

Research on the Choice of International Competitive Strategy of Start-up Education Consulting Companies under the Background of New Media

Kaidi Yu

UA92 Business School, Lancaster University, Manchester, M3 5FS, UK

ABSTRACT

We will take this case study to discuss how a Chinese education start-up company expands and what new media has to do. It looks at how social media, online marketing and internet services have influenced the ability of these businesses to distinguish themselves and to face the obstacles in foreign markets. The research highlights the importance of 'local' solutions, cultural adaptation and platform preferences through the case studies of the three companies. The study highlights region-specific strategies, cultural adaptation and platform preferences with the case studies of three companies: VIPKid, iTutorGroup and New Oriental. Successful internationalization is based on adaptive marketing, personalized engagement and localization efforts using platforms such as WeChat, Douyin (TikTok), LinkedIn and Facebook, the findings reveal. Recommendations for other start-ups seeking to expand to other parts of the world have been made and the need to continuously develop digital strategy to stay competitive has been observed.

KEYWORDS

International Strategies; Chinese Start-ups; Education Consulting; New Media Platforms; Digital Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of digital technologies and new media platforms, the effects have emerged in the education consulting sector as well. Internationally expanding Chinese start-up education consulting firms have to deal with the highly competitive and digitalized world market. New media (social media, digital marketing tools and online education) have become a major part of their competitive strategies. These companies are seeking to enter markets such as North America, Europe and Southeast Asia, and to achieve growth and success in markets that are not understood in depth, the effective usage of new media is critical [1, 2].

In recent years, the trend of China's education consulting industry has grown rapidly, reflecting the increasing demand for global education in China over the past decade. Numerous new companies have been established that provide study abroad advice, foreign language instruction, and internet learning, especially for foreign students. China's youth have been especially active in the platforms that link them to opportunities overseas [3]. But these businesses must contend with strong competition from local and foreign businesses. Moreover, the digital environment constantly changes, making their strategies unpredictable; they need to constantly adapt their marketing, customer engagement, and content delivery strategies [4].

New media offers start-up companies a more cost-effective way of increasing their marketing reach and visibility and connecting with customers on an international level. Companies can leverage

platform tools such as WeChat, Weibo and Douyin (TikTok) to directly reach audiences around the world and boost brand visibility and service promotion. Moreover, new media promotes interactive and personalized communication that plays a role in building trust and relationship for Chinese start-ups in foreign markets [5]. But using new media poses problems, including dealing with cultural differences, local education systems, regulatory needs, and regional technology preferences, and gaining a competitive advantage in the global marketplace [1].

This case study explores how Chinese education consulting start-ups overcome these challenges by strategically using new media. The study will draw on the methodologies of these three major start-ups in industry as they expand internationally, using digital platforms, to provide in-depth insights into how these companies do this. The study will be used to identify and discuss strategic decisions that contribute to the success of the company in the foreign market, as well as recommend the same for other start-ups aiming to expand internationally, based on the analysis of their business reports, websites and social media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. International Competitive Strategy in the Education Consulting Industry

International competitive strategy is the process companies follow to gain a competitive advantage in the international market. When a Chinese start-up education consulting company enters foreign markets, they may need to adjust to the needs of the local market and showcase their advantages. Porter's Generic Strategies (1985) seem to suggest that companies can gain competitive advantage by choosing one of three strategies: cost leadership, differentiation or focus [6]. In the education consultancy sector, one differentiates oneself from others by providing specialized services such as developing and providing language courses, preparing for tests or offering customized guidance on post-secondary course abroad. A significant innovation strategy that many companies in this sector are adopting is service delivery, especially online.

The blossoming of online learning has had a profound impact on international education consulting strategies. Online learning has had a big impact on international education consulting strategies. As more and more people are concerned about flexible education, particularly in developed nations, Chinese companies have been able to expand their brand to the world market by utilizing the digital means. In recent years, the online education platform models such as VIPKid and iTutorGroup have emerged to provide one-to-one tutoring services through innovative new media technology that has established platform systems for service providers that can be accessed by global customers. The success of such companies highlights the importance of synchronizing competitive strategies with the changing technological trends.

2.2. The Role of New Media in International Business Strategy

New media has changed the way businesses reach out to consumers around the world. Educational Consulting companies can use platforms like WeChat, Weibo, Douyin (TikTok), LinkedIn, and Facebook to access prospective clients across the border in a unique way. They have proven to be successful at raising brand awareness, engagement, and trust, particularly in other countries [1, 7]. Social media is no longer just a communication channel; it's an asset to build brand loyalty and it's a source of business.

Social media sites have proven to be very useful to the Chinese education consulting firms. For instance, we can use WeChat to communicate with students and parents both in China and globally and get them information on study abroad and tutoring services. Likewise, Douyin (TikTok) enables companies to produce captivating short video content that resonates with younger viewers who are fascinated with international study. According to Liu and Zhang (2023) [8], Chinese companies can

build credibility and trust with audiences on platforms like TikTok, which is key if they are planning to go global.

2.3. The Challenges of Expanding Internationally for Chinese Education Consulting Firms

China's education start-up consulting firms are still grappling with strong obstacles to global expansion, even though new media provides them with many opportunities. A primary challenge is tailoring marketing messages and services to the local context and preferences of the consumers, as well as local educational systems and cultural norms. Chinese companies, for instance, may not be as well received in Western markets as consumers are suspicious of foreign education providers [9]. Further, the language aspects and the various laws and regulations affecting educational services abroad can further complicate the process of going international. Although localization is primarily about translation into other languages, localization strategies are important as emphasized by Gao & Yu (2021) [10]. Successful international companies usually customize their products to match local learning objectives; their marketing materials reflect local values and preferences; and their products are culturally relevant. In the face of the challenge of localization, many Chinese companies will participate in cooperation with the local partners in the target countries to facilitate market entry.

2.4. Recent Trends in New Media and Education Consulting

New technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual reality (VR), and Augmented reality (AR) are revolutionizing global competitive approaches in the education consulting field. AI tools are now being used by numerous companies to develop personalized learning experiences for foreign students [11]. The technologies supplement the companies' services, so the firm can offer more customized and interactive services, which are becoming more attractive in foreign markets where students are looking for high quality and flexible educational solutions. The COVID-19 pandemic also speeded up the transition to online learning, emphasizing the key position of new media in education consulting. Due to the pandemic, education companies had to adjust their approaches and techniques quickly, and use digital platforms to communicate with their clients from all over the world [12]. Since then, this transition has changed the education consulting landscape and firms are increasingly turning to new media as their marketing tools and then using them as the means for service delivery as well.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of this research is qualitative analysis and secondary data sources are used to analyze the international competitive methods of Chinese education consulting start-up companies. The main method is to study the company's reports, public information from the company's websites, and social media. Secondary data analysis offers an effective and convenient approach for analyzing data gathered by firms' strategic decisions that do not involve primary data collection, like interviews or surveys.

3.1. Research Design

This research will rely on secondary data from several publicly available sources such as company reports, websites, social media and other digital content. Some key secondary data sources are the Company Reports that crucial for comprehending the strategy and performance of education consultancies. Reports like the annual ones, press releases and financial statements offer information about market performance, the clientele and international strategies. These reports are made on websites of companies such as New Oriental and TAL Education Group [13, 14].

It would be beneficial to have some idea about what the official website of the chosen start-up education consulting firms offers, their target groups and international outreach. The sites contain information that is useful about the companies' objectives and plans. The website of VIPKid for instance is a good example of how the company aims for the worldwide markets, including North American students, and teaches them online.

Social media platforms, such as WeChat, Weibo, Douyin (TikTok), LinkedIn, Facebook and twitter, will be examined to discover the way firms are utilising social media to market and engage with their audience. These are platforms which are typically used to launch marketing campaigns and engage with global audiences. The social media campaign of iTutorGroup, with WeChat, where online English tutoring services are promoted, will serve as an example in this study. Other information available from online news articles, third-party reports, blog posts and customer reviews will be used to obtain a wider perspective on the companies' international strategies and market trends. These sources will give a more detailed picture on competitive position of the firms and industry trends. These secondary data sources will play an important role in the evaluation of the international strategies of Chinese education consulting companies. Table 1 shows an overview of the secondary sources of data used in this methodology.

Table 1. Overview of Secondary Data Sources in Methodology

Data Source	Type of Data	Purpose of Use	Platform Examples
Company Reports	Financial & Operational	To understand company performance and strategy	VIPKid , iTutorGroup, New Oriental (Annual Reports, Business Insights)
Company Websites	Marketing, Services	To analyze service offerings, pricing models, and customer engagement	VIPKid 's website, iTutorGroup's landing page, New Oriental's global site
Social Media Posts	Marketing Campaigns	To understand brand positioning, customer engagement, and outreach	WeChat, Weibo, Douyin (TikTok), LinkedIn, Facebook
Public News Articles	Industry Trends	To identify external factors affecting competition and market dynamics	Articles from leading publications like The New York Times, The Financial Times, etc.
Industry Reports	Market Trends & Insights	To compare performance across competitors and sectors	McKinsey, PwC Reports, Chinese Education Industry Reports

3.2. Selection of Companies

This case study will concentrate on three education start-up companies in China, which are successfully expanding overseas. The companies chosen for this study are well-known for their products and services, which include education consulting, online courses or tutoring for foreign students. As an example, VIPKid has even expanded its online English teaching programs to North America. The companies also offer publicly available data such as annual reports, social media posts and marketing plans that can be analyzed. For example, iTutorGroup provides information about its overseas operations and is active in the international WeChat and LinkedIn platform. In addition, the chosen businesses are from various competitive strategies (cost leadership or differentiation). While iTutorGroup is addressing more general markets with scalable solutions, VIPKid stands out for tutoring one student at a time – and on-demand in English.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

Secondary data sources will be analyzed on a structured basis with an attempt to look out for patterns and strategic inputs from secondary sources. It will begin through analyzing the reports of business and the important strategies to develop internationalization, such as competitive advantages, positioning the markets and utilizing the new media. For instance, the annual report of New Oriental shows its international expansion strategy [13]. After that, company's websites and social media profiles will be assessed to assess promotional content, branding messages and engagement strategies. Businesses will be discussed in terms of the content and social media marketing strategies that they are employing. Likes/comments will be assessed and analyzed to show how companies are interacting with their audience internationally, including on a campaign like WeChat [15].

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section starts the discussion about the international competitive tactics of Chinese education consulting companies, particularly for the new media platform. The results of the three selected companies' analysis of their company reports, websites as well as social media content offer insights into the way these companies have used new media tools to gain a presence in the international arena. The analysis details the key trends, issues and practices to successfully expand internationally via digital platforms through thorough discussion.

4.1. Strategic Use of New Media for International Expansion

New media (especially social media and digital marketing) is one of the most important factors affecting the international strategies of Chinese education consulting companies. The three companies selected: VIPKid, iTutorGroup and New Oriental are found to use new media for different strategic purposes, such as brand visibility, customer engagement and market penetration in overseas markets. Table 2 is a summary of the international strategy and use of digital media for each Chinese education consulting firm selected, allowing for a comparison between each of the companies.

Table 2. Overview of New Media Strategies for Selected Companies

Data Source	Type of Data	Purpose of Use	Platform Examples
VIPKid	North America (USA, Canada)	WeChat, Weibo, Douyin (TikTok), Facebook	Social media marketing, influencer collaborations, video content
iTutorGroup	Southeast Asia, North America	LinkedIn, WeChat, Facebook, Instagram	Content marketing, employee branding, direct customer engagement
New Oriental	Global (focus on students from the US and Europe)	Weibo, Facebook, LinkedIn, Zoom	Webinars, information sessions, brand awareness campaigns

In North America, VIPKid uses social media platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin (TikTok) as integral components of their marketing efforts. The company's social media marketing efforts are directed toward parents and kids in the United States and Canada and provide content that showcases the advantages of custom-made online English tutoring. With short-form video content, Douyin (TikTok) has proved successful in reaching younger, tech-savvy people and has been effective in tutoring. This is in line with the research conducted by Li and Xu (2021) that pointed out the new media platforms give firms the opportunity to communicate with their foreign customers in a customized way [1].

WeChat and LinkedIn are not only platforms for iTutorGroup to promote its language learning services online globally but also its destination to reach out to the audience in Southeast Asia and the

U.S. It has successful reviews by international clients, quotes for free trials, and job offers to online teachers, engaging customers and attracting people to work there. Furthermore, WeChat is employed to connect directly with Chinese clients, allowing the domestic business to market and reach overseas customers. According to Sun and Zhang 2023 such digital measures can help Chinese companies overcome geographical and financial limitations, leading to improved international customer engagement [4].

New Oriental is one of China's biggest education consulting companies and uses a variety of strategies such as conventional online advertising, email marketing and content on social media sites such as Weibo, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The company also conducts free Webinars and online information sessions to attract foreign students who want to study abroad. The sessions, which are widely shared on social media platforms, are effective in driving organic traffic, building trust, and positioning New Oriental as a leader in the education consulting sector. According to Zhang and Liu (2023), this trend of webinars and live-streamed events has grown mainstream in the industry, providing companies with an interactive and engaging way to connect with prospective buyers [3]. Below figure. The distribution of social media platforms used by Chinese Education Consulting Firms (VIPKid, iTutorGroup, New Oriental) is shown in Figure 2.

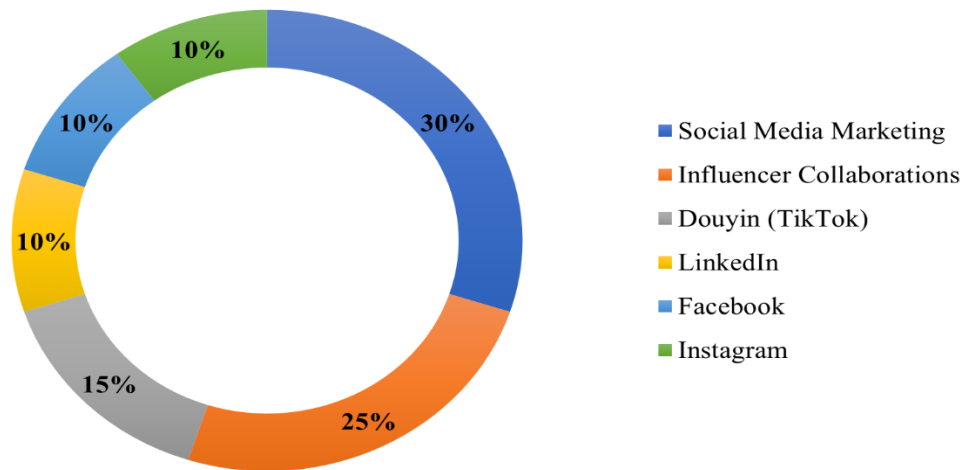


Figure 2. Distribution of Social Media Platforms

WeChat is the leader with 30% as all three companies use it to reach Chinese-speaking customers, especially in North America and in Southeast Asia. Weibo accounts for 25% and is primarily targeted to improve the brand presence in North America and Europe by the two companies: VIPKid and New Oriental. Douyin (TikTok) is one of the most important platforms for VIPKid to reach younger North American users by leveraging influencers and video content, with 20% penetration. New Oriental's primary focus for advertisement and information campaigns is through Facebook, with 15% of its users. Finally, Instagram accounts for 10%, and iTutorGroup is working on that to that channel to capture younger market segments in North America and Southeast Asia.

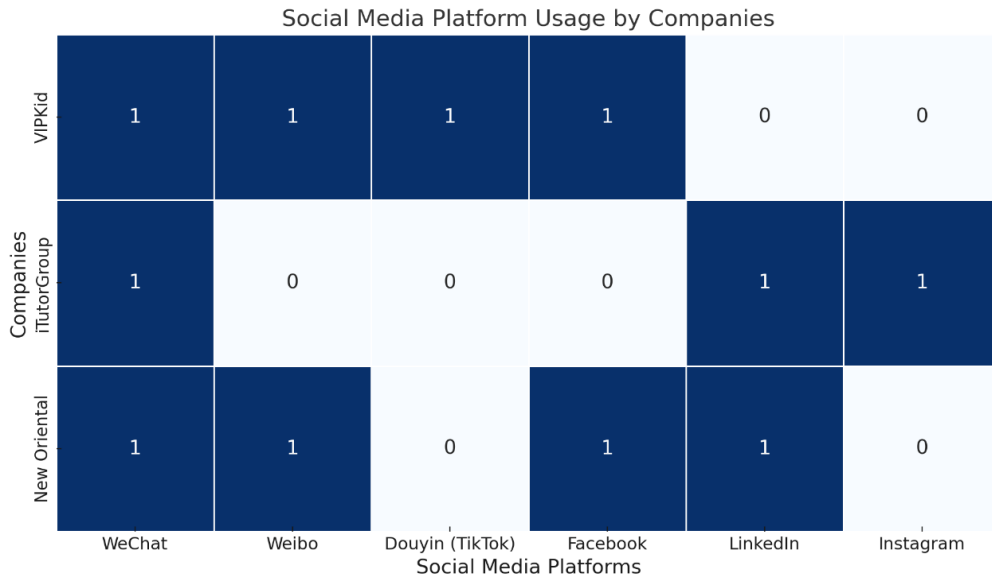


Figure 3. Social Media Platform Usage by Companies

As displayed in the above Figure 3, a heat map indicated the social media platforms of VIPKid, iTutorGroup, and New Oriental, with the "1" representing whether the platform is used or not. Color intensity indicates usage and annotations provide a clear data for interpretation. VIPKid prioritizes Douyin (TikTok), WeChat (for video) and Weibo, Facebook (for brand visibility), which are the platforms used to reach the young audience in North America, with a smaller focus on Douyin and WeChat. For client and employee engagement within North America and Southeast Asia, iTutorGroup uses LinkedIn as the main platform with complimentary WeChat and Instagram. New Oriental targets Europe and North America with its Facebook and Weibo ads, meanwhile Zoom is used for online webinar events to reach the global audience.

The following Pie Chart (Figure 4) can be used to visualize the marketing orientation of these companies in their internationalization process. The biggest market share is taken by North America (40%), followed by VIPKid and iTutorGroup, which focus on younger audiences, particularly children and parents. Southeast Asia is at 30%, and WeChat and LinkedIn are iTutorGroup's choice for this region. Twenty percent is in Europe, and New Oriental is trying to draw students to their study abroad program. Last, but by no means least, 10% of resources go to the global marketing, and New Oriental markets students across the globe through webinars and information sessions.

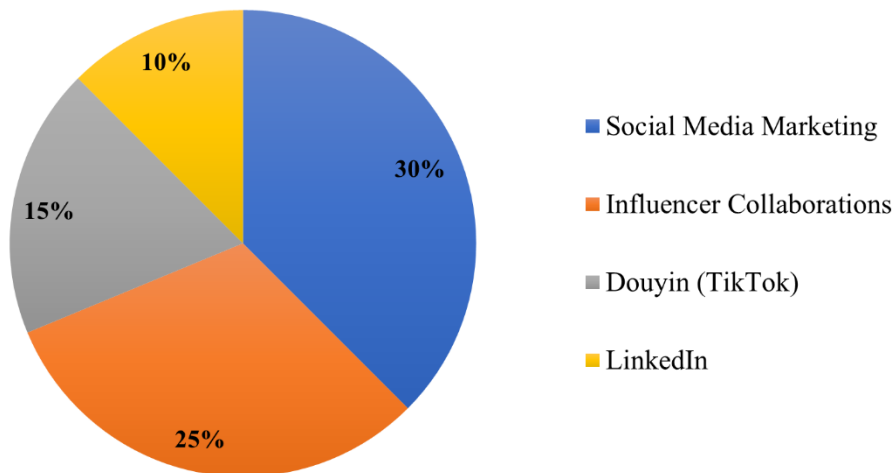


Figure 4. Marketing Focus of Chinese Education Consulting Companies

4.2. Cultural and Regional Adaptation Challenges

The Chinese education consulting market is becoming more competitive as companies aim to cross borders to grow in the global market, facing cultural and regional obstacles along the way. Each platform has different audiences in separate geographical regions and preferences for content that is tailored to fit those regions is essential for success. New media brings many opportunities, but it still is difficult to adjust the marketing strategies to be compatible with the cultural and technological preferences of international markets. For instance, in North America, Douyin, or TikTok, is a good channel for reaching the audience, but in Europe, Facebook and Instagram are more popular. This is in line with Wang and He's (2022) recommendation to tailor strategies according to regional preferences [2]. Likewise, iTutorGroup has faced issues in Southeast Asia due to the social media use in the region being different from North America. The company is also dependent on a messaging app like WeChat, which is widely used in China, but not necessarily in other nations such as Indonesia and Thailand, where Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp reign supreme. Consequently, the digital format of iTutorGroup needs to be tailored to catch up with local preference and technologies.

4.3. Competitive Advantage and Differentiation

New media platforms are an urgent need for Chinese education consulting companies to be competitive in the international market. VIPKid adopts WeChat and Douyin (TikTok) to build a leader in one-to-one teaching of English. VIPKid has differentiated itself in North America by emphasizing customization and by taking advantage of the user-generated content.

The iTutorGroup has the advantage of providing more comprehensive courses, such as business language training, and with its unique teaching model, matching students with the appropriate teachers. Personalized approach and high levels of social media interaction enable the business to reach specific foreign markets. According to Xu and Gao (2024), such differentiation strategies are key to building a competitive edge in education consulting, where trust and personal relationships are vital for customer loyalty [5].

4.4. Effectiveness of Social Media Engagement Metrics

One of the most important insights gained from social media data is the ability to drive successful international marketing strategies using engagement metrics. VIPKid has more engagement on platforms such as Douyin (TikTok) and Weibo, where students' success stories create massive organic traffic. Such metrics can make a significant contribution to international brand awareness and establishing trust, which are critical to winning international customers [3]. Not only does social media engagement serve as a traffic-generating tool, it also enhances conversion rate as well, with authentic and user generated content, potential customers are more likely to convert to customers. Also, New Oriental has high levels of engagement on Facebook, particularly with posts sharing information on scholarships and educational opportunities, that can drive engagement with international students. The interactions can draw attention to possible customers that can help with the business' growth around the world. Social media indicators are thus crucial to measure the effectiveness of international marketing.

5. CONCLUSION

This research offers an insightful view of the pivotal role of new media platforms in China's education consulting start-ups in internationalization practice. These companies have taken their enterprises "on the road" with social media, digital marketing and the internet to stand out from the crowd and go global. Despite these, barriers to be overcome are culture, platform selection and competition. These

businesses will need to be flexible and know how to use local platforms to help them be competitive and must provide services that are different from their foreign rivals.

The study is important to the Chinese Education Consulting industry in case they wish to go global. It focuses on the importance of regional marketing, which is to adapt the marketing strategy in accordance with the marketing habits of the region and the culture. Firms can differentiate themselves through customized engagement and providing unique teaching services. Besides, using platforms such as TikTok for the younger generation or LinkedIn for professional networks can help build a company's presence in new markets. This research is limited, however. It is a snapshot study of three companies and may not be representative of the industry as a whole. The results are based on public information and do not necessarily reflect the internal strategies or market changes. Conclusions are also limited in scope due to the regional focus. More research is needed with other companies and regions to gain a better understanding of other education consulting strategies around the world.

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