuous improvement on innovation and design will provide success for the Construction Company. Also, location has been considered as one key success factor by majority of customers. Hence, it is important for the company to choose the location strategically where it can provide value and satisfaction for its clients. Finally, price and quality should always remain the high priority areas since the company's success considerably depends on the quality of their construction and the price at which they offer to its clients.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By recognizing the CSF paradigm as being of relevance to strategic issues facing new entrants to a market, this study explores this perspective with a purpose to gaining insight into the prospects of the Construction Company by comparing perceptions of CSFs among its managers and its recent customers. This approach was taken since very often CSF theory are viewed by the researchers and practitioners as a key to the customer-service profit chain and to a consideration of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. However, in the emerging market context like Kosovo, it would seem that the newly entering companies make strategic market entry decisions based on intuition rather than by taking into account empirically determined factors concerning the nature of the market – purely because of the absence of such information. Thus, insights into CSFs that are objectively relevant may be a useful tool for the market entrant to monitor the customers satisfaction at a phase when the firm does not yet have a pool of customers. With this rational, the findings of this study show a significant relevance to management praxis in Kosovo residential construction sector.

From the above discussions, it is recommended that the Construction Company as well as other construction companies should gain an insight in to the factors that are considered as critical for success from both customers and company's perspective. This allows these companies to assess themselves against the perceptions of customers and thereby devise their strategy accordingly in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

This research has a number of limitations. Firstly, there is no general consensus among researchers on which CSFs would be more important for organizations to sustain their competitive advantage. Consequently, the 11 CSFs identified from the participants of this study may not be representative and appropriate for other construction companies that operate in different cultural context. Secondly, this study was a cross-sectional study and examined only qualitative data that were collected from in-depth interviews and did not examine quantitative data collected from survey questionnaires. This limited the study from generating findings from the mixed method, which can analyze a richer data set and produce more extended analytical outcomes. Finally, this study has only examined the CSFs in the context of a Construction Company in Kosovo, which represents a narrow focus. This limits the ability to generalize the findings not only across other construction industries in developed countries but also within the construction industries in developing countries like Kosovo. This implies that the findings of this study may not be valid for other construction industries outside of Kosovo because of the significant dissimilarities in cultural contexts. However, taking into consideration the methodological approach

taken, this study highlights opportunities for the Construction Company and does not claim generalizability for its findings. The research data suggests that additional research can be carried out in understanding and evaluating the criticality of seven factors (flexibility, legal issues, organizational culture, payment method, project timeline and trained sale team) that have been identified by only one group of stakeholders. Also, future researches can be carried out in investigating the CSFs of another growing industry in Kosovo.

ETHICS DECLARATIONS

Funding: No grant funding was obtained or utilized for the completion of this study.

Conflict of interest: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to this study.

Ethical Approval: All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Acknowledgment: I would like to thank Dr. Paul Sudnik and Prof. Dr. Bujar Pira for their valuable support, professional guidance, and constructive feedback on improving the quality of this paper.

Equally important I would like to thank the Senior Management of the Construction Company, which was selected as a case study, as well as their customers who have participated in this research, for showing their genuine interest and enthusiasm for the topic.

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