

A Probe into Kans' Short Drama Marketing Strategies Under the New Media Context

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Abstract: Media integration and the digital wave have propelled the transformation of brand marketing strategies, with short drama marketing emerging as a novel communication paradigm. This paper focuses on the short drama marketing practices of Kans (the standardized English name for Han Shu), exploring its paths of value delivery and market breakthrough through content, channels, and user interaction. The study reveals that Kans has accurately seized opportunities in the micro-short drama industry. By relying on hit product-driven strategies, deep cultivation on Douyin, emotional narration, and key node marketing, the brand has achieved simultaneous growth in both brand voice and sales volume. However, it also faces challenges such as diminishing marginal benefits of short dramas, over-reliance on a single channel, and insufficient product competitiveness. This study provides practical references for the digital marketing of beauty brands. It also supplements a new perspective for academic research on short drama marketing.

Keywords: Micro-short drama; Short drama marketing; Brand strategy; Douyin e-commerce; Emotional communication

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1. Industry background and current development of micro-short dramas

1.1. Policy support and industry regulation of micro-short dramas

Driven by digital technology and media integration, micro-short dramas are characterized by small scale, short duration and fast plot development. They adapt to fragmented communication and meet audiences' demand for instant entertainment. In 2020, the National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) included micro-short dramas in its content review system and clearly defined them as episodic works with single episodes shorter than 10 minutes, which marks the industry's entry into standardized development and this year is known as the "first year of micro-short dramas" in academic circles^[1]. Guided by relevant policies, the micro-short drama industry has gradually formed a three-in-one system featuring hierarchical management, filing and public notice, and creation support. Differentiated review was implemented in 2021, 312 key filed works were publicized in 2023, and the "View Brands in Micro-Short Dramas" initiative was launched in 2024. This initiative systematically explores the integration of brands and short drama narratives and provides policy support for brand short drama marketing. The

coordination of policies and market innovation has effectively curbed vulgarization and homogenization in the industry, and created space for micro-short dramas to empower brand communication ^[2].

1.2. Market size and user penetration of micro-short dramas

Supported by policy dividends and industry regulation, micro-short dramas have entered a stage of large-scale development. According to DataEye, the market size of China's micro-short dramas reached 50.4 billion yuan in 2024, exceeding the national film box office of 42.502 billion yuan in the same year. Micro-short dramas have evolved from a marginal content form to a mainstream entertainment consumption method, attracting more than 662 million internet users as viewers. These users spend an average of 101 minutes watching micro-short dramas per day, which is equal to the usage duration of instant messaging, forming rigid consumption in fragmented time periods. Relevant studies predict that the market size will exceed 100 billion yuan by 2027, providing sufficient traffic and audience foundations for brands such as Kans (Chinese skincare brand) to carry out short drama marketing.

1.3. Profit and business models of the micro-short drama business ecosystem

Under the mature development of the industry, micro-short dramas have formed a collaborative business ecosystem with multiple participants. By the end of 2024, there were 84,900 related enterprises, with remarkable monetization efficiency, the average production cost is 300,000 yuan, while the daily recharge revenue can reach up to 20 million yuan, showing diversified profit models. In-App Purchase (IAP), In-App Advertisement (IAA), and Integrated Advertising and Payment (IAAP) operate in parallel, among which IAA accounted for 50% of the market share in October 2024 and became the main growth driver ^[2].

In addition, the boom of branded custom short dramas has expanded commercial boundaries. In 2024, 348 brands in beauty, e-commerce, FMCG and other sectors invested in custom short dramas. Starbucks' successful short drama "I Run a Starbucks in Ancient Times" confirms the commercial logic that "content is the shelf", offering practical references for Kans' short drama marketing and reflecting the core value of short dramas in brand communication ^[3].

2. Brand overview and target audience analysis of Kans

2.1. Brand overview

Founded in 2003, Kans (the standardized English name for Han Shu) is a scientific anti-aging skincare brand under Shanghai Chicmax Group. According to financial reports (Figure 1), Kans accounted for 82.3% of the group's total revenue in 2024. In its early development, Kans targeted the mass anti-aging segment and quickly expanded its market with the influence of the Korean wave culture. In 2021, the brand was upgraded to a "Chinese scientific anti-aging brand" to promote its high-end and youth-oriented transformation. In 2023, it made a forward-looking layout in short drama marketing and achieved a breakthrough on the Douyin channel. Kans ranked first among beauty brands on Douyin consecutively from 2023 to 2024, with its Douyin GMV exceeding 6 billion yuan in 2024, making it the first beauty brand to reach this sales scale ^[4].

Revenue by Brand

	Year ended December 31			
	2024		2023	
	Revenue share		Revenue share	
	Amount	(%)	Amount	(%)
	(RMB million, except percentages)			
Kans	5,591.0	82.3	3,090.4	73.7
Yiyezi	229.3	3.4	356.5	8.5
Red Elephant	376.0	5.5	375.7	9.0
Newpage One	375.6	5.5	152.5	3.6
Other brands(Note)	220.6	3.3	215.6	5.2
Total	6,792.5	100.0	4,190.7	100.0

Figure 1. Revenue breakdown of brands in Shanghai Chicmax Group’s 2024 annual report.

2.2. Target audience profile

Kans’ target audience mainly consists of women aged 18–40, among which consumers aged 31–40 account for 74.95%, with a repurchase rate of over 20%. Its core users fall into two groups: those aged 24–30 focus on brightening and moisturizing effects, while those aged 31–40 pay attention to anti-wrinkle and anti-line functions. The brand’s product lines precisely cover these different demands. In addition, Kans’ target audience also includes highly educated and high-net-worth groups. These groups match the brand’s high requirements for product quality and contribute to strong user stickiness and high repurchase behavior^[5].

2.3. User needs and consumption pain points

Forty-five percent of Kans’ users come from third-and fourth-tier cities. These consumers have improved spending power and focus on scientific formula, visible efficacy, and safety and reliability of skincare products. Data show that discussions related to emotional skincare have increased by 790% compared with the same period last year. Micro-short dramas use compact plots and emotional resonance to target two major pain points of women in lower-tier markets: tired-looking skin and fatigue caused by dual roles in work and family. They meet skincare needs and provide emotional comfort at the same time. This helps the brand strengthen user favor and stickiness, and offers direction for content creation in Kans’ short drama marketing.

3. Core growth strategies of Kans’ marketing

3.1. Product strategy: Bestseller-driven and differentiated product portfolio

Kans builds its competitive advantages with three core elements: visual design, product development and pricing, which provide solid product support for short drama marketing. In terms of visual design, “Kans Red” has become a distinctive brand symbol. Among them, the Red Capsule series and Red Waist series strengthen consumer attention with their barrel-waist shape and red bottle design. In terms of product development, Kans continuously optimizes its core formulas and product portfolio structure. Taking anti-aging as the core, it covers primary, medium and deep anti-aging stages. It enriches the brand dimension and improves category synergy through combination sets and multi-functional formulas. In terms of pricing, the Red Waist set is priced at 399 yuan. It creates high cost performance with gifts (5 full-size products + 6 gifts). During marketing nodes and promotion

periods, it helps the single product achieve sales of over 2 billion yuan, becoming the core traffic-driving product for short drama marketing^[4].

3.2. Channel strategy: In-depth layout and refined operation

Kans takes Douyin as its core channel and captures the evolution trend of Douyin e-commerce. It builds a closed-loop marketing system of brand, effect and sales through full-link optimization of content driving, operation connection and traffic conversion^[6]. In 2023, Kans intensively launched 14 custom short dramas to cover diverse audiences, with a total of 1.46 billion views. It converts traffic to live streaming rooms and flagship stores through comment area guidance and link mounting. Kans has set up a special operation team to optimize traffic connection. Twenty self-broadcasting accounts form a 24-hour live streaming matrix. Through the transformation and upgrading of the self-broadcasting system, it builds live streaming rooms with differentiated product portfolios. It mainly promotes the Red Waist gift box (accounting for more than 88%), while auxiliary accounts focus on derivatives such as the White Waist series. This not only strengthens the market penetration of core products, but also achieves precise reach to segmented customer groups. Kans cooperates with celebrities and influencers to expand the communication scope. Relying on the extensive fan base of celebrities, it successfully activates diversified consumption demands such as whitening and spot fading, forming an effective complement to the self-broadcasting system. Among them, top celebrities contribute 78% of the live streaming transaction volume of influencers, realizing efficient traffic realization. This differentiated product portfolio strategy maintains the stability of the price system. Through the in-depth development of secondary promoted series (such as Red Capsule and Black Waist), it forms synergistic resonance between core bestsellers and diversified product lines.

3.3. Content strategy: Emotional resonance and brand narrative

Kans takes female value identification as the core and targets the life pain points of groups such as working women and young mothers to create emotional short drama content. By 2023, it had launched 22 custom short dramas, 83% of which focused on post-90s working women, and deeply integrated product efficacy with emotional themes such as “counterattack and growth”. Its representative work “Dress Up for Growth” reached 610 million views, realizing the immersive integration of products and plots and improving the delivery efficiency of brand information. Data show that when the fit between product placement and plot increases by 10%, users’ active search rate rises by 7.8 percentage points accordingly. This confirms the communication value of emotional narration and provides a replicable solution for brands to achieve precise reach in the attention economy era.

3.4. Marketing strategy: Node-based marketing and platform collaboration

Kans is deeply integrated into the Douyin ecosystem and completes the closed-loop conversion from product seeding to purchase through node-based marketing and refined shelf operation. In terms of project cooperation, Kans collaborates with core Douyin IPs to carry out marketing node activities and strengthen brand exposure. Since 2022, it has conducted refined operation in three major shelf fields of Douyin e-commerce: search, store and shop (**Figure 2**), which shortens users’ consumption decision-making path. In the mall field, it continuously participates in core promotion nodes of Douyin e-commerce, including Super Brand Day, Spring Festival Festival, 618 and Double 11. It amplifies traffic advantages through platform paid promotion to achieve dual growth in brand voice and sales volume, forming a synergistic effect with short drama marketing.

Construction of Kans' Douyin "People-Search-Goods 3S Pathway"



Figure 2. Construction of Kans' "People-Seeking-Goods 3S Path".

4. Effectiveness evaluation and challenge analysis

4.1. Marketing effect evaluation

Relying on the targeted layout of Douyin short drama marketing, Kans achieved explosive brand growth in 2023. Its Douyin GMV exceeded 3.44 billion yuan in 2023, ranking first in the beauty category for 14 consecutive months. During the 2024 Double 11 promotion, the Red Waist set hit an industry record of 1.1 billion yuan in sales within 35 days. This result was driven by the long-tail effect of short drama content and the ultra-cost-effective strategy. It verifies the strong driving effect of short drama marketing on core products and demonstrates the feasibility and effectiveness of Kans' short drama marketing strategy.

4.2. Challenge and risk analysis

The marginal benefit of short drama marketing shows a declining trend. In the first half of 2025, both the view count of Kans' short dramas and its Douyin GMV dropped significantly. As competitors such as Proya accelerated their layout in the short drama field, user aesthetic fatigue has become increasingly prominent [2]. Meanwhile, the production cost of short dramas keeps rising while conversion efficiency keeps falling. This requires the brand to strategically adjust the investment scale of short drama marketing and realize the optimal allocation of resources. The risk of channel simplification has become an important factor restricting Kans' development. In 2024, the GMV contributed by the Douyin platform accounted for as high as 91.7%, leading to a seriously unbalanced channel structure. The adjustment of the platform's commission policy has further squeezed the brand's profit margin. Besides, the user repurchase rate of the Douyin channel is 15 percentage points lower than that of Tmall. The cross-platform price difference has also triggered conflicts in the dealer system. The irrational channel layout exposes the brand to high operational risks. The shortcoming of insufficient product competitiveness is quite obvious. The negative review rate of the core Red Waist series reached 38%. The brand's R&D expense ratio has been 2 percentage points lower than the industry average for a long time. Its patent reserve is relatively weak, and there are also disputes over false publicity and similar packaging design. Insufficient product strength not only affects user trust but also restricts the long-term communication effect of short drama marketing, making it difficult to achieve the continuous accumulation of brand value [5].

5. Conclusion

There is an obvious lack of long-term development. Kans' growth momentum relies excessively on external traffic dividends, from early channel dividends to the current Douyin short drama marketing. It has failed to accumulate sustainable brand assets. Although the brand has launched transformation measures such as restarting offline channels and launching self-researched ingredients, the proportion of offline channels is still less than 5%. The investment in core R&D and in-depth user cultivation is insufficient. In the future, systematic transformation is needed to consolidate the foundation of brand development and achieve long-term growth.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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