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Author: Mr. Tao Xie
China

Ms. Yuanyuan Peng
China
Mr. Zihua Zhu
Beijing Commsat Technology Development Co., Ltd., China

COMMSAT'S CASE, AN EXAMPLE OF CHINA'S SPACE ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES

Abstract

This paper examines the entrepreneurial path of Commsat–one of the first commercial space startups in China. The objective is to use it as an example, to identify the challenges that space startups have to cope with in China. The methodology adopts a top-down approach. The overall commercial space landscape in China was first reviewed to set the benchmark. Within the review, the satellite sector with which Commsat associates was singled out for more detailed observation. On the basis of the understanding of China's commercial satellite landscape, both of Commsat' achievement and challenges were then laid out for further examination. Through a close look at Commsat' gradual development in the past five years since its inception, a performance assessment was conducted. The assessment adopts three key indicators in terms of technology readiness level, financing capability and human resources. Based on the performance assessment, Commsat is identified as one of the leading privately-held commercial satellite companies in China in terms of its strength of research and development, financing and human resource reservation. At the same time, challenges that Commsat has been facing along its entrepreneurial journey were also identified. The main challenges include market identification, cost control and relationships with state-owned space enterprises. In conclusion, as one of the first space startups in China since 2015, the progress Commsat has made reflects how China's commercial space sector is dramatically evolving. The analysis of Commsat's case and its lessons learned can also be drawn on for other space entrepreneurial activities around the world.