

# Teaching MBA and EMBA Students in Asia: Using Case Method and Online Education Software for Strategic Management

## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** MBA and EMBA students in higher power distance countries such as Taiwan used to listening lectures, not to express their opinions and discuss issues at classes openly. We used case method and online education software for teaching David's (2015) Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework at the course of Strategic Management. MBA and EMBA students in Taiwan were pleased to submit their opinions by the on-line software; therefore, teachers can lead them to solve problems by discussing cases.

**Study design:** We used case method and online educational software to teach Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework for MBA and EMBA students in a university in Taiwan.

**Place and Duration of Study:** Studies carried out at one university in Taiwan between 2016 and 2017.

**Methodology:** Our sample came from around 40 MBA and EMBA students attended Strategic Management courses in a university in Taiwan.

**Results:** At the end of the courses, MBA and EMBA students can use the David's Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework in other industry such as tourism and higher education industries.

**Conclusion:** Teaching in higher power distance countries are quite difficult to use case method since most students has been trained to listen teachers' lectures from primary schools. Although some students would be asked to answer questions, but most of students in class felt it's not their business. Combining case method and online education software may allow all students in class submit their opinions and listen to other's opinions. We recommend teachers in Asian countries with high power distance and low individualism, such as China, Japan and Korea use this teaching method.

*Keywords: Case Method, Online Education Software, Power Distance, Individualism, Strategic Management*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Case method, online education software, and students in higher power distance countries

The aims of this proposal are to design, practice, and evaluate a group of comparative strategies for one of the leading mobile companies in the world: Xiaomi. In order to achieve the teaching goal, we use case method, Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework (David, 2015) [1], and online education software: ZUVIO [2].

We taught Strategic Management at a university in Taiwan. Most of my students are Taiwanese; others came from Southeast Asia. Case Method is quite new for most of the MBA and EMBA students in Taiwan. For students in higher power distance countries, such as Taiwan, Japan, China, and South Korea, they are hesitated to raise their hands and speak out their opinions openly. In the end, a course trying to use case method may become another lecture course. These students did have opinions but did not want to speak out openly.

To solve this problem, we introduce online education software called: ZUVIO. It is quite popular for universities to use this teaching assistant in Taiwan. There are nine matrixes in David's model: (1) The External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix, (2) The Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix, (3) The Competitive Profile Matrix (CPM), (4) The Threats-Opportunities-Weakness-Strengths (TOWS) Matrix, (5) The Strategic Position and Action Evaluation (SPACE) Matrix, (6) The BCG Matrix, (7) The Internal-External (IE) Matrix, (8) The Grand Strategy Matrix (GSM), and (9) The Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) [3].

In our MBA and EMBA courses of Strategic Management in Taiwan, we utilized a case “Xiaomi Inc.” to practice strategic matrixes developed by David. Before using ZUVIO, we used to present lectures and asked MBA and EMBA students to answer questions by writing on papers. It took us more than two days to mark and give comments for each answer sheet for MBA and EMBA students in Taiwan. After making use of case method, we used one hour at class to introduce one matrix briefly and two hours to practice this matrix by online education software to exercise the case of Xiaomi. Eventually, it took nine weeks to finish David’s nine matrixes [4].

Traditionally, MBA and EMBA students have to preview cases before lectures and teachers asked questions to inspire these students in classrooms. Most of the time, only few students would have chances to answer questions the classrooms. In a society with higher power distance, students have been trained to listen to teachers’ lectures, not students’ opinions. Using online education system may deal with this problem. Sometime, we would ask one student a question, then use ZUVIO to ensure whether classmates were listening or not. After three or four weeks, students knew they had to pay attentions as someone answering questions.

Teaching in higher power distance countries are quite difficult to use case method since most students has been trained to listen teachers’ lectures from primary schools. Although some students would be asked to answer questions, but most of students in class felt it’s not their business. Combining case method, David’s model, and online education software may allow all students in class submit their opinions and listen to other’s opinions. Moreover, teachers do not have to mark answer sheets after class and could give students feedback in class.

David’s Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework is briefly introduced as followings: First, the External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix; An EFE Matrix permits strategists to review and calculate outside impact factors in terms of political, governmental, legal, cultural, demographic, economic, social, environmental, technological, and competitive information. Second, the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix; An IFE Matrix sums up and appraises the main strengths and weaknesses in the functional areas of a firm such as marketing, finance, operation, R&D and so on. Moreover, The IFE Matrix also offers a foundation for identifying and evaluating relationships among those areas. Intuitive judgments are required in assembling an IFE Matrix. Third, the Competitive Profile Matrix (CPM); The CPM may identify a company’s key rivals. Identifying Critical success factors is the most important process in constructing the CPM.

Forth, the Threats-Opportunities-Weakness-Strengths (SWOT) Matrix; The TOWS Matrix is an imperative matching implement that assists managers construct four types of strategies: SO (strengths-opportunities), WO (weaknesses-opportunities), ST (strengths-threats), and WT (weakness-threats) strategies. First, SO strategies exercise as firm’s inside strengths to make the most of external opportunities. Second, WO strategies intend at improving internal weakness by making use of external opportunities. Third, ST strategies exercise a firm’s strengths to keep away from or decrease the impact of outer threats. Finally, WT strategies are self-protective tactics directed at reducing inner weakness and avoiding outer threats. Fifth, the Strategic Position and Action Evaluation (SPACE) Matrix; The SPACE Matrix with four-quadrant framework points out whether aggressive, conservative, defensive, or competitive strategies are most suitable for given company. The axes of the SPACE Matrix stand for two internal dimensions (FS: financial strength, and CA: competitive advantage) and two external dimensions (ES: environment stability, and IS: industry strength). These four factors are perhaps the most imperative determinants of a firm’s strategic position on the whole. Xiaomi is in the aggressive quadrant, which can use backward, forward, horizontal integration; market penetration, market development, product development; and related diversification, unrelated diversification.

Sixth, BCG Matrix; The main benefits of the BCG Matrix are that it draws attentions to the cash flow, investment qualities, and needs of a firm’s a mixture of divisions. First, question marks, when a division falls into the quadrant I may have a low relative market share position and fights in a high-growth industry. Second, stars, quadrant II firm signify the firm’s best long-run opportunities for growth and prosperity. Third, cash cows, a division positioned in quadrant III may have a high comparative market share position with competing in a low-growth industry. Finally, quadrant IV divisions of the firms may have a low comparative market share position with competing in a slow- or no-market-growth industry. In the end, firms should try hard to accomplish a portfolio of divisions that are Stars and cash cows. Due to the complex to obtain related quantitative data, we use Delphi Method to locate each division into suitable quadrant. Seventh, the Internal-External (IE) Matrix; The IE Matrix positions a firm’s a range of divisions in a nine-cell exhibit. The Matrix engages plotting divisions in a diagram. This Matrix requires more information about the divisions than the BCG Matrix. The IE Matrix is based on two major dimensions: the IFE total weighted scores (x-axis) and the EFE total weighted scores (y-axis). The IE Matrix can be divided into three main regions that have dissimilar insinuations. First, the advice for divisions that fall into cells I, II, or IV can be explained as grow and build: intensive or integrative strategies are recommended. Second, divisions that fall into cells III, V, or VII can be explained as hold and maintain: market penetration and product development are recommended. Third, common advices for divisions that fall into cells VI, VIII, or IX are harvest or divest: retrenchment and divestiture are recommended. Since it is difficult to obtain related quantitative data, we use Delphi Method to locate each division into proper quadrant.

Eighth, the Grand Strategy Matrix (GSM); The GSM has turned into a admired instrument for preparing alternative strategies. All firms can be positioned in one of the GSM's four quadrants. This Matrix is based on two evaluative dimensions: competitive position (x-axis) and market growth (y-axis). Any market (industry) whose annual growth in sales exceeds 5 percent can be viewed to have rapid growth. Firms located in Quadrant I of the GSM are in an outstanding position. Suitable strategies for these firms are concentration on current markets or products, integrations and related diversification. Firms positioned in Quadrant II need to appraise their current approach to the marketplace critically. Since these firms are in a rapid-market growth industry, intensive strategies may be good choices for these firms. However, if these firms are short of competitive advantages, then horizontal integration is often an attractive selection. Quadrant III organizations compete in slow-growth industries with weak competitive positions. These firms must make some radical change quickly to keep away from further decline or the possibility of liquidation. Wide-ranging cost and asset reduction (retrenchment) should be chased at the first place. A substitute strategy is to move resources away from the present business into dissimilar areas (diversify). The final choices for Quadrant III businesses are divestiture or liquidation when they run out of steam. Finally, businesses in Quadrant IV have a strong competitive position with setting in slow-growth industry. These firms have the power to commence diversified projects into more promising growth industry (market) by using related or unrelated diversification strategies. Finally, the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM); The QSPM indicates which alternative strategies are best. The QSPM uses input from Stage 1 analyses and matching results from Stage 2 analyses to decide objectively among alternative strategies. This matrix is a tool that allows strategists to evaluate alternative strategies objectively, requires good intuitive judgment, based on previously identified external and internal critical success factors. The left column of a QSPM consists of information obtained directly from the EFE Matrix and IFE Matrix [5].

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Our sample came from around 40 MBA and EMBA students attended Strategic Management courses in a university in Taiwan. Users can download the APP of ZUVIO from Android Play or Apple Store. You may use PC to assess their website as well. We provided a ZUVIO user name and its passwords for assessing ZUVIO account. Users can try to exercise this educational software by entering the course of Strategic Planning at ZUVIO. For non-Chinese users, it is better to use Google translation since the website of ZUVIO is only in Chinese version, but the questions at the course of Strategic Planning are written in English. A mobile phone is needed for every instructor and student as using online education software. One laptop can help teachers to show students' opinions.

We used the case of Xiaomi, which falls in the field of Strategic Management of focusing on smart phone industry. To meet the teaching obligations for strategic planning in international markets, the present case shows smart phone markets worldwide specially spotlighting on China market – the biggest one in the world. The case company is Xiaomi: one of the fastest growing competitors in the smart phone industry. Smart phones markets worldwide and the development of Xiaomi were briefly introduced. This case study is designed to develop a profile of strategies for Xiaomi. By this case, MBA and EMBA students may learn how to use David's Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework in strategic planning at the course of Strategic Management [6].

Data in this case may be collected from open sources such as Apple, Gartner, Huawei, IDC, OPPO, TrendForce, Vivo, and Xiaomi [7-14]. Delphi Method can be employed in order to assess the weights and ratings in the nine matrixes. This case may be discussed with our suggestion of instructing the MBA and EMBA students to experience and learn the following reading materials: (1) The Business Vision and Mission, (2) The External Assessment, (3) The Internal Assessment, and (4) David's Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We suggest this case study may be introduced and analyzed with David's theoretical framework. The Case Learning Objectives are as following: first, to know the importance of strategic planning in international markets. Second, roles of top management team participate in the global strategic planning. Third, students can become skilled at the David's Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework (i.e. IFE, EFE, CPM, SWOT, SPACE, BCG, IE, GSM, QSPM) and apply in other industries. Fourth, students can develop a profile of strategic plan for Xiaomi. Moreover, EMBA students may have capability to develop strategic plan for their company.

Second, MBA and EMBA students can be offered suggested questions, which may be a written assignment or discuss by using on-line educational software. Please download the APP of ZUVIO or use PC to assess their website as well. Second, users can compare the different effects between on-line educational software and written sheets. Finally, we

suggest that these questions may be read before instructors start as a guide to the case, since it can lead the instructors understand familiar with this case and learning outcomes. In the end, most of MBA and EMBA students are familiar with using the framework. Moreover, EMBA students are aware of utilizing this framework in evaluating their company.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We used the case of Xiaomi, which falls in the field of Strategic Management of focusing on smart phone industry. To meet the teaching obligations for strategic planning in international markets, the present case shows smart phone markets worldwide specially spotlighting on China market – the biggest one in the world. The case company is Xiaomi: one of the fastest growing competitors in the smart phone industry. Smart phones markets worldwide and the development of Xiaomi were briefly introduced. This case study is designed to develop a profile of strategies for Xiaomi. By this case, MBA and EMBA students may learn how to use David's Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework in strategic planning at the course of Strategic Management. The results were excellent; MBA and EMBA students can use the David's Strategy-Formulation Analytical Framework in other industry such as tourism and higher education industries. We believe the teaching method can be used in other high power distance and low individualism countries, such as China, Japan and Korea.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist. The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

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