# K-beauty boom hits UK high streets with snail slime and salmon sperm skincare



# The Rise of K-Beauty: Unconventional Ingredients and Mainstream Acceptance in the UK

Korean beauty, or K-beauty, is experiencing a remarkable transition from the digital realm to the physical spaces of UK high streets. This phenomenon is largely propelled by the influence of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, captivating consumers with unique skincare products featuring unconventional ingredients such as snail slime and salmon sperm. As traditional retailers forge ahead to incorporate K-beauty into their offerings, the trend reflects not only a growing demand for innovative beauty products but also South Korea's rising cultural prominence in various sectors, including film, music, and cuisine.

Social media has emerged as a pivotal force in K-beauty’s ascent, shaping consumer behaviour significantly. According to market research conducted by Mintel, 34% of UK beauty users have purchased a product after seeing it on social media, a figure that soars to 58% among Gen Z. For younger consumers, K-beauty’s allure lies in the 'glass skin' aesthetic — a radiant, ultra-hydrated look that has become synonymous with South Korean skincare. Products like Beauty of Joseon and Laneige are gaining traction, often introduced through influencer endorsements and viral challenges.

While K-beauty has traditionally catered to a niche audience, the recent surge in availability through high street retailers is likely to broaden its appeal. Popular products such as Cosrx’s skin essence—which boasts snail mucin known for its replenishing properties—and Anua’s face serum containing polydeoxyribonucleotide (PDRN) derived from salmon sperm are now easily accessible at stores like Superdrug and Boots. This accessibility is crucial as consumers increasingly seek diverse options without the financial strain often associated with premium skincare brands.

The intriguing ingredient of PDRN has been highlighted in numerous discussions, especially after it was featured in pop culture, notably by musician Doja Cat in her 'Vegas' music video. Experts suggest that PDRN can enhance skin elasticity and promote collagen production, making it an attractive proposition for beauty enthusiasts. Its increasing popularity among consumers reflects a growing openness to experimenting with novel ingredients, driven by an emphasis on efficacy coupled with an engaging narrative around the products.

The financial landscape surrounding K-beauty appears robust, even as broader economic concerns loom. Spending in the pharmacy and beauty sector saw an average increase of 10.2% year-on-year during the first quarter, indicating that consumers prioritise self-care and beauty regimes. The boom is further exemplified by the surge in sales of K-beauty products at Boots, which reportedly shifts one such item every 15 seconds in peak times.

The rise of K-beauty also paves the way for an increase in brick-and-mortar stores, marking a significant shift in retail strategy. For instance, the Korean beauty retailer Moida recently opened its first UK store in London's Westfield shopping centre and is planning future expansions, with ambitions to reach cities outside London such as Manchester. Similarly, PureSeoul, with multiple outlets across the UK, reflects the growing trend of retailers clustering in areas that resonate with Asian cultural influences, offering not just beauty products but a lifestyle experience.

Industry experts, such as Matt Peters from Savills, emphasize that the commitment to longer leases by K-beauty retailers indicates their confidence in the sustained interest of UK consumers. Retailers are keen to establish a long-term foothold in the market, suggesting they view K-beauty not as a fleeting trend, but as a dynamic addition to the beauty landscape.

The unique composition of K-beauty products, often enriched with natural ingredients like honey, propolis, and mugwort, complements scientific advancements in beauty formulations. This innovative fusion attracts consumers who prioritise health-conscious skincare solutions. As K-beauty continues to evolve, it is poised to claim a significant share of the global beauty market, projected to reach $18.3 billion by 2030 at a growth rate of 9% annually.

The K-beauty trend represents more than just a cosmetic shift; it signifies a broader cultural exchange that embraces diversity in beauty standards. For many consumers, including those in the UK, K-beauty encapsulates a holistic approach to skin health, underpinned by community and shared experiences—both online and in person. With K-beauty firmly establishing itself within the UK market, consumers will have more opportunities to explore these innovative products, potentially leading to deeper engagement with the cultural contexts from which they spring.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/3192308/salmon-sperm-your-skincare-latest-k-beauty-trend-seen-doja), [[7]](https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/salmon-sperm-skincare-trend/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/korean-beauty-products-trend-skincare-innovation-sheet-masks-snail-slime-egg-whites-a7706281.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[7]](https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/salmon-sperm-skincare-trend/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[6]](https://www.arabianbusiness.com/lifestyle/beauty/glass-skin-and-snail-mucus-inside-the-unusual-world-of-korean-skincare-a-trend-or-beauty-secret)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[6]](https://www.arabianbusiness.com/lifestyle/beauty/glass-skin-and-snail-mucus-inside-the-unusual-world-of-korean-skincare-a-trend-or-beauty-secret)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/korean-beauty-products-trend-skincare-innovation-sheet-masks-snail-slime-egg-whites-a7706281.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets> - This article discusses the surge of Korean beauty (K-beauty) products in the UK, driven by social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Retailers are opening physical stores to meet the demand for skincare items featuring unique ingredients such as snail slime and salmon sperm. The trend reflects South Korea's growing cultural influence, with products like Beauty of Joseon and Laneige gaining popularity through influencer reviews. The 'glass skin' look, characterized by dewy, luminous skin, is a major appeal of K-beauty products.
3. <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/3192308/salmon-sperm-your-skincare-latest-k-beauty-trend-seen-doja> - This article explores the rising popularity of salmon sperm DNA, known as polydeoxyribonucleotide (PDRN), in skincare products. PDRN is believed to enhance skin elasticity and collagen levels, offering regenerative and anti-inflammatory effects. The trend gained attention when Doja Cat featured a K-beauty product containing salmon sperm in her 'Vegas' music video. Experts support its benefits, citing studies associating salmon sperm with increased skin elasticity and collagen production.
4. <https://heatworld.com/shopping/beauty/cosrx-snail-mucin-review/> - This review highlights the COSRX Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence, a K-beauty product that has gained popularity on TikTok. The essence is praised for its ability to soothe broken skin barriers, hydrate skin, and stimulate collagen production. The article notes that the product has over fifty thousand five-star reviews on Amazon, indicating its effectiveness and popularity among users seeking skincare solutions.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/korean-beauty-products-trend-skincare-innovation-sheet-masks-snail-slime-egg-whites-a7706281.html> - This article introduces various Korean beauty products, including sheet masks and snail slime-infused creams. It highlights the Tony Moly 'I’m Real Rice Mask,' which uses natural rice extract to clarify and restore radiance, and Mizon's 'All in One Snail Repair Cream,' made with 92% snail secretion filtrate to nourish skin and enhance tone. These products exemplify the innovative use of natural ingredients in K-beauty skincare.
6. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/lifestyle/beauty/glass-skin-and-snail-mucus-inside-the-unusual-world-of-korean-skincare-a-trend-or-beauty-secret> - This article delves into the K-beauty trend of achieving 'glass skin' and the use of snail mucin in skincare. It discusses how snail mucin, rich in hyaluronic acid and antioxidants, has become a staple in Korean skincare routines, offering benefits like improved hydration and skin regeneration. The piece also touches on the incorporation of advanced technology in skincare formulations, contributing to the widespread appeal of K-beauty products.
7. <https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/salmon-sperm-skincare-trend/> - This article examines the emerging trend of using salmon sperm DNA, or polydeoxyribonucleotide (PDRN), in skincare products. PDRN is believed to promote skin regeneration, enhance hydration, and stimulate collagen production. The piece notes that while the ingredient is gaining traction in South Korea, its adoption in Western markets is still developing. Brands like KAHI are incorporating salmon sperm into their products, indicating a growing interest in this unique skincare component.