# K-beauty moves from viral sensation to in-store staple across UK high streets



Korean beauty products are making a significant transition from the realm of online discovery to tangible retail experiences, a shift largely propelled by the dynamic influence of social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Consumers are now finding themselves drawn to physical stores where they can directly test and purchase innovative skin care items that have gained viral status online. Notable ingredients like snail mucin and PDRN (polydeoxyribonucleotide), derived from salmon sperm, have piqued interest and curiosity, cementing K-beauty's place in the UK’s beauty landscape.

The rise of K-beauty is a reflection of South Korea's burgeoning cultural influence, transcending beyond skincare to encompass food, music, and entertainment. The global success of K-pop, alongside streaming phenomena such as K-dramas, has set the stage for beauty brands to capture a wider audience. According to Mintel, a market research firm, social media's role in the popularity of K-beauty cannot be overstated. An impressive 34% of UK users have made beauty purchases influenced by social media, a figure that climbs to 58% among the Gen Z demographic.

Historically characterised by limited availability in physical shops, K-beauty is now thriving in brick-and-mortar settings. Retailers such as Boots and Superdrug have expanded their ranges to include popular lines like Cosrx and Anua, offering products that align with the current obsession for the 'glass skin' aesthetic—a look defined by hydrated, luminous skin. Reports suggest that Boots sells a Korean skincare product every 15 seconds, emphasising a strong consumer appetite for these innovative offerings.

Moreover, the growing trend towards investing in self-care segments, like beauty and wellness products, seems resilient even as consumers tighten their budgets in other areas. Recent figures show that spending in pharmacy, health, and beauty soared by 10.2% in early 2024, further underpinning the K-beauty boom. This trend is anticipated to only accelerate as K-beauty is forecasted to evolve into an $18.3 billion industry by 2030, buoyed by a nearly 10% annual demand increase.

Innovative brands such as Moida and PureSeoul are establishing physical presences in the UK. Moida’s presence in West London’s high-profile shopping centres indicates a strategic move to attract a growing market segment devoted to K-beauty. The decision for retailers to sign long-term leases suggests a belief in the sustainability of K-beauty in the British market.

The allure of K-beauty products lies not just in their exotic ingredients but also in their relatively affordable price points. Compared to established premium brands, K-beauty offers an accessible entry point for consumers keen to experiment with new formulations. This accessibility is crucial in attracting a younger audience keen on maintaining elaborate skincare rituals, which have become commonplace in South Korean culture.

As witnessed in bustling London locations frequented by a diverse clientele, K-beauty retailers are smartly situating themselves alongside other Asian-focused businesses, creating hubs that enhance the shopping experience. The retail landscape reflects this burgeoning interest, with new shops and pop-ups emerging in response to consumer demand. As demonstrated by shoppers who actively seek out K-beauty products after being introduced through social media, the overall experience of shopping for these products has evolved from niche to mainstream.

The current trajectory of K-beauty in the UK signals a significant cultural shift. As more consumers embrace multi-step skincare routines inspired by Korean practices, and as engaging and vibrant retail spaces proliferate, the foundations for sustained popularity appear stronger than ever. Looking ahead, brands such as Moida suggest plans for further expansion, indicating that K-beauty’s presence is poised to deepen as it continues to resonate with consumers across the UK.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraph 4, 5
3. Paragraph 1, 2
4. Paragraph 3
5. Paragraph 2, 3
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 3, 5

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. Brands like Cosrx, Beauty of Joseon, and Laneige have gained popularity through platforms like TikTok, prompting retailers such as Boots to expand their K-beauty offerings. The article also notes that K-beauty is expected to become a $18.3 billion business by 2030, with demand climbing almost 10% annually.
* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/beauty/k-beauty-tik-tok-skin-care-influencers/> - This article explores how TikTok has revitalized interest in K-beauty. It mentions that the hashtag #kbeauty has 9.5 billion views on TikTok, and the term 'Korean glass skin' saw a 134% year-over-year growth on the platform. Products like Cosrx's Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence have become best-sellers due to viral trends. The article also notes that K-beauty is expected to be an $18.3 billion business by 2030, with demand climbing almost 10% annually.
* <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1423613/south-korea-korean-beauty-popularity-in-the-uk/> - This Statista survey from 2023 indicates that 34.4% of UK consumers who have experienced South Korean cultural content believe Korean beauty is popular in the UK. This reflects a steady interest in K-beauty products among UK consumers.
* <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/world/archives/2024/09/30/2003824592> - This article reports on the surge in sales of K-beauty products in the UK, driven by the 'glass skin' trend. It notes that demand for upmarket lotions and serums has increased by 13% compared to the previous year. Brands like Cosrx, Beauty of Joseon, and Laneige have gained popularity through platforms like TikTok, prompting retailers such as Boots to expand their K-beauty offerings. The article also mentions that K-beauty is expected to become a $18.3 billion business by 2030, with demand climbing almost 10% annually.
* <https://beautinews.com/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. Brands like Cosrx, Beauty of Joseon, and Laneige have gained popularity through platforms like TikTok, prompting retailers such as Boots to expand their K-beauty offerings. The article also notes that K-beauty is expected to become a $18.3 billion business by 2030, with demand climbing almost 10% annually.
* <https://cosmeticsbusiness.com/cosmetics-business-reveals-the-top-5-k-beauty> - This article reveals the top 5 K-beauty trends of 2025, highlighting the rise of overnight masks and the 'glass skin' trend, led by products such as Sungboom’s Deep Collagen Anti-Wrinkle Lifting Mask. It notes that TikTok has become the primary platform for K-beauty exploration, surpassing traditional search engines, and fueling renewed consumer interest. Retailers are expanding their selection of K-beauty brands, with Sephora US adding Korean sensitive skin brand AESTURA and Boots in the UK adding six new K-beauty brands, including Anua, Skin1004, and Mixsoon.