

K-BEAUTY: A GLOW UP FOR UK RETAIL?

March 2026



The influence of Asian culture has accelerated dramatically across the UK over the past five years. The evidence is wide and far reaching, from K Pop demon hunters, to the sell-out Labubu, and the sharp rise in Asian Gaming IPs. As the once “niche” subculture continues to mature into a mainstream force, the K-beauty sector offers an opportunity to major centres and streets.

What is K-Beauty?

K-Beauty covers a wide range of skincare, make-up and cosmetics from South Korea and is praised for its high quality and good value. Think transformative serums, high quality ingredients, and most importantly compelling value. K-beauty has emerged as a disruptive force in the beauty sector and South Korea is now the world’s second-largest exporter of cosmetics with exports reaching over US \$11 billion in 2025.

K Beauty’s popularity stems from its innovation and forward-thinking formulations. It is driven by research and development that stays ahead of western trends, aided by regulatory R&D agility. This bodes well as conscious consumerism continues to influence spending patterns as consumers gravitate towards gentle formulations and the advanced technology that K-beauty is celebrated for. Furthermore, the industry has emerged as a supply chain superpower, characterised by continuous innovation, and unrivaled speed to market.

As well as strong market positioning, K-beauty

resonates particularly with younger consumer segments, a market often hard to pin down. Tik Tok has supercharged K-Beauty’s growth by creating viral trends, connecting brands directly with young consumers, and accessible purchasing via Tik Tok Shop. Viral success has pushed K-Beauty into major stores like Sephora, Boots, Space NK and we are seeing rapid expansion with K-Beauty retailers opening physical stores across the UK, indicating it is a long-term movement rather than a fleeting trend.

Is this just a trend or a structural shift?

Despite the viral nature of the sector, such a strong product offering and wider market data suggests K-Beauty will play an important role in years to come. Vogue Business noted that the UK Korean Beauty sector will grow from £439 million in 2023 to £855 million by 2032, representing a compound annual growth rate of 7.8% and positioning K-Beauty as one of the fastest-growing divisions in the beauty industry. In 2025, Boots sold one K-Beauty product every 15 seconds, and in 2024 L’Oreal acquired premium Korean skincare brand Dr. G, a clear signal of sustained momentum. As major UK beauty retailers continue to expand their K-Beauty ranges, the market is expected to deliver another strong year of growth.



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What is the impact on UK Real Estate?

UK-based K-Beauty retailers are steadily expanding their physical presence, structurally supporting demand and already driving competitive tension in prime locations.

PURESEOUL, one of the market leaders, has grown from an online launch in 2019 to 14 UK stores, recently opening a flagship on Carnaby Street and scaling across prime locations in the major cities. Moida opened in Westfield London in 2024 and has since added Leicester Square and Manchester, with Battersea Power Station next. Skin Cupid followed with a 3,000 sq ft flagship on Charing Cross Road in 2025. A number of K-beauty brands remain active within the UK market, many with multiple national requirements.

Store fit-outs are bold and experience-led, with

vibrant interiors and clearly defined zones for discovery and education. The stores are designed to be immersive, community-focused and are built to stand out. Clustering is also driving momentum; Moida, Skin Cupid and PURESEOUL now all trade within four minutes of each other on Charing Cross Road, creating a Gen Z beauty hotspot, all of which continue to trade well and driving footfall.

For landlords, K-Beauty represents a new wave of occupier: digitally native, fast-scaling and proven at driving footfall and online buzz. K-Beauty provides a unique opportunity to inject energy, stay relevant, and access younger customers across the Gen-Z and Millennial segments. The sector has already demonstrated its ability to scale nationally, with strong demand for 1,000 sq ft - 3,000 sq ft. Supported by strong fundamentals we expect sustained expansion and believe K-Beauty is well positioned to become a long-term contributor to the UK retail landscape.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



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