# K-Beauty’s unique ingredients propel surge in UK high street sales



# The Rise of K-Beauty: Snail Slime and Salmon Sperm Make a Splash in the UK

Korean beauty products, renowned for their innovative ingredients and striking marketing, are making a significant leap from digital realms to physical storefronts across the UK. With social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram driving an ever-growing trend, skincare items infused with unique components such as snail slime and salmon sperm are capturing the attention of local consumers eager to experience the famed K-beauty phenomenon.

The latest iteration of this beauty movement showcases a demand robust enough to prompt retailers to establish physical locations. Though some brands, including well-known names like Beauty of Joseon and Laneige, have been available through niche online retailers, British shoppers can now directly engage with these products, enjoying the opportunity to test their purported benefits in person.

A considerable driving force behind K-beauty’s meteoric rise in the UK is the pursuit of the sought-after 'glass skin' look—a trend that focuses on achieving a luminous, hydrating finish. The appeal of such products stems not only from their aesthetics but also from the backing of a cultural shift highlighting Korean ingredients and traditions. As Georgia Stafford from the market research firm Mintel notes, the visibility of these products on social media has led to a staggering 34% of users purchasing beauty items after seeing them online, a statistic that soars to 58% among Gen Z users.

Remarkably, one in five Gen Z consumers is now engaging with K-beauty, a stark contrast to an overall adoption rate of just 8%. This generation is drawn to elaborate skincare routines, often incorporating the lengthy 10-step processes that have gained prominence in South Korea. The prospect of achieving that "glass skin" allure pushes these younger consumers closer to K-beauty products.

Until recently, K-beauty items had a limited audience, primarily available online. However, the shift to in-store experiences is now palpable. Consumers can readily access products such as Cosrx’s snail mucin essence—informally known as snail slime—at retailers like Superdrug and Boots. Boots, in particular, is witnessing a sales surge, reportedly selling a K-beauty product nearly every 15 seconds during peak shopping periods.

The economic landscape also favours beauty spending; Barclays reported that pharmacy, health, and beauty expenditures rose by 10.2% compared to the previous year, signalling a robust market amidst broader consumer budget constraints. K-beauty is not just about skin; it represents a wider cultural interest, translating into a projected global market value of $18.3 billion by 2030, expanding at an annual rate close to 10%.

As part of this burgeoning market, physical retail space is rapidly evolving. The recent opening of Moida's second store in London's West End follows the brand’s debut in December, further complemented by rivals such as PureSeoul, which boasts multiple locations across the UK. Meanwhile, Skin Cupid is set to capitalise on its initial success with a new central London outlet.

Brands are ensuring that the essence of Korean culture resonates through their retail experiences. For example, the managing director of LG Household & Health Care UK, Steven Jeong, acknowledges the blend of online and in-person channels as essential to engaging customers effectively. LG's resurgence into the beauty market with its K-beauty brand, Belif, marks a significant moment for a company historically rooted in electronics but now looking to connect with UK consumers through skincare.

Viewing K-beauty as part of the broader Korean Wave—hallyu—many are drawn to international phenomena stemming from Korean film, music, and cuisine. K-beauty in particular leverages this cultural cache, attracting consumers who have either travelled to Korea or engaged with Korean media, as evidenced by stories of shoppers like 28-year-old Ike Lawson, who found K-beauty through K-dramas and personal experience.

Among the plethora of products available, substances such as snail mucin and polydeoxyribonucleotide (PDRN), derived from salmon sperm, are increasingly in the spotlight. These ingredients are believed to offer a range of skincare benefits, including improved hydration and anti-aging properties, and have recently gained traction through cultural references—like those seen in popular music and television.

In conclusion, the transition of K-beauty from online curiosity to high street favourite underscores a larger trend towards embracing innovative skincare solutions. With physical outlets expanding and consumer interest soaring, it seems clear that K-beauty is here to stay, representing more than just skincare—it's a cultural movement poised to redefine beauty standards across the UK.

## 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/2024/sep/27/promise-of-glass-skin-drives-surge-in-sales-of-k-beauty-products-in-uk)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[5]](https://eliza.co.uk/beauty/snail-mucin)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/sep/27/promise-of-glass-skin-drives-surge-in-sales-of-k-beauty-products-in-uk), [[6]](https://www.arabianbusiness.com/lifestyle/glass-skin-and-snail-mucus-inside-the-unusual-world-of-korean-skincare-a-trend-or-beauty-secret)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/sep/27/promise-of-glass-skin-drives-surge-in-sales-of-k-beauty-products-in-uk), [[3]](https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/3192308/salmon-sperm-your-skincare-latest-k-beauty-trend-seen-doja)
* Paragraph 5 – [[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/2024/sep/27/promise-of-glass-skin-drives-surge-in-sales-of-k-beauty-products-in-uk), [[4]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/korean-beauty-products-trend-skincare-innovation-sheet-masks-snail-slime-egg-whites-a7706281.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[7]](https://skincaredailynews.com/2024/01/these-two-skincare-ingredients-are-getting-lots-of-attention-but-are-they-worth-it/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/08/snail-slime-salmon-sperm-k-beauty-boom-hits-uk-high-streets), [[5]](https://eliza.co.uk/beauty/snail-mucin)
* Paragraph 8 – [[3]](https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/3192308/salmon-sperm-your-skincare-latest-k-beauty-trend-seen-doja), [[6]](https://www.arabianbusiness.com/lifestyle/glass-skin-and-snail-mucus-inside-the-unusual-world-of-korean-skincare-a-trend-or-beauty-secret)

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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/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 Korean beauty (K-beauty) products in the UK, driven by the desire for the 'glass skin' look. It highlights the popularity of brands like Cosrx, Beauty of Joseon, and Laneige, and notes that demand for upmarket lotions and serums has increased by 13% compared to the previous year. The piece also mentions that K-beauty is expected to become a $18.3 billion industry by 2030, with demand climbing at almost 10% annually.
3. <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/3192308/salmon-sperm-your-skincare-latest-k-beauty-trend-seen-doja> - This article explores the use of salmon sperm DNA, known as polydeoxyribonucleotide (PDRN), in K-beauty products. It explains that PDRN is believed to enhance skin elasticity and collagen levels, offering regenerative and anti-inflammatory effects. The piece also notes that products containing salmon sperm DNA have gained popularity, with mentions in Doja Cat's 'Vegas' music video and the TV show 'Extraordinary Attorney Woo'.
4. <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 K-beauty products, including sheet masks and snail slime-infused creams. It highlights Tony Moly's 'I’m Real Rice Mask' and Mizon's 'All in One Snail Repair Cream', emphasizing their effectiveness in brightening, plumping, and hydrating the skin. The piece also discusses the incorporation of snail secretion filtrate in South Korean beauty products and its benefits for skin health.
5. <https://eliza.co.uk/beauty/snail-mucin> - This article provides an overview of snail mucin in skincare, detailing its benefits such as improved hydration, enhanced wound healing, and reduced signs of aging. It recommends products like COSRX's Advanced Snail 92 All In One Cream and NEOGEN Dermalogy Cica Repair Snail Essence, noting their popularity in the UK market and availability through specialized retailers.
6. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/lifestyle/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' through the use of ingredients like snail mucin and salmon sperm DNA. It explains that polydeoxyribonucleotide (PDRN) derived from salmon DNA is believed to promote skin regeneration, improve hydration, and stimulate collagen production, offering anti-aging benefits.
7. <https://skincaredailynews.com/2024/01/these-two-skincare-ingredients-are-getting-lots-of-attention-but-are-they-worth-it/> - This article examines the rising popularity of snail mucin and salmon sperm DNA in skincare products. It discusses the benefits of snail mucin, including improved hydration and reduced signs of aging, and the potential advantages of salmon sperm DNA, such as enhanced skin regeneration and collagen production. The piece also notes the need for more extensive research to fully validate these benefits.