

Venture Capital-Style Fission Entrepreneurship in Large Enterprises from the Perspective of Organizational Ambidexterity: A Multiple-Case Study

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Abstract: Against the ongoing reshaping of market patterns and industry divides driven by digital advancements, major corporations are facing growing urgency to overhaul their existing business frameworks. In response, some firms have established relatively autonomous entrepreneurial units, often referred to as internal ventures, through venture-capital-inspired mechanisms, including rigorous project selection criteria, equity-based incentive schemes, dedicated platform support, and market-oriented governance frameworks. This study refers to this practice as venture capital-style fission entrepreneurship. This phenomenon is already common among large domestic enterprises in China. Yet few have a clear grasp of its actual internal operation mode, nor do they fully recognize how it helps optimize corporate strategies and broaden the industrial business ecosystem. Drawing on organizational ambidexterity, this study adopts a multiple-case study design and grounded theory approach to examine four representative Chinese firms: Haier, Mengniu, Inspur, and Xiaomi. The findings show that, because of differences in resource endowments, organizational inertia, and external contextual pressures, VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises develops four fission orientations: behavioral triggering, knowledge evolution, resource reconfiguration, and ecosystem expansion. Under these orientations, firms configure mechanisms through organizational improvisation, composite learning, entrepreneurial bricolage, and ecosystem migration, thereby generating four corresponding fission capabilities: alertness-based response, knowledge transformation, resource reconfiguration, and network growth. These capabilities further give rise to four modes of VC-style fission entrepreneurship: rapid-response, learning-transformation, resource-reconfiguration, and ecosystem-expansion modes. The study further indicates that these four modes are not isolated. Rather, under the tension of organizational ambidexterity, they jointly constitute a dynamic evolutionary chain of “contextual driving-mechanism configuration-capability generation-value feedback.” By exploring the operation of VC-style fission entrepreneurship at the micro-process level, this study extends the explanatory boundary of organizational ambidexterity in the context of fission entrepreneurship and provides managerial implications for large enterprises seeking to systematically promote VC-style fission entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Venture capital-style fission entrepreneurship; Organizational ambidexterity; Multiple-case study; Grounded theory

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1. Introduction

With the continuing penetration of digital technologies, the reconfiguration of industrial boundaries, and the rapid iteration of consumer demand, the growth environment of large enterprises has changed substantially. On the one hand, large enterprises rely on long-term accumulation to build relatively complete resource systems, organizational structures, and business processes. These conditions support scale production, standardized management, and efficiency improvement in mature businesses. On the other hand, stable structures may also become organizational inertia, causing slow responses, lengthy decision chains, and insufficient innovation momentum when enterprises face new technologies, new markets, and new business models. Especially in the context of platform economies and intensified ecosystem competition, firm competition is no longer confined to a single product or business unit. It is increasingly reflected in the ability to identify new opportunities, incubate new businesses, reorganize resources, and coordinate ecosystem relationships.

Fission entrepreneurship is an important way for large enterprises to reduce organizational inertia and stimulate internal entrepreneurial activity. Existing studies usually define it as the process in which a new firm or a new business unit is formed from an existing organization. Fission entrepreneurship is different from ordinary entrepreneurship because the new venture does not usually start from nothing. The findings from previous research indicate that there are instances where fission organizations maintain ties with the parent organization with regard to knowledge, resource, social, and organizational processes. Such ties assist them in gaining access to resources, entering into markets, and gaining legitimacy. Chinese studies further point out that fission entrepreneurship is not only the separation of a new unit from the parent firm. It also involves the continuation of organizational genes, the recombination of resources, and value feedback between the parent firm and the fission venture. Therefore, when discussing VC-style fission entrepreneurship, this paper pays attention not only to the independence of the new venture, but also to how the parent firm continues to influence its development.

As the phenomenon matures, venture-capital-style fission entrepreneurship has emerged as a distinctive and increasingly salient variant. It is not the same as ordinary internal innovation, and it is not a complete spin-off from the parent firm. Instead, it is a form between the two, in which the new unit has some autonomy, may receive external capital, and still keeps governance connections with the parent firm. Instead, large enterprises draw on the logic of venture capital in opportunity identification, incubation, empowerment, governance, and exit. Through institutional arrangements such as equity incentives, independent accounting, platform resource support, and market-oriented constraints, they cultivate relatively independent entrepreneurial units within the parent organization or ecosystem. Compared with general internal entrepreneurship, VC-style fission entrepreneurship places greater emphasis on market-oriented governance, capitalized incentives, and risk sharing. Compared with general external entrepreneurship, it can inherit the parent firm's advantages in brand, technology, supply chain, channels, and platform resources. It therefore combines elements of corporate venture capital, internal entrepreneurship, and fission entrepreneurship.

The discussion of VC-style fission entrepreneurship can be traced to several related studies, although few of them use this exact term. The first category of studies is fission entrepreneurship research. Such research questions typically involve the origin of the venture, the people who founded it, the triggering event behind its creation, and the relationship maintained with the parent organization^[1-3]. Another aspect studied by researchers is why fission-based ventures outperform other firms. In the subsequent research, scholars advance one step further and inquire into the reasons for the differences among the results achieved by fission ventures.

Furthermore, these studies take into account the resource commitment of the parent firm, entrepreneurial context within the organization, entrepreneur's cognition and identity, and industry context within which the new venture operates ^[4-6]. Literature on corporate venture capital is also pertinent to this subject area. The research in corporate venture capital reveals that venture capital goes beyond being an early source of funding for start-ups. In other words, the impact of venture capital extends beyond its investments into newly formed companies. Through governance, resource linkage, value addition, and global business expansion, venture capital can have an effect on the post-entry growth performance of new ventures ^[7-9]. In addition, studies on digital platforms and ecosystems have begun to connect fission entrepreneurship with platform construction, ecosystem governance, and the parent firm's effort to maintain ecosystem leadership ^[10]. These studies help explain the resource conditions, governance arrangements, and external environment of VC-style fission entrepreneurship. However, they still pay limited attention to what happens after a fission unit emerges, especially how the parent firm organizes opportunity identification, resource support, governance control, and ecosystem connection during the development of the new unit.

What remains less clear is the internal process through which VC-style fission entrepreneurship is actually organized inside large enterprises. Existing fission entrepreneurship studies have provided rich discussions of concepts, types, characteristics, and outcomes, but they pay less attention to how a fission unit is triggered, supported, and gradually developed after it emerges from the parent firm. This issue is important because VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not simply a new project funded by the parent company. This means that the parent firm has to deal with several tensions at the same time. It needs to provide resources without reducing the autonomy of the entrepreneurial team. It also needs to use its existing capabilities while leaving space for new business exploration. At the same time, the newly formed fission unit has to be connected with the parent firm's platform and ecosystem relationships.

This is worsened by the digital economy. Digital platforms facilitate the ability of companies to link together users, technology, data, suppliers, and external organizations, but they also diminish the barriers and demarcation line that exist between the parent company and the fission companies. A fission unit generally begins as a small project that exists within the parent company, but with continued growth, it can gain independence to become a key node in the parent company's network ecosystem. However, although empirical studies of this phenomenon have been growing steadily, no study to date has systematically examined the process involved. VC-style fission entrepreneurship should therefore be studied not only as a mode of organizational structure, but also as a process through which major firms orchestrate opportunities, knowledge, resources, and ecosystems over time.

VC-based fission entrepreneurship can benefit from the concept of organizational ambidexterity because it always entails finding the proper mix between exploiting existing strengths and exploring future opportunities. The exploratory side is shown through the independence allowed for the fission entities since they must have freedom to evaluate new possibilities, markets, and business models. On the other hand, the exploitation side is demonstrated by the dependence on the resources, governance structures, and strategic guidance provided by the parent organization ^[11,12]. Thus, the VC-style fission is not simply a detachment from the parent entity. Within this fission, an entrepreneurial unit seeks to explore potential sources of growth, but at the same time, it remains linked to its parent firm. It draws upon the resources available with the parent firm and also utilizes some management practices from it. It requires inheriting certain competencies from its parent firm, while at the same time it is not being overly bound by the processes of the parent firm. Thus, organizational ambidexterity is

not just a theoretical framework that provides the basis for this research.

Following this line of reasoning, the current study seeks to examine two interrelated research questions, namely, what are the mechanisms that facilitate VC-style fission entrepreneurship at the micro level in large corporations, and how can these mechanisms account for the fission process through which the fission unit is established within the corporation, evolves, and eventually enters the ecosystem? To address these questions, a multiple case study methodology will be used. The following companies can be taken as good examples: They all show clear support from their parents to their fission units, but they have different dominant logics of fission. We first analyzed the case material, then made a comparison among those four companies. In the process of analyzing the case material, a reading and comparing process was conducted. Then, we made a summary of the key categories, and made a comparison of these four companies one by one.

2. Literature review

2.1. The connotation, features, and types of fission entrepreneurship

Fission entrepreneurship occurs when a new business organization or a relatively autonomous business division is created from the parent organization. The initial literature in the field often talked about spinoffs and spinouts as the means of explaining the creation of new business enterprises from incumbent firms^[13,14]. Unlike normal firms, most fission firms do not normally start out with total independence. Rather, fission firms may have ties with the firm from which they split off in terms of knowledge, technologies, people, social networks, and organizational processes, which may help them gain access to resources and legitimacy, among other things^[15,16].

Modern studies in China consider the ongoing effects of the parent organization more seriously, even after the fission process commences. Whereas in Western countries, the issue of spin-offs is usually associated with independence from the property rights standpoint, in Eastern Asia or China, the linkages between the parent and the newly formed organization do not cease after fission. The parent company may still exert its influence on the new venture via equity holdings, resource supply, business dealings, or strategy coordination^[17]. According to this perspective, fission entrepreneurship is not just about separating, but also about maintaining ties between the parent company and the fission venture. This can be seen from different perspectives such as technology transfer, people movement, network expansion, and opportunity recognition^[18].

Some key characteristics of fission entrepreneurship are as follows. First, fission enterprises tend to carry forward much knowledge and expertise acquired through experiences in the parent organization. This advantage makes them well positioned when compared to ventures born without support from their parent firms^[19]. Second, fission entrepreneurship is associated with resource reconfiguration. In this case, the resources from the parent firm do not just get transferred to the new venture. They must be arranged alongside other factors such as new teams, new technologies, new partnerships, or new business models^[17,20]. Thirdly, fission ventures have a higher probability of surviving the early stages of development because they may benefit from knowledge and other resources from the parent organization^[21,22]. It is these aspects that make fission entrepreneurship distinct from regular entrepreneurship.

Academics have also grouped fission entrepreneurship in several ways. Previous research has grouped fission entrepreneurship into academic, corporate, and entrepreneurial types based on the source of the fission process^[3]. From the perspective of actors and triggering events, fission entrepreneurship can also be divided into four types: opportunistic, necessitated, strategic restructuring, and incumbent-supported^[1]. Another stream of research categorizes entrepreneurship types according to the interaction between the parent company and the

fission company ^[2]. These categorizations enable us to better understand some of the key categories of fission entrepreneurship, although they continue to be oriented primarily toward typology rather than organizational characteristics of fission entrepreneurship within large enterprises. Nevertheless, based on the current scope of our research, these categorizations primarily clarify the “types of fission entrepreneurship” without shedding light on their organization in large enterprises using VC logic.

2.2. Concept and research progress of VC-style fission entrepreneurship

VC-style fission entrepreneurship can be understood as an organizational form that deeply integrates corporate venture capital with fission entrepreneurship. It refers to an organizational model in which large enterprises draw on venture capital mechanisms to incubate internal entrepreneurial teams, support independent operation, and empower them with platform resources, thereby realizing business innovation, industrial extension, and strategic synergy. Its core is not one-way resource provision by the parent firm, but the combination of entrepreneurial team agency, parent-firm resource advantages, and the professional governance logic of capital mechanisms through VC-like screening, incentives, governance, and exit arrangements.

Compared with general fission entrepreneurship, VC-style fission entrepreneurship places greater emphasis on parent-firm active design and platform empowerment. Parent firms not only allow fission units to operate independently, but also reduce entrepreneurial risks through funding, technological support, supply-chain coordination, brand endorsement, and market-oriented assessment. Compared with general corporate venture capital, VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not entirely an external investment activity, because fission units usually maintain stronger resource, strategic, and organizational links with the parent firm. Therefore, VC-style fission entrepreneurship is characterized by the coexistence of resource support, risk sharing, relative operational independence, and strategic synergy.

Although existing studies have not fully unified the concept of “VC-style fission entrepreneurship,” related research has revealed similar practices from different angles. Research on internal entrepreneurship in large enterprises suggests that parent firms can provide resource support and independent growth space for internal entrepreneurial teams through “fission-generating” and “creation-generating” paths ^[23]. Research on parent-initiated fission emphasizes that fission ventures need to form their own organizational routines while inheriting the parent firm’s advantageous routines ^[24]. Research on Haier-related fission entrepreneurship further indicates that the complementarity between parent-firm resource empowerment and entrepreneurial team agency helps achieve strategic synergy and value co-creation ^[25]. These studies suggest that VC-style fission entrepreneurship has a clear feature of “parent-firm empowerment-independent exploration-collaborative growth.”

In practice, VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not limited to one form. It may take the form of internal incubation, business spin-off, joint venture cooperation, or continued cooperation with former employees after they leave the parent firm. VC-style internal entrepreneurship emphasizes that the parent firm builds an internal entrepreneurial platform and encourages employees to incubate new businesses based on corporate resources. In this sense, VC-style fission entrepreneurship may appear in several forms. In a spin-off form, the parent firm separates a business unit or technical project with market potential and allows it to operate with greater independence. The use of equity, valuation, and market-based incentives helps release the initiative of the entrepreneurial team. In the joint-venture form, the parent firm does not rely only on internal teams. It works with external entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial teams, while venture capital helps provide funding, governance experience, and access to external resources. The departure-based form is another situation. In the departure-

based form, former employees are not simply regarded as leaving the parent firm. After leaving, they may still keep cooperation with the parent firm through equity, investment, or business relations. With the continuation of these relations, they may gradually become external partners in the parent firm's ecosystem. Over time, they may also become external partners in the parent firm's ecosystem. Therefore, VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not a single fixed model. In practice, large enterprises may use internal incubation, spin-off operation, joint development, or alumni cooperation in different ways. The specific form depends on the firm's resources, business scope, governance purpose, and the entrepreneurial opportunity it wants to develop.

2.3. Organizational ambidexterity and the micro-mechanisms of VC-style fission entrepreneurship

This study uses organizational ambidexterity as its theoretical starting point, mainly because VC-style fission entrepreneurship contains a persistent tension between using existing organizational advantages and creating space for new entrepreneurial action. On the one hand, fission units are expected to search for new markets, technologies, and business opportunities. This approach follows the logic of exploration. At the same time, these units are not entirely independent of the parent company. The very initial stages of their growth rely on the knowledge, routines, platforms, brands, and organizational structures built up by the parent company, thus following the logic of exploitation^[11]. In this sense, VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not simply an entrepreneurial activity outside the existing organization. It refers to the process through which big companies attempt to nurture new initiatives by taking advantage of their existing resources. This approach is consistent with the view that organizations require ambidexterity for both exploitation and exploration^[12].

However, the ambidexterity perspective only explains the basic tension behind VC-style fission entrepreneurship. It does not fully show how this process is actually activated and organized in specific firms. In the cases examined in this study, the parent firm does not merely provide a general background of support. It has to identify early market signals, judge whether an entrepreneurial opportunity is worth cultivating, mobilize suitable resources, and then connect the new unit with existing organizational systems or wider ecosystem relationships. Therefore, additional micro-mechanisms are needed to explain the concrete process through which fission entrepreneurship unfolds. At the early stage of fission entrepreneurship, firms usually face unclear demand and uncertain market signals. They cannot always wait until an opportunity has been fully proved. Organizational improvisation refers to the firm's ability to act before all conditions are clear, while entrepreneurial alertness refers to its judgment of which weak signals may become real opportunities. Together, they explain how unclear demand can first be translated into a trial project or an early entrepreneurial attempt^[26,27]. After the new business begins to develop, the issue is no longer only rapid response. Firms also need to use their existing knowledge while exploring new business areas. Organizational ambidexterity and composite learning are useful for explaining this learning process^[11,28]. In addition, fission units often cannot obtain all the resources they need from the beginning. In this process, entrepreneurial bricolage is mainly used to explain the resource problem of fission units. At the beginning, the fission unit usually cannot obtain all needed resources. Therefore, it has to use the resources already owned by the parent firm or available in the surrounding network, and then adjust these resources according to the needs of the new business^[26,29]. Ecosystem migration is used to explain the change of relationship boundary. With the development of the fission unit, it may no longer rely only on the original organizational relationship, but gradually build new connections with suppliers, users, platforms, and other partners^[30]. These behavioral, learning, resource, and interaction processes together

constitute the internal driving force through which fission entrepreneurship develops from opportunity identification to ecosystem formation. However, existing studies tend to discuss these mechanisms separately. Integrative analysis remains insufficient, especially regarding the theoretical model that reveals their internal interconnections.

2.4. Literature review summary

In summary, existing studies provide important theoretical foundations in fission entrepreneurship, VC-style fission entrepreneurship, organizational ambidexterity, organizational improvisation, entrepreneurial bricolage, and ecosystems. However, for the research question addressed in this study, further development is still needed. First, studies on fission entrepreneurship pay more attention to types, features, and performance, while the micro-operating processes of VC-style fission entrepreneurship remain underexplored. Second, although research on VC-style fission entrepreneurship has considered parent-firm resource empowerment, entrepreneurial team agency, and strategic synergy, it has not sufficiently revealed the interconnections among opportunity triggering, knowledge transformation, resource reconfiguration, and ecosystem expansion. Third, organizational ambidexterity can explain the tension between exploration and exploitation in large enterprises, but without being linked to specific micro-mechanisms, it remains insufficient for explaining how VC-style fission entrepreneurship actually operates.

Therefore, from the perspective of organizational ambidexterity, this study integrates the entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation, the composite learning mechanism driven by organizational ambidexterity, the resource aggregation mechanism driven by entrepreneurial bricolage, and the network growth mechanism driven by ecosystem migration into a unified framework. It aims to explain the dynamic process through which VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises moves from opportunity triggering to ecosystem expansion. Accordingly, this study seeks to explain how VC-style fission entrepreneurship achieves a dynamic balance between parent-firm resource constraints and entrepreneurial autonomous exploration, and further reveals the process mechanism from opportunity triggering, knowledge evolution, and resource reconfiguration to ecosystem expansion.

3. Research design

3.1. Research method

This study adopts a multiple-case research design because VC-style fission entrepreneurship is difficult to explain through a single event or a simple variable relationship. In the cases examined here, fission entrepreneurship is not only about whether a parent firm provides resources to a new venture. This includes aspects like identification of the opportunity by the parent company, achievement of autonomy by the entrepreneurial unit, recycling or recombination of current resources, and creation of linkages between the new business unit and its larger environment. These concepts have more of a bearing on process and context and hence are better explained using case studies. The adoption of multiple cases will provide a means to examine both similarities and differences between the organizations. The four companies studied here have similar characteristics of supporting and nurturing new ventures, but the triggering events for their fission processes are quite different from one another. Some cases are influenced by customer needs and market reaction, while others are influenced by technology transfer, recombination, or chain extension. Analysis of such cases

enables the researcher to avoid considering VC-style fission entrepreneurship as a single model. This allows for analyzing how various mechanisms come about under certain organizational and industry circumstances. That is why, when using a multi-case analysis, we will be able not only to analyze the characteristics of the four companies involved, but also to track the process of emergence and development of the phenomenon under study. This design is therefore consistent with the aim of this study, which is to explain the internal operation of VC-style fission entrepreneurship rather than simply classify its external forms.

In terms of analytical method, this study uses the procedural grounded theory proposed by Strauss and Corbin as its core research method. Procedural grounded theory emphasizes the extraction of concepts and categories from empirical materials through systematic open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, and then the construction of a theoretical model^[31]. Since VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises is highly contextual, processual, and mechanistically complex, relying solely on existing theoretical frameworks for deductive analysis may obscure the action logic and category relationships actually presented in the case materials. Therefore, this study does not predetermine specific mechanisms. Instead, it follows the coding procedures of procedural grounded theory on the basis of the theoretical sensitivity provided by organizational ambidexterity, conducting layered abstraction and constant comparison of case materials. Specifically, open coding is used to extract initial concepts and categories from the original materials; axial coding is used to reveal relationships among different categories and form main categories; and selective coding further identifies the core category and constructs a theoretical model that explains the process of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises. By combining multiple-case research with procedural grounded theory, this study retains contextual differences among different corporate practices while extracting common mechanisms with explanatory power through cross-case comparison.

3.2. Case selection

In this paper, Haier, Mengniu, Inspur, and Xiaomi are selected as the case firms. These four firms are selected for two reasons. First, their practices are closely related to the research topic. Second, they differ in organizational background, so they can be used for comparison across cases. All four firms are large enterprises with visible practices related to internal entrepreneurship, new business incubation, platform-based support, or ecosystem expansion. These practices make them suitable for examining how VC-style fission entrepreneurship is organized within established firms.

In addition, however, the four cases are different. For instance, the practice of Haier is related to user innovation through the Rendanheyi model. Mengniu can be said to be an example of a company where channel change, venture capital investment, and industry collaboration are more important than anything else. Inspur is more closely associated with technological repurposing and cloud computing. In comparison, Xiaomi is emblematic of the ecosystem-chain approach for investing and expanding through platforms within the realms of consumer electronics and AIoT. The above distinctions allow one to examine how fission entrepreneurship evolves under differing resource endowments, structures, and industries.

The other reason for choosing these companies is the availability of data. All four firms have fairly substantial data available online, including corporate websites, annual reports, social responsibility reports, articles on company accounts, press reports, industry reports, and relevant scholarly works. These data will help validate events and support future coding. For this reason, the four cases are suitable for this study in terms of topic relevance, case comparison, industry difference, and data availability. The basic information of the case firms is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Basic information of case firms

Case Firm	Industry	Representative Practices
Haier	Household appliance industry	Rendanheyi model, maker platform, chain-group organization, scenario-based innovation
Mengniu	Dairy industry	Venture capital introduction, cloud commerce platform, industry-university-research collaboration, internationalized business
Inspur	Information technology industry	Science and innovation platform, cloud computing, industrial internet, digital twin applications
Xiaomi	Consumer electronics industry	Ecosystem-chain investment, Mi Home platform, AIoT, Human-Car-Home ecosystem

3.3. Data collection and analysis

To examine how VC-style fission entrepreneurship operates in large enterprises, this study collected multiple types of data around the issue of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises. The data include corporate public materials, corporate websites and official account posts, annual reports, media reports, public interviews, and industry research reports. The study follows the principle of triangulation and uses multiple sources and forms of materials to cross-validate events and enhance the authenticity and interpretive appropriateness of the data. The data sources are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Data collection for case firms

Data Type	Collection Method	Data Source	Focus
Corporate public materials	Official websites, annual reports, social responsibility reports, official accounts	Public materials of Haier, Mengniu, Inspur, and Xiaomi	Strategic layout, organizational practices, entrepreneurial projects, platform ecosystem construction
Media and industry materials	Authoritative financial media, industry media, industry research reports	Public reports, industry reports, case reports	Fission entrepreneurship events, project evolution, market responses, industry background
Academic literature	CNKI, journal articles, case studies	Research on fission entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship, and platform ecosystems	Theoretical concepts, case supplements, mechanism explanation

3.3.1. Open coding

Following the data coding procedure of grounded theory, this study first conducted open coding on the case materials to obtain initial categories. It then conducted axial coding and selective coding based on these initial categories and relevant materials, and finally constructed a theoretical model. During open coding, the original materials were analyzed line by line, sentence by sentence, and paragraph by paragraph to identify relevant concepts. In this process, the study attempted to remain as close as possible to the original materials so that initial concepts could naturally emerge. For example, the material “the comment section became a wish pool for users, and some users proposed an all-in-one lazy washing machine. Soon afterward, Haier’s lazy washing machine was launched, with 88,000 units pre-sold in one week” was labeled as “user comments directly triggered product development,” conceptualized as “opportunity capture,” and then abstracted into the initial category “entrepreneurial opportunity alertness.” Through coding, 17 initial categories were obtained from the original materials. Part of the coding process is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Open coding (selected examples)

Case Material	Initial Label	Conceptual Code	Category
“The comment section became a wish pool for users. Some users proposed an all-in-one lazy washing machine. Soon afterward, Haier’s lazy washing machine was launched, with 88,000 units pre-sold in one week.” (Haier)	User comments directly triggered product development	Opportunity capture	Entrepreneurial opportunity alertness
“Research on alternative solutions to HFC refrigerants began ten years before policy requirements.” (Haier)	Technological alternative pre-research	Improvisational reuse and integration	Organizational improvisation
The Mengniu cloud commerce smart supply-chain system reduced raw milk allocation costs, and its digital experience empowered traditional channels to optimize full-chain efficiency, reflecting knowledge upgrading from exploration to exploitation. (Mengniu)	Digital experience drove traditional business upgrading	Ambidextrous experience empowering traditional business	Ambidextrous driving mechanism
Mengniu Cloud Commerce launched the high-end fresh milk brand “Daily Fresh Words”; independent accounting accelerated innovation, and high-end market experience fed back into traditional channels, forming knowledge transformation from exploration to exploitation. (Mengniu)	Innovation experience transformed into traditional business	Knowledge flow and transformation	Composite learning and knowledge integration
The “digital twin airport system” reused Inspur Cloud Sea three-dimensional modeling technology to improve airport operation and maintenance efficiency, representing effective use of modeling technology resources. (Inspur)	Digital twin airport modeling technology reuse	Reverse technological reuse and integration	Resource migration
Inspur Cloud Sea supported the China Tower distributed resource pool project by migrating one-cloud multi-core technology to adapt to heterogeneous computing resources, reflecting flexible bricolage of technological resources. (Inspur)	Cloud Sea one-cloud multi-core technology adaptation	Use of computing and data resources	Resource grafting
Xiaomi adopts a VC model of taking equity stakes without controlling ecosystem-chain firms, leaving the greatest benefits to teams while maintaining independence and binding them to the ecosystem through methodology output. (Xiaomi)	VC model preserves independence and binds the ecosystem	VC mechanism design	Network derivation
Fengmi Technology launched the Mi Home laser projection TV priced at RMB 9,999, and in 2023 cooperated with XGIMI to expand overseas markets, combining existing projection technology with overseas channels and promoting the upgrading of the fission ecosystem. (Xiaomi)	Integration of technology and channels for premium upgrading	Globalized fission	Network growth

3.3.2. Axial coding

On the basis of the initial categories extracted through open coding, this study further conducted axial coding to discover and establish potential logical relationships among initial categories and to summarize them into more general main categories. For example, entrepreneurial opportunity alertness, organizational improvisation, risk alertness and resilience, improvisational collaborative networks, supporting capability bases, and self-driven organizational mechanisms all focus on the “perception-response” loop formed by improvisational action and ambidextrous alertness (opportunity/risk), which achieves a dynamic balance between agile exploration and resilient defense. These categories were therefore summarized as the “entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation.” Through repeated comparison and clustering of initial categories, this study extracted four core main categories, as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Axial coding

Main Category	Initial Categories Included	Internal Relationship (Core Dynamic Logic)
Entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation	Entrepreneurial opportunity alertness; organizational improvisation; risk alertness and resilience; improvisational collaborative networks; supporting capability bases; self-driven organizational mechanisms	Improvisational action and ambidextrous alertness (opportunity/risk) form a “perception-response” loop, achieving a dynamic balance between agile exploration and resilient defense.
Composite learning mechanism driven by organizational ambidexterity	Ambidextrous driving mechanism; composite learning and knowledge integration; technological empowerment and support; innovation practice and outcome transformation; sustainable development and organizational effectiveness	Ambidextrous balance provides a framework for composite learning, while technological empowerment accelerates knowledge integration and transformation, forming an iterative “exploration-exploitation” upward spiral.
Resource aggregation mechanism driven by entrepreneurial bricolage	Resource migration; resource grafting; resource reconfiguration	The process follows a circular path of “migration (activating existing resources)-grafting (cross-boundary integration)-reconfiguration (systemic value addition),” enabling resources to move from fragmentation to systematization and achieve value upgrading.
Network growth mechanism driven by ecosystem migration	Network derivation; network integration; network growth; network solidification	The process follows a staged path of “derivation (initiation)-integration (coordination)-growth (expansion)-solidification (sedimentation),” completing the full-cycle evolution of ecosystem networks and forming a value loop.

3.3.3. Selective coding

Through continuous comparison and analysis of the four main categories, “entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation,” “composite learning mechanism driven by organizational ambidexterity,” “resource aggregation mechanism driven by entrepreneurial bricolage,” and “network growth mechanism driven by ecosystem migration”, this study extracted a core category that can integrate all categories: the “micro-mechanisms of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises.” The storyline around this core category can be stated as follows: the formation and evolution of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises depend on the synergistic effects of micro-mechanisms across four dimensions: organizational behavior, learning process, resource operation, and ecosystem interaction. These mechanisms follow an internal logic of “element activation-interaction coordination-value loop” and constitute an integrated theoretical model that explains how VC-style fission entrepreneurship emerges internally.

Based on the storyline developed through grounded theory analysis, this study constructs the micro-mechanism model of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises, as shown in **Figure 1**.

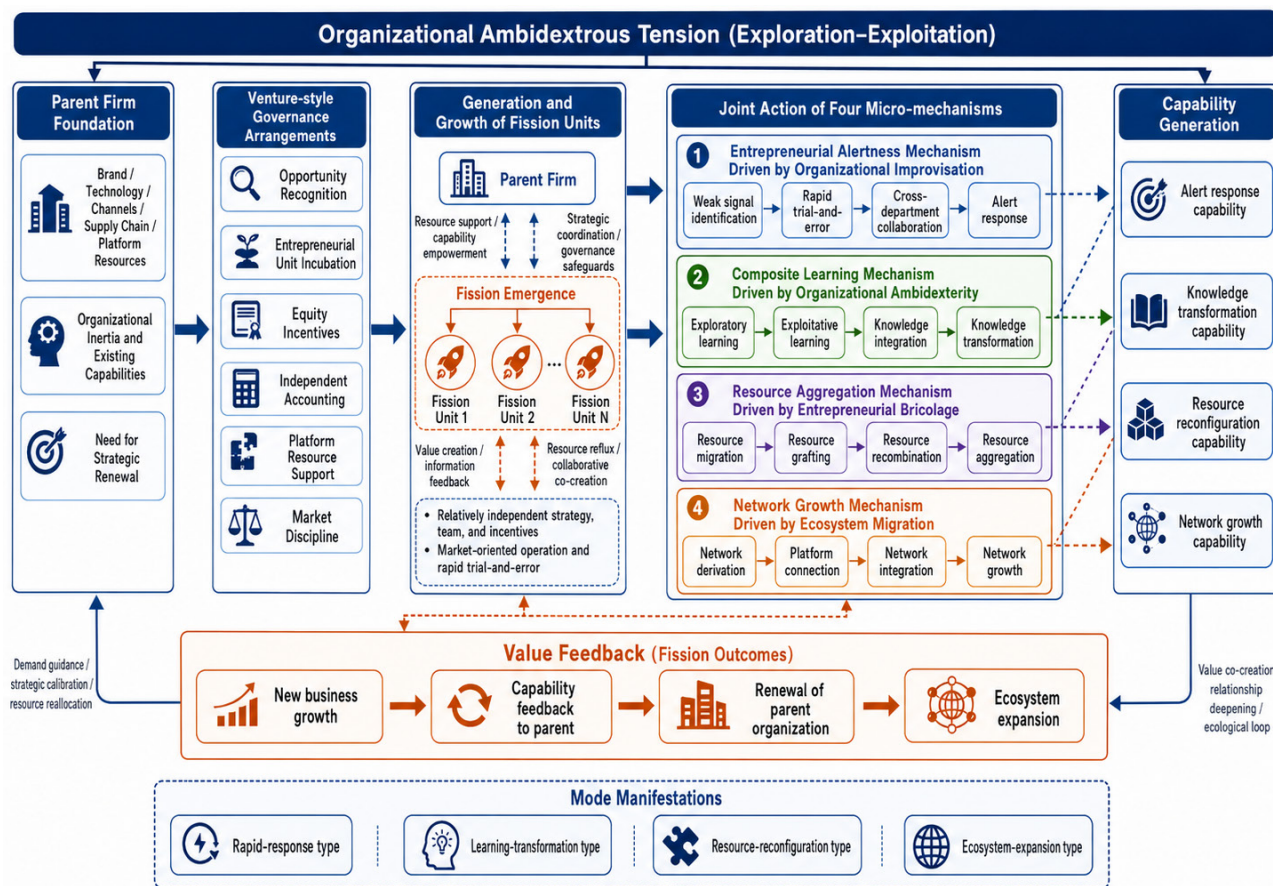


Figure 1. Micro-mechanism model of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises.

The analysis indicates that the four mechanisms jointly explain the operation of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises. The entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation is mainly reflected in firms' rapid perception of, and timely response to, market opportunities and potential risks, enabling fission entrepreneurship to be effectively triggered under uncertainty. The composite learning mechanism driven by organizational ambidexterity is reflected in firms' continuous use and transformation of existing knowledge and experience while exploring new businesses, thereby promoting learning cycles between new and old businesses. The resource aggregation mechanism driven by entrepreneurial bricolage emphasizes that firms activate existing resources and form new resource combinations through resource migration, grafting, and reconfiguration. The network growth mechanism driven by ecosystem migration is reflected in the process through which fission units, under the combined effects of parent platforms, VC mechanisms, and external partners, gradually expand from single projects into ecosystem networks. Overall, the four mechanisms are not mutually isolated; they jointly promote the continuous evolution of VC-style fission entrepreneurship from the dimensions of behavioral triggering, knowledge evolution, resource reconfiguration, and ecosystem expansion.

3.3.4. Theoretical saturation test

To ensure the stability and explanatory power of the theoretical model, this study conducted a theoretical saturation test after the initial model was developed. Case data randomly reserved from the original materials

were not involved in the previous coding process. After the initial model was formed, the reserved data were coded again using the three-stage coding procedure to examine whether new concepts, categories, or relationships emerged. The results show that the coding analysis of the reserved data did not generate new theoretical categories, and the original four main categories and their internal logical relationships could adequately explain the main phenomena in the reserved materials. Therefore, the “micro-mechanism model of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises” constructed in this study can be regarded as theoretically saturated and relatively stable.

4. Case analysis

4.1. Within-case analysis

4.1.1. Haier: Entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation

Among the four cases, Haier shows most clearly how fission entrepreneurship can be activated by market signals at the front end of the organization. Its practice is closely related to a behavioral-triggering orientation. Here, behavioral triggering does not refer to a simple passive response to market changes. It means that the firm takes action before external demand becomes clear and before the business opportunity is fully confirmed. In this process, opportunity identification, resource mobilization, and solution adjustment are carried out through action rather than completed before action.

This is clear from the case of Haier’s smart home business operation. The emergence of smart home consumption means that user needs no longer manifest themselves through official product requirements or market reports but rather through random web comments, post-consumption reactions, local market reactions, and practical application scenarios. It is possible for users to state that it is tedious washing small pieces of clothing separately, or that there is a need for products that are designed to save time and effort. This kind of information does not tend to be explicit and will often require some guesswork from a developer before it becomes useful for developing new products. If such an organization goes about its work using hierarchical means, it may take several attempts for the proposal to reach the development phase.

The organizational structure of Haier helps bridge this gap. Through the Rendanheyi system, the maker platform, and chain group, frontline units can respond to market feedback; yet through the parent platform, resources, coordination mechanisms, and institutional limits remain in place. From this perspective, VC-style fission entrepreneurship at Haier has nothing to do with a strict procedure for approving projects. Instead, this is an opportunity discovery process based on action, where teams first enter the scene, see if the problem really exists, and then make decisions about the opportunities.

Organizational improvisation has a critical function in this scenario. It allows teams to respond to situations when knowledge is incomplete and try out different solutions at a small scale. On the other hand, entrepreneurial alertness assists organizations in distinguishing between a single complaint from a customer and an indication of future market opportunities. In particular, the creation of the all-in-one lazy washing machine and the underwear washing machine is explained by this process. Neither of them was invented according to an innovation strategy formulated in its entirety from the beginning. They were initially based on user feedback and were subsequently developed into products and tested in the market. Another illustration is the case of the solar-powered refrigerator for vaccines. The development of such a product was a result of an alliance among refrigeration, medical, and energy groups temporarily working together, demonstrating Haier’s chain group

coordination capability.

However, Haier should not be considered as proof that any user comment could automatically generate a new entrepreneurial venture. The process of rapid response should also involve selection and control; otherwise, fission entrepreneurship will generate too much dispersion that would result in inefficient use of resources. To solve this dilemma, Haier has incorporated risk alertness together with opportunity alertness. The directions offered by user feedback and scenario information are still judged on their technical feasibility, resource availability, logistics, and platform rules. In Haier, organizational improvisation is thus a structured form of improvisation where team members can make decisions and take actions without knowing all the information, yet their actions are still related to the resource and governance framework of the parent organization.

The most important consequence of this process is not just the emergence of some new products. It is even more so the development of a response system for Haier that will be reusable within its entrepreneurship process. A user's feedback and problem scenarios can enter faster into the organization's action system. Once the project is completed, experience gained will not be stored by the team only. This experience can be absorbed by the platform and used in subsequent processes of fission.

Therefore, the agile operation model adopted by Haier is based on an ongoing cycle involving the identification of weak signals, delegation of tasks, trial of new solutions, and feedback of learning into the home platform. In this light, the front-end aspect of VC-style fission entrepreneurship by Haier entails more than just resource allocation; it involves transforming scattered market signals into entrepreneurial actions (**Figure 2**).

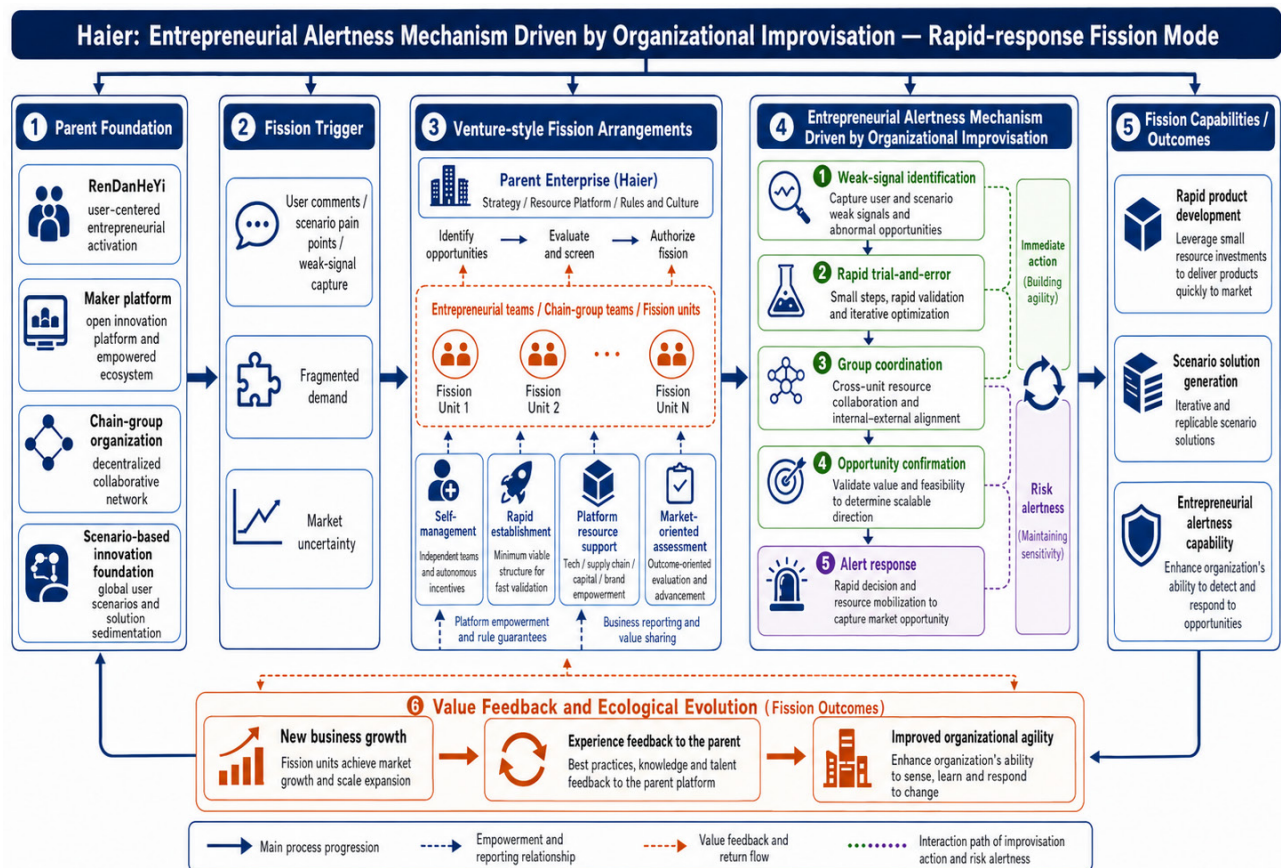


Figure 2. Process of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in Haier.

4.1.2. Mengniu: Composite learning mechanism driven by organizational ambidexterity

Mengniu's fission entrepreneurship practice is more prominently characterized by a knowledge-evolution orientation. The dairy industry differs from general consumer goods industries. Its innovation activities are influenced by consumption upgrading, growing demand for health and nutrition, and segmented market changes, while also being constrained by food safety, quality control, supply-chain stability, and international standards. Therefore, Mengniu's new business exploration cannot be understood simply as the launch of several new products. It requires continuous connections among the existing dairy knowledge system, emerging nutrition and health knowledge, digital operations, and international experience. As a mature dairy enterprise, Mengniu has strong capabilities in supply chains, channels, quality management, and branding. These capabilities constitute the exploitative foundation of fission entrepreneurship. At the same time, high-end fresh milk, cheese, nutrition and health, and international businesses require the firm to continuously engage in exploratory learning.

In this process, Mengniu's VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not the separate operation of new and traditional businesses, but the realization of knowledge circulation between old and new businesses through composite learning. The dairy technology innovation fund adopts the model of "firms posing questions and academia providing answers," enabling external scientific research capabilities to focus on real industrial problems. Breakthroughs in HMO technology integrate independent R&D with external institutional cooperation and promote the transformation of basic research into industrial applications. Space-bred strain R&D combines space breeding knowledge with probiotic technology, expanding the knowledge boundary of traditional dairy R&D. These practices show that Mengniu's exploratory learning is not closed R&D, but continuously expands new business knowledge sources through industry-university-research collaboration, cross-boundary knowledge connection, and absorption of international experience.

More importantly, Mengniu does not stop the absorption of external knowledge at the level of new projects or products. Instead, it transforms such knowledge into organizational capabilities through internal mechanisms. While reducing raw milk allocation costs and improving supply-demand matching efficiency, the cloud commerce smart supply-chain system feeds digital operation experience back into traditional channels. The experience accumulated through independent accounting and market-oriented operation in the high-end fresh milk business also influences channel management and brand expression in traditional products. The experience of intelligent manufacturing and low-carbon production developed in lighthouse factories and green factories spreads through the group platform to more production bases. Thus, fission entrepreneurship not only generates new businesses, but also continuously updates the knowledge system of the parent organization.

The learning-transformation fission mode reflected in the Mengniu case therefore depends on a relatively stable bridging mechanism between exploratory and exploitative learning. External new knowledge, cross-boundary technologies, and international experience open up new exploration spaces for the firm, while the parent firm's existing supply chain, quality management, and channel systems provide support for the implementation of new knowledge. Trial-and-error experience in new businesses further feeds back into traditional businesses, allowing organizational capabilities to circulate between old and new businesses. Compared with Haier, which emphasizes rapid action, Mengniu places greater emphasis on knowledge absorption, integration, and transformation. This case shows that if VC-style fission entrepreneurship is to move from short-term project incubation to long-term organizational evolution, it must establish a composite learning mechanism connecting old and new knowledge (**Figure 3**).

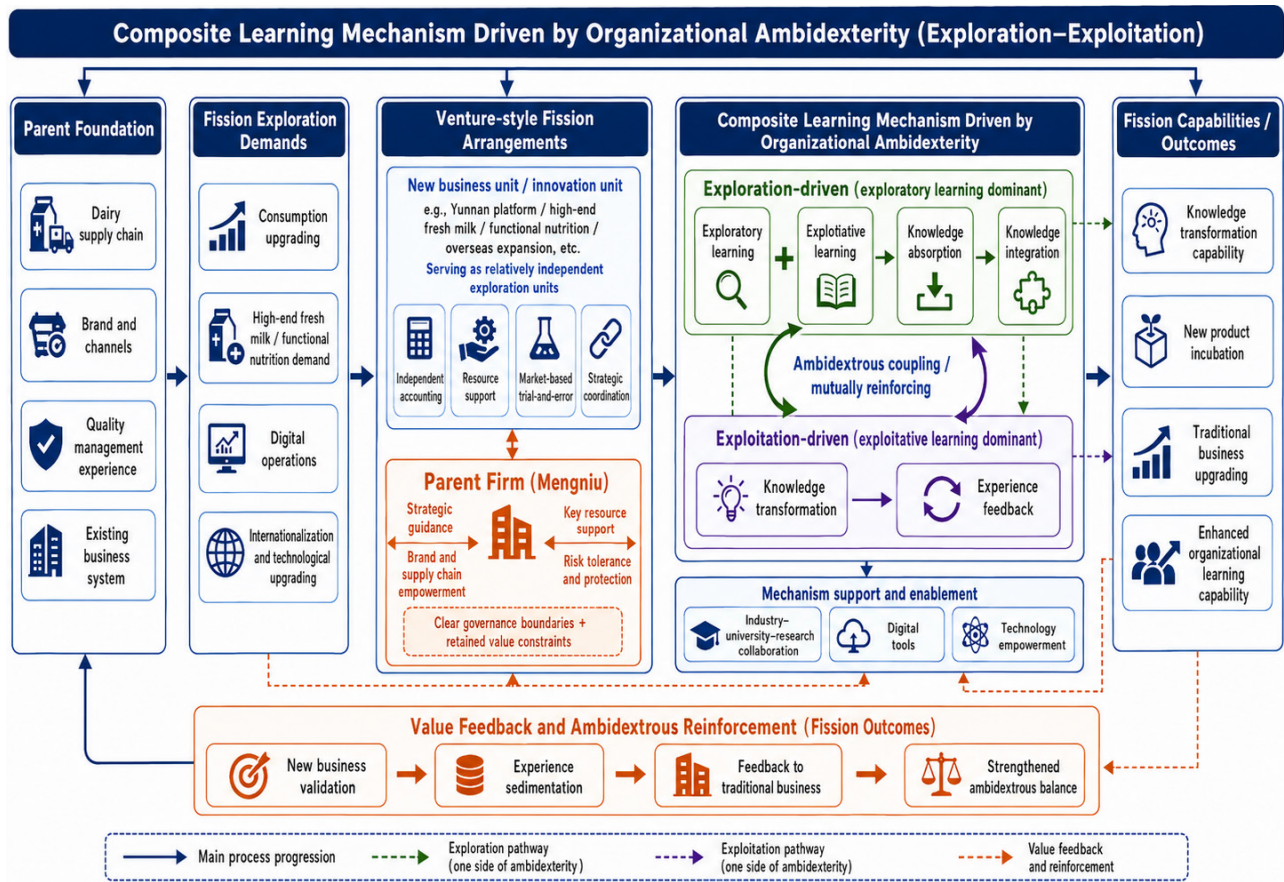


Figure 3. Mechanism of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in Mengniu.

4.1.3. Inspur: Resource aggregation mechanism driven by entrepreneurial bricolage

Inspur’s fission entrepreneurship practice shows a clear resource-reconfiguration orientation. Unlike Haier, which responds quickly to user demand, and Mengniu, which emphasizes knowledge evolution and continuous learning, Inspur operates in the information technology and digital services field, which is characterized by strong scenario expansion. Digital government, industrial internet, smart-city projects, cloud services, and enterprise digital transformation all create different kinds of customer problems. These problems require the firm to draw on more than one type of resource at the same time. For Inspur, the available resources are not limited to cloud computing or operating-system technology. They also include digital twin tools, edge-computing capabilities, data platforms, industry customer relationships, and experience accumulated through science and innovation platforms. The challenge, however, is that these resources are not always immediately usable for new ventures. Many of them are embedded in existing departments, established project routines, or particular industry scenarios. As a result, Inspur’s fission entrepreneurship first needs to release these resources from their original settings and make them available for new combinations.

Therefore, the first issue Inspur’s VC-style fission entrepreneurship needs to solve is not whether resources exist, but how resources can become usable again. Resource migration constitutes the starting point of its resource-reconfiguration process. The testing environment of the science and innovation center is used for rapid validation of entrepreneurial projects; the digital twin airport system reuses Cloud Sea three-dimensional modeling technology; the casual laundry project draws on underlying operating-system development experience; and the Yunzhou platform reuses distributed cloud architecture and data middle-platform

capabilities. These practices indicate that parent-firm resources are not simply transferred to entrepreneurial units. Instead, they are re-identified and redefined in new business scenarios. In this process, resources originally sedimented in established business systems gain new application space.

On the basis of resource migration, resource grafting further promotes complementarity among different types of resources. Inspur combines operator customer resources with cloud computing capabilities to form a closed loop of data collection, analysis, and value-added services. Through industrial matching activities, Inspur connects its industrial internet capabilities with the needs of port scenarios. It also uses digital twin modeling together with AI algorithms to form solutions that combine software and hardware. The science and innovation fund connects capital resources with project incubation. The key to resource grafting is not simple addition, but the reorganization of technology, customers, capital, and platform resources around scenario problems so that they form new value chains.

After resource migration and resource grafting accumulate, Inspur further forms new platform systems and business models through resource reconfiguration. Practices such as industrial internet platforms, smart airport systems, distribution cloud, and the Yunzhou platform show that, after reconfiguration, fragmented resources no longer serve only one project but can be sedimented into replicable and scalable platform capabilities. Owing to resource reconfiguration, fission entrepreneurship is no longer restricted to individual projects but may evolve into an enterprise development process, during which resources are repeatedly utilized, linked together, and expanded upon in new contexts. From the case study of Inspur, one could conclude that what makes VC-style fission entrepreneurship distinctive is not only the availability of abundant resources, but more significantly, the capacity of a business to shift, graft, and recombine its existing, heterogeneous, and scenario-oriented resources for new entrepreneurial ventures (Figure 4).

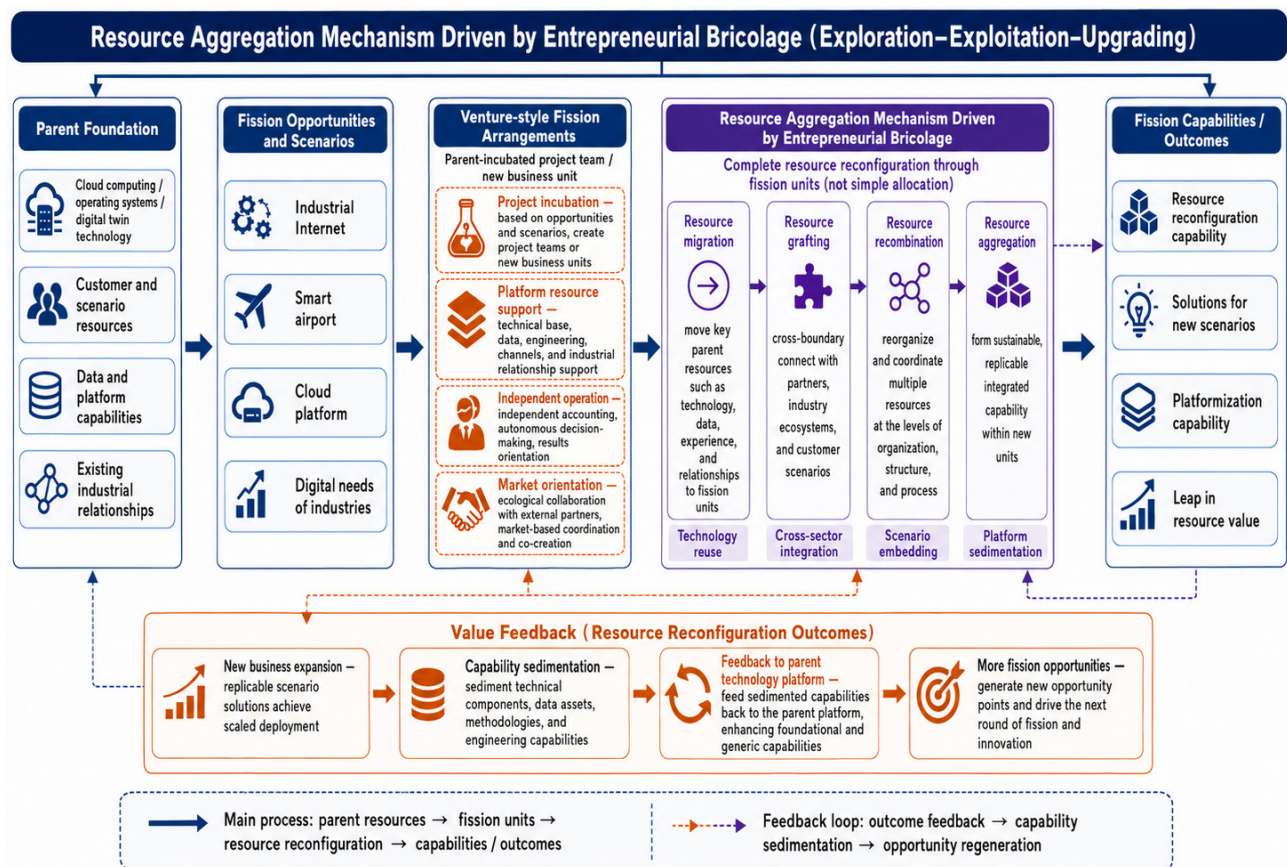


Figure 4. Mechanism of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in Inspur.

4.1.4. Xiaomi: Network growth mechanism driven by ecosystem migration

The VC-style fission entrepreneurship approach of Xiaomi is linked with the development of the company's ecosystem chain. Initially, smartphones enabled Xiaomi to develop users, brand reputation, logistics expertise, and internet-enabled operations. Based on this, Xiaomi expanded into power banks, smart bands, air purifiers, smart home solutions, household products, and cars. These businesses were developed not independently but as part of an integrated approach. Most of them had ties to ecosystem-chain firms through investments, standards for products, platform interfaces, traffic, and logistics. In the process, Xiaomi maintained the independence of many entrepreneurial units but at the same time tied them to the parent platform. The parent firm offered platform entry points and basic norms, whereas ecosystem-chain firms brought additional products and user interaction points. Hence, the fission entrepreneurship of Xiaomi will be primarily seen in the constant growth of ecosystem networks. It does not just aim to nurture individual entrepreneurial ventures but to connect various entrepreneurial entities into one platform system. In the network-driven period, Xiaomi uses smartphones as the key focal point to seek out projects which help address user pains, share common values with Xiaomi, and have a sizable market opportunity. The venture capital strategy of holding stakes in ventures without exercising control allows for entrepreneurial entity independence while allowing the parent company to empower them through product development, supply chain provision, brand affiliation, and methodology creation. The relationship between the entrepreneurial teams and their parent company allows for balance between entrepreneurial freedom and parent-platform collaboration. Entrepreneurs are not fully integrated into hierarchical structures and, as such, are able to experiment in response to the market.

In the phase of network integration, Xiaomi brings ecosystem-chain companies together using the Mi Home App, IoT platform, HyperOS, interface sharing, and basic collaboration principles. With this approach, ecosystem-chain companies have access to the user base and technology system of Xiaomi, but this approach does not transform these companies into normal internal business units. Most companies maintain their own operations while making sure that their goods/services can connect with the same platform. Trust-based agreements and benefit-sharing arrangements minimize the need for repeated negotiations between the companies. Consequently, fission companies within the Xiaomi group stay relatively autonomous but are no longer separated from each other.

The growth of Xiaomi's ecosystem chain is associated with more than just the fission of individual items. Initially, the company used products like power banks, smartbands, and air purifiers primarily for filling out the gaps in its product line and increasing the touchpoints with the customers. However, over time, the emphasis shifted to the more complicated solutions, particularly those related to the area of smart homes and the "Human-Car-Home" ecosystem. At the same time, in its role, Xiaomi is not limited to investments or sales channels only. The ecosystem chain companies increase the range of products available from Xiaomi. For their part, Xiaomi provides an environment that is fairly conducive to the growth of these ventures. In this regard, the benefits of VC-style fission entrepreneurship extend beyond the performance of these ventures, since Xiaomi is also capable of forming a coherent network ecosystem (**Figure 5**).

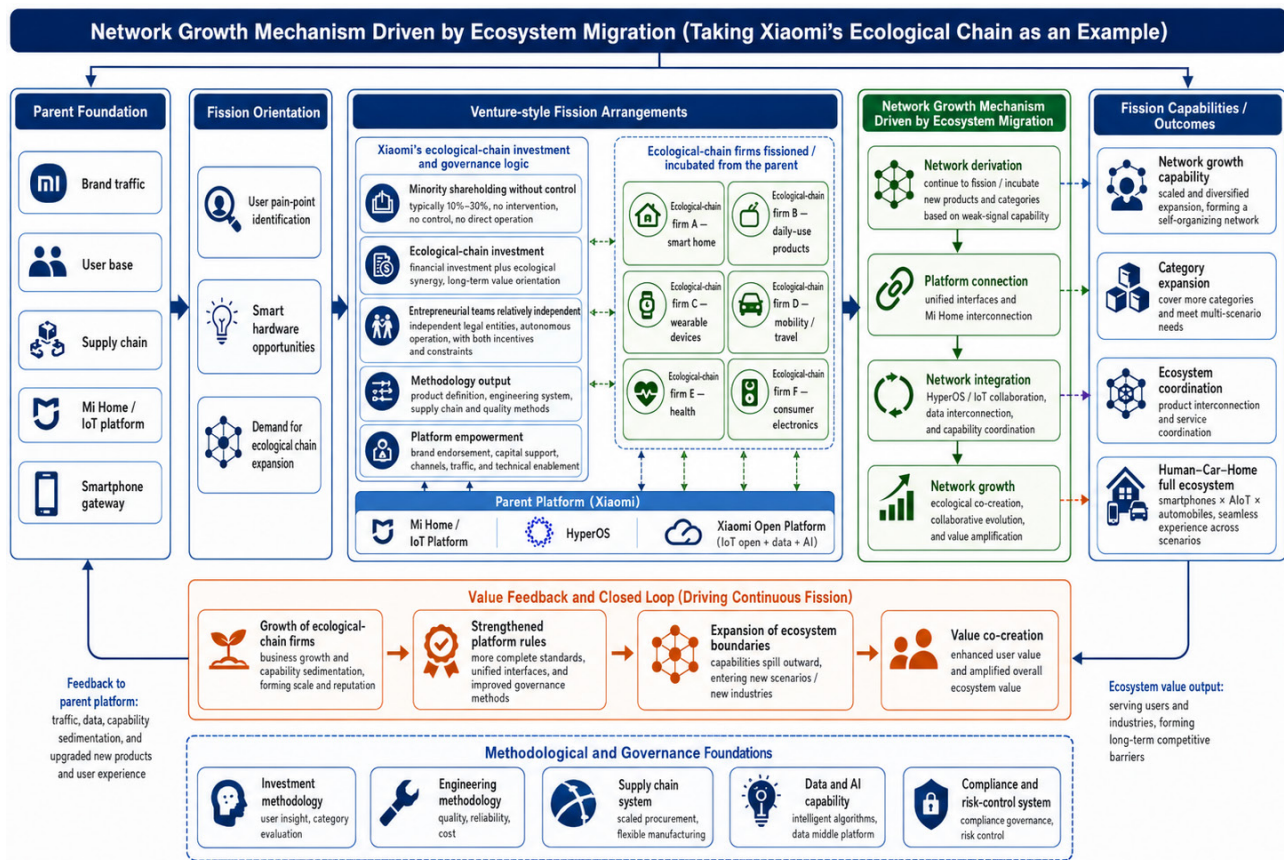


Figure 5. Mechanism of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in Xiaomi.

4.2. Cross-case discussion

4.2.1. Common mechanisms of VC-style fission entrepreneurship

However, from the four cases above, we can see that VC-style fission entrepreneurship follows somewhat varied paths, with the context of the industry first presenting firms with a distinct challenge, while the firm's capabilities and resources shape the fission strategy pursued. In Haier, the issue that the firm is trying to solve is fragmented market demand and rapidly changing signals. Mengniu is concerned more with issues like quality control, channel upgrading, and knowledge acquisition; hence, learning and knowledge transfer play a critical role in its fission activity. For Inspur, there is a strong link between its fission business model and the digital application scenario, which involves reusing available resources and technologies within a new environment.

These cases also suggest that the four mechanisms do not play the same role in the whole process. Organizational improvisation is closer to the front end of fission entrepreneurship. It helps the firm act on weak signals and turn them into specific entrepreneurial attempts. Composite learning becomes important after new business activities have generated experience, because that experience has to be absorbed, integrated, and fed back into the parent organization. Entrepreneurial bricolage supports the expansion of fission entrepreneurship by allowing firms to reuse and recombine existing resources under new conditions. Ecosystem migration further extends the process by connecting fission units with broader platform relationships and external partners. Thus, the four mechanisms are not separate explanations, but connected parts of the same process.

Organizational ambidexterity is the underlying logic that runs through the above process. At the behavioral

level, ambidexterity is reflected in the balance between opportunity alertness and risk alertness. At the knowledge level, it is reflected in the cycle between exploratory learning and exploitative learning. At the resource level, it is reflected in the combination of existing resource reuse and heterogeneous resource grafting. At the ecosystem level, it is reflected in the coordination between entrepreneurial unit autonomy and parent-platform control. Because large enterprises can maintain dynamic balance in these tensions, VC-style fission entrepreneurship can preserve entrepreneurial flexibility without departing from parent-firm resources and strategic direction.

Furthermore, VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not a one-way process in which the parent firm transfers resources to entrepreneurial units. The cases show that fission units also influence the parent firm during their growth. Haier's new product practices strengthen the firm's ability to respond to user demand; Mengniu's new business exploration promotes the flow of knowledge and experience between new and old businesses; Inspur's new scenario projects enrich platform technologies and industry solutions; and Xiaomi's ecosystem-chain expansion enlarges platform entrances and product coverage. In short, the value of fission entrepreneurship lies not only in the generation of new businesses, but also in the renewal of parent-firm capabilities and the expansion of ecosystem relationships.

4.2.2. Differentiated modes of VC-style fission entrepreneurship

The four cases also have their specific traits. This is not because of any arbitrary decision made by management. It is closely tied to what type of industry they operate in, what kind of resource endowments they possess, and what sort of organizational capabilities they have. The specific trait that distinguishes Haier is fast reaction to customer needs. The distinguishing trait of Mengniu is the bridging between the old knowledge base and the new. The distinguishing trait of Inspur is resource recombination under novel circumstances. This means that the four modes : rapid response, learning transformation, resource reconfiguration, and ecosystem expansion, can be considered major examples of VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large corporations, depending on circumstances.

The rapid-response fission mode applies to firms facing fast-changing user demand, complex scenarios, and a strong need for rapid trial-and-error. Its key is not the completeness of prior planning, but whether the organization can allow weak signals to enter the action system and transform ambiguous demand into entrepreneurial projects through organizational improvisation and entrepreneurial alertness. Mengniu shows a learning-transformation mode of fission entrepreneurship. This mode is more likely to appear in firms that already have a stable traditional business, but still need to absorb new knowledge from emerging businesses. In Mengniu's case, the new business is not separated from the old business. Instead, experience gained from new channels, new products, or new market practices can be brought back to the parent firm and used to improve its existing operations. The main function of this mode is therefore not only to create a new business unit, but also to help the parent firm renew its knowledge base and organizational capabilities. The resource-reconfiguration fission mode applies to firms with abundant resources dispersed across different technologies, customers, and scenarios. It enables existing resources to gain new uses in new scenarios through resource migration, grafting, and reconfiguration. The ecosystem-expansion fission mode applies to firms with platform entrances, brand influence, supply-chain capabilities, and complementor-organizing capabilities. Its focus is to maintain entrepreneurial unit vitality through VC-style governance while organizing entrepreneurial units into ecosystem network nodes through platform rules and interfaces. Large enterprises may exhibit different dominant modes

at different development stages or may adopt multiple modes simultaneously within the same organization. For example, in the early stage, a firm may rely more on the rapid-response mode to capture opportunities. As the business expands, it may need learning transformation and resource reconfiguration. Eventually, it may form a broader platform network through ecosystem expansion. Therefore, the significance of differentiated modes is not to label firms, but to reveal the dominant mechanisms and evolutionary directions of VC-style fission entrepreneurship under different conditions.

Based on within-case analysis and cross-case comparison, this study further integrates the four micro-mechanisms within the interaction between parent firms and fission units. VC-style fission entrepreneurship is not a one-way process of new business incubation; rather, it forms a dynamic cycle among parent-firm resource empowerment, VC-style governance arrangements, fission unit growth, and value feedback. The entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation provides front-end triggering for fission entrepreneurship. The composite learning mechanism driven by organizational ambidexterity transforms new business experience into knowledge capabilities. The resource aggregation mechanism driven by entrepreneurial bricolage transforms resources from sedimented states into systemic capabilities. The network growth mechanism driven by ecosystem migration enables fission units to enter broader ecosystem networks. Together, these four micro-mechanisms promote fission unit growth and realize value loops through capability feedback, parent-firm renewal, and ecosystem expansion. Their overall relationship is shown in **Figure 6**.

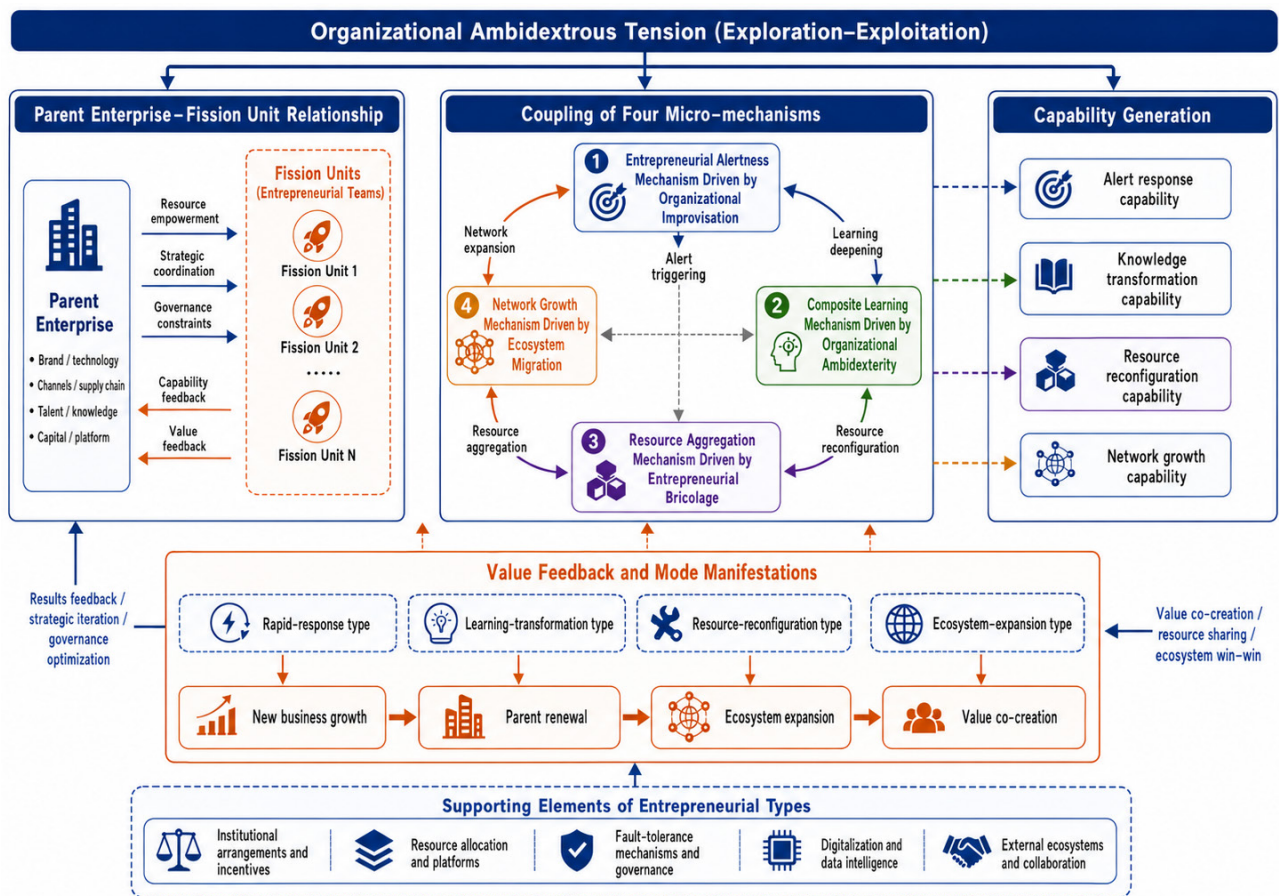


Figure 6. Mechanism of VC-style fission entrepreneurship.

5. Conclusions and implications

5.1. Research conclusions

Drawing on organizational ambidexterity, this study conducts a multiple-case analysis of VC-style fission entrepreneurship practices in Haier, Mengniu, Inspur, and Xiaomi. The study finds that VC-style fission entrepreneurship in large enterprises cannot be explained by a single institutional arrangement or one type of resource input. Rather, it is a process jointly shaped by external uncertainty, parent-firm resource bases, entrepreneurial team agency, and platform governance mechanisms. Because of differences in industry environment, resource endowments, and organizational foundations, different firms form four fission orientations, behavioral triggering, knowledge evolution, resource reconfiguration, and ecosystem expansion, and further develop four modes: rapid-response, learning-transformation, resource-reconfiguration, and ecosystem-expansion modes.

At the mechanism level, the operation of VC-style fission entrepreneurship depends on the coordination of four key mechanisms. The entrepreneurial alertness mechanism driven by organizational improvisation explains how fission entrepreneurship enters the action process from weak signals, enabling firms to complete opportunity validation through small-scale trial-and-error when opportunities remain unclear, while controlling trial-and-error boundaries through the balance between opportunity alertness and risk alertness. The composite learning mechanism driven by organizational ambidexterity explains how old and new knowledge circulate between parent firms and entrepreneurial units, preventing new business exploration from becoming detached from parent-firm experience and enabling the parent organization to absorb knowledge assets generated from new businesses. The resource aggregation mechanism driven by entrepreneurial bricolage explains how resources are transformed from existing states into new business capabilities, allowing resources dispersed across different businesses and scenarios to gain new uses. The network-growth mechanism shows how fission units move from single projects to the platform ecosystem. In this process, entrepreneurship is not only reflected in one product or one new venture. Its value can also be enlarged through platform connections, ecosystem partners, and repeated cooperation among different units.

The study further shows that organizational ambidexterity is not an externally attached theoretical label for VC-style fission entrepreneurship; rather, it is the underlying logic running through the entire process. VC-style fission entrepreneurship can exist in large enterprises precisely because it forms a dynamic balance among exploration and exploitation, autonomy and control, and inheritance and breakthrough. Entrepreneurial units explore through relatively independent organizational spaces, while parent firms provide exploitative support through resources, platforms, and governance mechanisms. Fission entrepreneurship thus preserves the flexibility of entrepreneurial teams without completely departing from parent-firm resource bases and strategic directions. Accordingly, VC-style fission entrepreneurship becomes an important way for large enterprises to pursue organizational renewal between stability and innovation.

5.2. Theoretical contributions

The first theoretical contribution of this study lies in revealing the micro-processes of VC-style fission entrepreneurship. Existing fission entrepreneurship studies focus more on the types, features, and performance outcomes of fission ventures. In addition, the process of VC-style fission entrepreneurship is revealed to start from an opportunity trigger, followed by knowledge evolution and resource reconfiguration, and to end at ecosystem expansion. Through such a process-oriented analysis, this approach can enable fission

entrepreneurship research to move away from outcome description to mechanism building and thus offer a better analytical framework for studying organizational renewal via entrepreneurship of large corporations.

Moreover, the four cases make the issue of ambidexterity tangible as well. Here, both exploration and exploitation are more than mere structural configurations and theoretical learning processes; they take shape within the very process by which each firm structures fission entrepreneurship. On one hand, Haier has to react rapidly to customer feedback, but at the same time it needs to guard against allowing rapid experiments to spiral out of control into random experimentation. On the other hand, Mengniu exploits its exploratory activities for acquiring new information that can be linked to its traditional dairy business. Another scenario demonstrated by Inspur is one in which a company does not begin from scratch but instead keeps leveraging its existing technologies and customer base within a different digital environment. Xiaomi grants some freedom to companies operating in the same ecosystem chain while linking them to the main ecosystem in terms of investments, product specifications, technical interactions, and traffic sharing. In such a way, ambidexterity is not an independent organizational design imposed above the process of fission.

As a result, four ways of VC-style fission entrepreneurship can be distinguished: rapid response, learning transformation, resource reconfiguration, and ecosystem expansion. It should be noted that the four ways listed above do not aim to provide a strict definition for the entrepreneurship approach of Haier, Mengniu, Inspur, and Xiaomi. Rather, these four ways indicate the mechanism that becomes more apparent under certain circumstances. For example, one company may initially use the rapid response approach due to ambiguous opportunity and move on to learning transformation or resource reconfiguration. With the strengthening of platform foundation, there will be an increased likelihood of the firm's ecosystem expanding. This typology is valuable because it helps to understand why firms with parent company support and VC-style governance choose different types of fission strategies.

5.3. Managerial implications

Large companies should view VC-style fission entrepreneurship not just as projects for incubation or financing. Opportunities will frequently come about through weaker signals, such as customer feedback, issues in usage of the products/services, minor technical glitches, or alterations in local demand patterns. However, if these opportunities have to be managed via lengthy processes of reporting and approval, there is a risk of tardiness in responding to them. While it is essential for the parent company to leave room for experimentation by these teams, such experimentation should not be without limits. There are several ways by which early efforts can be controlled.

The parent company should also be careful about avoiding two kinds of situations. One: where the fission unit is so far removed that it loses support from the supply chain, quality management system, channels, brand, and customers of the parent company. Two: where it is so heavily controlled by the parent company that it loses its flexibility for entrepreneurial activities. In that case, a better way would be to allow the fission unit to take advantage of the parent company's resources but still be able to make some independent decisions. This is because resources are locked into their existing departments or business units in large companies; hence, the need for better resource interfaces and flexibility in authorizations. Once the fission unit gains access to platforms, interfaces, supply chain partners, and end-user scenarios, it is no longer just another project of the parent company.

5.4. Limitations and future research

This paper will mainly face some limitations concerning cases, data, and timeframe. First of all, the case selection in this paper includes Haier, Mengniu, Inspur, and Xiaomi. It is appropriate to use those four firms for this research, yet not all types of VC-style fission entrepreneurship can be covered by them. Secondly, the materials in this paper are mostly publicly available materials. This information helps to trace events and compare cases, but does not give a complete picture of the internal decision-making process, the process of informal negotiations, or even any conflict that might occur between the parent company and the fission company. Furthermore, while this paper provides us with four different modes of VC-style fission entrepreneurship, there is no explanation as to the evolution or development of each mode. Future research could focus on a larger number of cases and analyze how a company transitions through the four different modes over time.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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