KOREAN SKINCARE MARKET · ALGERIA

K-beauty took hold in Algeria without a single Korean brand established there.

In a little over three years, Korean skincare has become the new reference for skin care in Algeria. None of these brands is genuinely established there, none communicates directly, and the supply described by retailers remains largely informal. The market was built without them.

HOW WE WENT ABOUT IT

Study type	Qualitative, exploratory
Consumer arm	7 focus groups · women aged 16 to 50 · SEC AB and BC+ · users of Korean skincare
Retail arm	5 face-to-face individual interviews with cosmetics store managers
Coverage	Algiers
Fieldwork	December 2025 for the retail arm · report published January 2026

01 Adoption was cultural before it was cosmetic.

The rise dates from the post-Covid period, around 2022–2023, and coincides with the explosion of TikTok. The study describes a three-step consumer logic: Korean culture is valued, that valuation installs credibility, and credibility precedes interest in the product. The category never had to introduce itself — it arrived in the wake of K-dramas and K-pop.

02 The European reference point has shifted.

Set against Korean products by the participants, European brands — long established — are described as less effective, with results barely visible, technologies judged dated and formulas perceived as more chemical and more aggressive. The halt to imports, which ended nearly two decades of European use and made those products expensive, opened the door. K-beauty walked through it.

Culture precedes the product in building trust

01	02	03
Korean culture valued	Perceived credibility	Interest in the products

Consumer logic as the study sets it out. Qualitative study: this sequence describes a mechanism, it does not measure how often it occurs.

03 With no brand established, the point of sale prescribes.

No Korean brand is genuinely established in Algeria and none communicates directly to the Algerian public: the relationship is built on product experience and on social media trends. The salesperson becomes the prescriber — saying what works, what to avoid, what is counterfeit. The women interviewed choose their shop as much as their product. In the retailers interviewed, Korean skincare was said to account for 60 to 80% of sales against European products (20 to 40%) — a declared order of magnitude, drawn from a small sample and limited to Algiers.

Two reference points, as the participants describe them

	KOREAN SKINCARE	EUROPEAN SKINCARE
Perceived efficacy	— Perceived as more effective — Faster results — Visible effects	— Perceived lack of efficacy — Results barely or not visible
Technology and formulation	— New technologies — Products perceived as more concentrated — Constant innovation	— Technologies perceived as dated — Evolution judged limited — Formulas perceived as outdated
Naturalness and composition	— Perceived as more natural — Gentle products, kind to the skin — Clean image	— Perceived as more chemical — Products judged more aggressive — Less reassuring on composition

Perceptions stated in focus groups. Qualitative study: these elements describe representations, they do not measure product performance.

WHAT THE FULL STUDY CONTAINS

- Four user profiles and their detailed routines
- The map of brands present, their popularity cycle and their gateway products
- Price brackets by product type and the logic of repurchase
- The retail arm: supply circuits, sales structure, counterfeiting
- The active ingredients sought, by age group and by skin concern
- The concept test for a local offer: reception, expected brand codes and ideal range

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Qualitative exploratory study: the elements presented describe perceptions and usage and are not intended to be extrapolated to the whole market. The orders of magnitude quoted are declared, drawn from a small sample and limited to Algiers. No interviewed retailer and no element of the concept test is identified here.

WHAT THIS IMPLIES

01 A category with no owner.

No brand occupies the ground it created. The demand exists and so does the credibility, but that credibility is carried by a country of origin rather than by a brand — and so transfers to whichever brand is at the counter on the day of purchase.

02 The point of sale is the category's medium.

In a market where no brand communicates directly, the salesperson combines the roles of prescriber, guarantee of authenticity and after-sales service. Any entry strategy that ignores this is talking into the void.