# K-beauty’s viral ingredients spark surge in UK high street presence



Korean beauty products, commonly referred to as K-beauty, are increasingly transitioning from digital platforms to physical retail spaces, capturing the attention of consumers eager to experience the latest skincare trends. This shift is primarily fuelled by the viral success of unique ingredients, such as snail mucin and salmon sperm DNA, which have piqued interest across social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Retailers are now strategically opening stores and launching collections to meet this growing demand, creating opportunities for consumers to engage directly with products that have gained viral status online.

The allure of K-beauty lies not only in its innovative formulations but also in South Korea's cultural confidence, as evidenced by the global proliferation of its food, film, and music industries, exemplified by stars such as BTS. This cultural wave has paved the way for K-beauty’s rising profile, characterised by a commitment to using natural ingredients that are gentle on the skin, combined with stringent regulations on product labelling. According to market research from Mintel, social media is central to K-beauty's popularity in the UK, with 34% of consumers purchasing beauty products after discovering them online. This figure rises to an impressive 58% among Gen Z consumers, highlighting the demographic’s preference for skincare regimes, including the intricate 10-step routines celebrated in South Korea.

Traditionally, K-beauty products had a limited presence in brick-and-mortar stores, which hindered broader appeal. However, the burgeoning online success is now translating into significant in-store purchases. Major UK retailers, such as Boots and Superdrug, have broadened their K-beauty selections, featuring products like Cosrx's snail mucin essence and Anua's serum containing PDRN, an ingredient known for its skin-rejuvenating properties. Georgia Stafford of Mintel notes that K-beauty products often retail at lower prices compared to well-established premium brands, making them particularly appealing for consumers eager to experiment with innovative skincare.

Recent data reveals that Boots sold a K-beauty product every 15 seconds during peak sales periods, and the demand for these products appears resilient even as consumers face financial tightening in other sectors. Barclays indicates that expenditure on beauty and healthcare exceeded average spending increases by 10.2% in the first quarter of the year, demonstrating that K-beauty is thriving amidst broader economic challenges.

The physical transformation of the K-beauty landscape is exemplified by the recent openings of Korean retailer Moida’s stores in London, along with others such as PureSeoul, which has expanded to multiple locations. Markets currently favour areas that are culturally aligned, supporting the idea that K-beauty retailers not only wish to showcase their products but also to create communities around shared cultural experiences, with shops located near Asian-focused businesses enhancing their visibility and consumer engagement.

Consumer experiences further highlight the growing acceptance of K-beauty in the mainstream market. Shoppers like Ike Lawson, who recently visited Korea, affirm that the products resonate due to their effectiveness and the unique ingredients they feature. Lawson’s enthusiasm captures a broader trend where K-beauty has garnered attention not only for its skincare benefits but also for its cultural connection, confirming that the appeal of K-beauty extends beyond mere product efficacy.

Industry analysts predict sustained growth for K-beauty, with expectations that it will evolve into a $18.3 billion global industry by 2030. Factors behind this expansion include consumers’ increasing adoption of K-beauty routines and an appetite for innovative products that address diverse skincare needs. This trend is not confined to the UK; in the US, K-beauty revenue on platforms like Amazon surged by 78% year-over-year in 2023, with TikTok searches for Korean skincare skyrocketing by 180%, reflecting a worldwide embrace of this beauty phenomenon.

As K-beauty continues to flourish, its retailers are embedding themselves in the community, designing spaces not merely for transactions but as cultural enclaves that foster connections among consumers. The strategic choices retailers are making today signal an investment in the future of K-beauty in the UK and beyond, establishing a lasting presence in the skincare market that aligns with the way beauty consumers are evolving.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.irishexaminer.com/business/companies/arid-41629555.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/sep/27/promise-of-glass-skin-drives-surge-in-sales-of-k-beauty-products-in-uk> - This article discusses the surge in sales of K-beauty products in the UK, driven by the 'glass skin' trend. It highlights that demand for upmarket lotions and serums has increased by 13% compared to the previous year. Retailers like Boots are expanding their K-beauty range, adding brands such as Skin1004 and Round Lab. The article also notes that K-beauty is expected to become a $18.3 billion industry by 2030, with South Korean beauty standards influencing global skincare routines.
* <https://www.cosmeticsdesign.com/Article/2024/10/16/riding-the-second-wave-of-k-beauty-in-the-us-market> - This report examines the growth of K-beauty in the US market, emphasizing the role of digital platforms like Amazon and TikTok. K-beauty revenue on Amazon.com increased by 78% year-over-year in 2023, with sales expected to more than double in 2024. TikTok has also been pivotal, with searches for 'Korean skin care' rising by 180% in 2023. The article highlights the expansion of K-beauty into hair care, color cosmetics, body care, and fragrance, reflecting its broadening appeal.
* <https://www.cosmeticsbusiness.com/cosmetics-business-reveals-the-top-5-k-beauty> - This report outlines the top five K-beauty trends of 2025, including the rise of overnight masks and the 'glass skin' trend. It notes that TikTok has become the primary platform for K-beauty exploration, surpassing traditional search engines. Retailers like Sephora and Boots are expanding their K-beauty offerings, with brands such as AESTURA and Skin1004 being added to their portfolios. The article emphasizes that K-beauty's resurgence is a sustained movement driven by various factors, including social media influence.
* <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2025/03/03/3035280/0/en/Global-K-Beauty-Product-Industry-Set-to-Reach-USD-20-4-Billion-by-2035-Driven-by-Rising-Demand-for-Korean-Skincare-Products-FMI.html> - This press release discusses the projected growth of the global K-beauty industry, estimating it will reach USD 20.4 billion by 2035. The growth is attributed to factors such as consumer-focused innovation, clean and sustainable beauty practices, the adoption of multi-step skincare routines, and global accessibility. The article highlights that K-beauty brands are continuously innovating to address specific skin concerns and are expanding their reach through both online and offline retail channels.
* <https://www.allure.com/story/biggest-k-beauty-trends-2023> - This article highlights the seven biggest K-beauty trends of 2023, including the rise of at-home beauty devices that provide in-office results. It notes that devices like LED masks, microcurrent tools, and ultrasound devices have become more diverse, allowing consumers to tackle skin issues at home. The popularity of these devices is attributed to their affordability compared to in-office treatments and the increased time spent at home following the pandemic.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/sep/27/promise-of-glass-skin-drives-surge-in-sales-of-k-beauty-products-in-uk> - This article discusses the surge in sales of K-beauty products in the UK, driven by the 'glass skin' trend. It highlights that demand for upmarket lotions and serums has increased by 13% compared to the previous year. Retailers like Boots are expanding their K-beauty range, adding brands such as Skin1004 and Round Lab. The article also notes that K-beauty is expected to become a $18.3 billion industry by 2030, with South Korean beauty standards influencing global skincare routines.