

How Glow Theory is bringing K-Beauty to SA

By  Maroefah Smith

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The Korean Wave has brought several things to our shore, but K-Beauty has caused a surge in the beauty world. More and more beauty enthusiasts are looking at Korean beauty techniques and products to achieve flawless skin.



It's made such a buzz that US department store [Target launched its own line](#) of K-Beauty products, while [Forever 21's beauty store Riley Rose](#) had dedicated itself to carrying an extensive range of K-Beauty products.

It has slowly started making its way down to South Africa and one of the e-tailers bringing it closer to home is [Glow Theory](#). Tamsin van Tonder started Glow Theory in 2017 after becoming frustrated with shipping products from South Korea.

Here, she lets us in on how she selects the products, goes about marketing them on social media, and the products every K-Beauty newbie needs.

■ **What differentiates K-Beauty from western beauty products?**

I think there are a few aspects that set it apart; the first is the focus on being kind to your skin – it's virtually impossible to find harsh, astringent products in the K-Beauty realm. The focus is instead on products that will give you healthy, hydrated skin long term.

Second, the innovation in the Korean skincare industry is second to none. I'm just now starting to see Korean-inspired releases from Western brands of products that have been common in Korea for many years. From BB cream and cushion compacts to sheet masks and essences, Korean brands lead the way in innovation and research.

Third, K-Beauty is highly customisable for each individual's skincare concerns – there tends to not be much focus on a miracle 'all-in-one' product, but rather on targeted products for specific skin concerns that allow consumers to put together a routine that's best for their individual skin needs.

■ **What are some of the challenges of catering to such a niche consumer market?**

I believe there are two main challenges I'm currently facing as a K-Beauty startup in South Africa: the first is reaching potential customers who are already interested in Korean beauty but don't yet know that it's available in South Africa, and the second is balancing my desire to only stock a curated selection of products I personally endorse and believe in, with meeting consumer demands for the latest trending products and brands.



■ **How do you source the products?**

I stay up to date on the latest releases from Korea by reading a variety of blogs and websites (something I enjoyed doing before Glow Theory launched, and the reason I have personally used K-Beauty products for many years now) and reach out to brands online if I am interested in their product offering.

Regular trips to Korea help to maintain good business relations, as well as providing insight into which products are popular in the country, which can often differ from those getting attention in the Western markets.

■ **You add a note to say thanks for each order. How important are such small details in maintaining a positive relationship with your consumers?**

Very important. I shopped online for many years prior to launching Glow Theory and, due to this, my approach to customer service is to provide the kind of buying experience that I personally enjoy as an online shopper. Many of Glow Theory's customers have shopped with us since our launch month, and so I often feel like I'm writing notes to friends when I'm composing the thank you note. It helps that I genuinely am thankful that they trust Glow Theory with their skin!

■ **What role does social media play in marketing your business?**

The majority of Glow Theory's customer base has come from social media. It's a great (and cost-effective) way to reach out to customers and allow them to get to know your brand; it's also convenient for addressing customer questions and providing info. Lastly, it affords the opportunity to have complete control over your brand aesthetic and image.

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NEW BRAND // Have you checked out our latest curation, Pyunkang Yul? Developed by a Seoul-based Asian Medicine Clinic famous for treating skin issues, @pyunkangyul is perfect for stressed, dull, and inflamed skin. Their cult favourite Essence Toner is a must have for soothing and intense hydration, while the ATO Blue Label Cream includes a fantastic ingredient list formulated with 50% Honeysuckle Flower Extract, Ceramide, and Copper Peptides, perfect for nourishing and calming skin. We're so excited to have them on board! If you have any questions about the brand, leave them below! 💎💎 #shopglowtheory #koreanbeauty #rasianbeauty #abcommunity #kbeauty #kbeautyza #koreanbeautyza #pyunkangyul #pyunkangyullessencetoner #essencetoner #7skinmethod #blues #blueandpink #blueandgreen #orientalmedicine #seoulkorea #seoul #atopicdermatitis

A post shared by [Korean Beauty South Africa \(@shopglowtheory\)](#) on Jul 5, 2018 at 8:54am PDT

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■ ***You recently added the Pyunkang Yul range to your collection of products. What other product launches should we expect in the future?***

I don't want to let the cat out of the bag just yet, but our next big launch is a very well-known brand that has been one of the most popular among all the customer requests we receive. I'm excited to be working directly with the brand to launch the products in South Africa!

Other than that, we'll be focusing on curating ready-made skincare kits for customers who want to avoid the confusion of putting together their own routine (something that's been highly requested for a while now), as well as on a quarterly beauty box that will allow Glow Theory customers to experience brands and products we don't currently stock.

■ ***What are the key products a K-Beauty newbie should stock up on?***

Proper cleansing is one of the most important elements of the K-Beauty routine, so my first choice would be a balm

cleanser such as the Banila Co. Clean It Zero or Heimish All Clean Balm. Next, a gentle chemical exfoliant like the Cosrx BHA Liquid to clean out pores and prevent breakouts without damaging your skin.

And, of course, we definitely can't forget sheet masks! No other product has the ability to immediately change the condition of your skin like a good quality sheet mask, and it's certainly the product most synonymous with Korean beauty.

ABOUT MAROEFAH SMITH

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