> **SPEC SAMPLE — illustrative, not commissioned by any brand.** This is a demonstration of Yunju Company's "$150 Korea market snapshot" format. "Brand X" is a hypothetical US D2C skincare brand. No real brand hired us or reviewed this document. All prices were read from public pages on **2026-10-30 (KST)** and change often.

Korea Market Snapshot: US D2C Skincare Entering Korea

Subject: Brand X (hypothetical) — a US direct-to-consumer skincare brand selling a barrier-repair moisturizer, a toner and a niacinamide serum, considering a first Korea launch. **Prepared by:** Yunju Company (Gwangju, Korea) · **Date:** 2026-10-30 · **Format:** 5-page snapshot

How to read this report. Every number has a source in Section 7 (with the date accessed). Statements are tagged: **[Fact]** = taken from an opened source · **[Estimate]** = our reading of facts · **[Assumption]** = a premise about Brand X we made up for this sample.

Summary

- **[Fact]** Korea's cosmetics industry hit records in 2025: domestic production KRW 17.94 trillion (skincare KRW 10.32 trillion) and exports USD 11.4 billion, while imports were only USD 1.29 billion [S1].
- **[Estimate]** Korea is a crowded skincare market, not an empty one. A foreign brand competes with strong local brands at KRW 15,000–30,000 per toner or serum. Brand X needs a clear reason to buy (an ingredient story, a format, or a "US derm brand" angle), not just "imported".
- **[Fact]** Foreign skincare brands already sell well at Olive Young, e.g. The Ordinary, Paula's Choice, Kiehl's and Bioderma [S5–S8].
- **[Estimate]** Best low-risk test: cross-border on Coupang (no Korean entity needed [S10]) plus Korean content on Instagram/Naver. Then move to a local importer for Olive Young and functional-cosmetic claims.

1. Market size and trends

Indicator (2025)	Value	Tag / source
Domestic cosmetics production	KRW 17.94 trillion (+2.3% YoY, record)	Fact [S1]
— of which skincare ("basic cosmetics")	KRW 10.32 trillion (57.5%)	Fact [S1][S2]
Functional cosmetics production	KRW 7.18 trillion (40.0% of production; −2.3% YoY)	Fact [S1]
Cosmetics exports	USD 11.4 billion (+11.8%); skincare 74.7% of exports	Fact [S1][S2]
Cosmetics imports	USD 1.29 billion (−2.3%)	Fact [S1]
Olive Young standalone revenue	KRW 5.83 trillion (+21.8%)	Fact [S3]
Foreign shoppers' share of Olive Young offline sales	about 28%	Fact [S3]
Brands with KRW 10bn+ annual sales at Olive Young	116 (36 in 2020)	Fact [S4]

Trends we can support with sources

- **[Fact]** Fastest-growing skincare product types in 2025 production: packs/masks (+28.3%), hand/foot softening (+18.2%), body products (+16.0%). In functional cosmetics, whitening/brightening (+9.7%) and sunscreen (+9.4%) grew [S1].
- **[Fact]** Six brands passed KRW 100bn sales at Olive Young in 2025: Dr.G, d'Alba, Round Lab, MEDIHEAL, CLIO, Torriden [S4].
- **[Fact]** Tourists are a big share of offline demand: foreign customers went from 2% (2022) to 28% (2025) of Olive Young offline sales [S3].
- **[Estimate]** Imports are small next to local output, so most of the shelf is Korean. A foreign brand wins on a clear point of difference, not on being foreign.
- **Not verified:** the total Korean *retail* skincare market size (consumer spend). Production is not the same as retail sales, so we do not give a retail market figure.

2. Channels: what each is good for

Channel	What it is	Good for Brand X	Watch-outs
Olive Young (online + stores)	Korea's main health & beauty chain. Fast delivery service "오늘드림"; stores in tourist areas act as showrooms [S3][S4]	Credibility, trial, tourist traffic; where buyers compare brands side by side	Needs a Korean importer (Responsible Seller) and Korean labels. Deals happen in-store and online at the same time [Estimate]
Coupang (marketplace; Rocket / global fulfillment)	Large e-commerce marketplace. Its cross-border seller program says no Korean language and no Korean business entity are required [S10]. Coupang Global Fulfillment handles storage, shipping, customs, returns and Korean CS (page describes a China hub) [S11]	A low-cost first test of demand with real Korean reviews	Which fulfillment option fits a US-based brand: **not verified**, check with Coupang. Price competition is strong [Estimate]
Naver Smart Store / Brand Store	Naver Shopping storefronts. Brand Store is for brands that make their own products or own the trademark, and some Naver shopping-search ad placements need Brand Store [S12]	Search traffic, an official brand page, owned reviews	Needs a Korean operator for CS and returns [Estimate]. Fee levels: not verified here
Kakao (KakaoTalk Gift + Talk channel)	Gift-giving inside KakaoTalk: about 189.5 million gifts sent in 2025, 8,700+ brands; a beauty voucher was the #1 wish-list item; Dior Beauty #1 in self-purchase [S13]. Kakao commerce GMV KRW 10.6 trillion in 2025 [S14]	Gift sets (holidays, Pepero Day, Valentine's); a Talk channel for CRM and repeat orders	Works best once the brand is known; giftable set packaging needed [Estimate]
Instagram and other social (YouTube, Naver Blog)	Where discovery, reviews and creator content happen [Estimate]	Korean creator reviews, before/after routines, launch hype	Ads must follow the Cosmetics Act (no medicine-like claims; claims must be substantiated) [S16]. Platform user numbers: not verified here

3. Benchmark brands in Korea (live Olive Young prices)

All prices from Olive Young Korea pages, read **2026-10-30**. "List" = crossed-out price, "Sale" = price shown that day.

Brand (origin)	Product (as listed)	List KRW	Sale KRW	Source
The Ordinary (Canada; foreign entrant)	Glycolic Acid 7% Exfoliating Toner 100 ml / 240 ml	11,300 / 16,900	—	[S5]
The Ordinary	Argireline Solution 10% 30 ml; Vitamin C Suspension 23% + HA Spheres 2% 30 ml	14,700; 12,300	—	[S6]
Paula's Choice (US; foreign entrant, has a Korean company and its own Korean online store [S9])	BHA Liquid Exfoliant 118 ml set (+30 ml)	39,000	31,200	[S5]
Paula's Choice	25% Vitamin C + Glutathione Clinical Serum 30 ml	99,000	79,200	[S7]
Kiehl's (US)	Ultra Facial Cream 28/50/150 ml (from)	49,000~	41,650~ (KRW 83,300 per 100 ml~)	[S8]
Bioderma (France)	Hydrabio Toner 500 ml set (+250 ml)	40,000	—	[S5]
Round Lab (Korea; KRW 100bn+ brand [S4])	1025 Dokdo Toner 500 ml set (+100 ml)	30,000	26,800	[S5]
Torriden (Korea; KRW 100bn+ brand [S4])	DIVE-IN Low-Molecular Hyaluronic Acid Toner 500 ml set	29,000	19,800	[S5]
Anua (Korea)	Heartleaf 77 Toner 350 ml + 350 ml refill set	49,000	27,500	[S5]

[Estimate] What this shows: Korean leaders sell large toners (500 ml or 350 ml + refill) at about KRW 20,000–27,000 on sale. Foreign brands are found at both ends: The Ordinary in the low price band and Paula's

Choice/Kiehl's in the KRW 30,000–80,000 band. Bonus volume (+30 ml, +refill) is the usual promotion.

4. Price bands (skincare, Olive Young, 2026-10-30)

Band	Price range (KRW, per item as listed)	Examples seen	Implication for Brand X
Value actives	under 17,000	The Ordinary 11,300–16,900 [S5][S6]	Hard to beat on price. Avoid unless Brand X is a "simple actives" brand
Core K-beauty	~17,000–30,000 (sale)	Torriden 19,800; Anua 27,500; Round Lab 26,800 [S5]	Strong local competition, big volume per item
Masstige imports	~30,000–50,000	Paula's Choice BHA 31,200; Bioderma 40,000; Kiehl's from 41,650 [S5][S8]	**[Estimate] Most realistic band for a US D2C brand**
Premium serum	~80,000–100,000	Paula's Choice Vitamin C 79,200 / 99,000 [S7]	Needs strong proof (clinical data, reviews)

Band edges are our own grouping of the listings above **[Estimate]**. **[Assumption]** Brand X's US prices are not given in this sample, so we do not convert prices or suggest a Korean price for Brand X.

5. Regulatory and entry notes (high level, not legal advice)

- **[Fact] Importer.** Anyone who imports cosmetics to distribute or sell in Korea must register a *Responsible Cosmetic Distribution Business* (화장품책임판매업) with MFDS and employ a responsible distribution manager [S15][S17]. Before every import, a standard customs pre-clearance report goes to KPTA [S17].
- **[Fact] Functional cosmetics.** Products that claim whitening/brightening, wrinkle improvement, UV protection and certain other functions are "functional cosmetics". Each product must go through MFDS evaluation or a report. A full MFDS review takes 60 days and the e-filing fee is KRW 189,000. A report (when the product matches notified active ingredients/specs) has no fee and is usually handled the same day [S15][S16]. Selling one without this is prohibited [S16].
- **[Fact] Korean labeling.** Labels must be in easy-to-read Korean (foreign languages can be added). Required: product name, business operator name/address, all ingredients (descending order), volume, batch number, use-by date or period after opening, "functional cosmetic" mark if relevant, and cautions. Imported products must show the manufacturing country and manufacturer [S16][S18].
- **[Fact] Ads and claims.** No labeling or ads that make a cosmetic look like a medicine. Function claims must match the MFDS result, and claims must be substantiated if MFDS asks [S16].
- **Cross-border vs local importer [Estimate]:**
- *Cross-border* (shipped to individual Korean buyers, e.g., via a marketplace): fast to test and no Korean entity on Coupang's program [S10]. The Act treats "directly purchased overseas cosmetics" separately [S16]. Not suitable for Olive Young shelves.
- *Local importer / distributor*: needed for Olive Young, Naver Brand Store operations and functional claims. Brand X would appoint a registered Responsible Seller or set up a Korean entity (as Paula's Choice has done [S9]).

6. Recommendations and next steps (for Brand X)

1. **[Estimate] Pick one hero product and one claim.** Lead with the barrier-repair moisturizer (no functional claim needed), and keep brightening/anti-wrinkle/SPF claims until MFDS evaluation or a report is done.
2. **[Estimate] Test cross-border first (8–12 weeks).** List 2–3 SKUs through Coupang's cross-border program, use Korean product pages, and track reviews and repeat orders before any import costs.
3. **[Estimate] Price in the masstige band (~KRW 30,000–50,000)** with bonus-volume sets, the common promotion format on Olive Young.
4. **[Estimate] Build Korean content before retail.** Korean Instagram + Naver Blog creator reviews, written in natural Korean and with claims that follow the Cosmetics Act.

5. **[Estimate] Phase 2: find a registered Responsible Seller** (importer) to prepare Korean labels and functional-cosmetic filings, then pitch Olive Young and open a Naver Brand Store. Add Kakao gift sets for gifting seasons.

What a paid snapshot adds: the client's real SKUs and US prices, 10+ benchmark products in the client's exact category, Korean search-keyword demand, and a label/claim checklist for each SKU.

7. Sources (all accessed 2026-10-30 KST)

- **S1** MFDS 2025 cosmetics production/export/import statistics (release of 2026-05-22), as reported by Newsis: https://www.newsis.com/view/NISX20260522_0003640574 and JYB TV (full release text): https://www.jybtv.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=206783
- **S2** Korea.net, 2025 cosmetics exports record (search-index summary; skincare share also in S1): https://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Business/view?articleId=285631
- **S3** EBN, CJ Olive Young 2025 results: https://www.ebn.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=1702832
- **S4** CJ Newsroom, "116 K-Beauty Brands Exceed 10 Billion KRW in Sales at Olive Young": https://newsroom.cj.net/from-indie-to-icon-116-k-beauty-brands-exceed-10-billion-krw-in-sales-at-olive-young/
- **S5** Olive Young, Skincare > Skin/Toner category page: https://www.oliveyoung.co.kr/store/display/getMCategoryList.do?dispCatNo=100000100010013
- **S6** Olive Young, The Ordinary feature page: https://www.oliveyoung.co.kr/store/planshop/getPlanShopDetail.do?dispCatNo=500000101070095
- **S7** Olive Young, Paula's Choice 25% Vitamin C + Glutathione Clinical Serum: https://www.oliveyoung.co.kr/store/goods/getGoodsDetail.do?goodsNo=A000000262892
- **S8** Olive Young, Kiehl's Ultra Facial Cream: https://www.oliveyoung.co.kr/store/goods/getGoodsDetail.do?goodsNo=A000000214168
- **S9** Paula's Choice Korea official online store (company: 폴라스초이스코리아 유한회사): https://www.paulaschoice.co.kr/
- **S10** Coupang Global Selling home: https://globalsellers.coupang.com/en/
- **S11** Coupang, "Introducing Coupang Global Fulfillment (CGF)": https://globalsellers.coupang.com/en/newsroom/introducing-coupang-global-fulfillment-cgf-a-game-changing-solution-for-global-sellers/
- **S12** AMPM Marketing Inside, Naver shopping brand-type ads and Brand Store eligibility: https://inside.ampm.co.kr/insight/9814
- **S13** Yonhap, KakaoTalk Gift 2025 data: https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20251224113400017
- **S14** Kakao Corp press release, 2025 results: https://www.kakaocorp.com/page/detail/11931
- **S15** MFDS (English), Functional cosmetics approval process: https://www.mfds.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_24/de011005l001.do
- **S16** Cosmetics Act, English translation (KLRI, via law.go.kr): https://www.law.go.kr/LSW/eng/engLsInfoR.do?lsiSeq=270323
- **S17** Korea Customs Service FAQ, cosmetics import procedure: https://www.customs.go.kr/call/ad/crmcc/selectFaqViewPage.do?cnslKnwlSrno=239&mi=6822
- **S18** Easylaw (MOLEG), 화장품의 기재·표시 (cosmetics labeling): https://www.easylaw.go.kr/CSP/CnpClsMainBtr.laf?ccfNo=4&cciNo=1&cnpClsNo=2&csmSeq=1301&popMenu=ov

Left out because we could not verify them: Korean retail skincare market size; Olive Young store count; Naver/Coupang fee rates; Coupang US-hub logistics details; Instagram/YouTube user numbers in Korea; any USD conversion of KRW prices.

한국어 요약 (Korean summary)

> **SPEC SAMPLE — 실제 브랜드 의뢰 아님.** 가상의 미국 D2C 스킨케어 브랜드(Brand X) 기준 예시입니다.

- 2025년 국내 화장품 생산 17.9조원(기초 10.3조원), 수출 114억 달러로 역대 최대, 수입은 12.9억 달러 [S1].
- 올리브영에는 디오디너리·폴라초이스·키엘·바이오더마 같은 해외 브랜드가 이미 입점해 있음. 국내 1위권 토너는 대용량 기획 세트가 할인가 2~2.7만원대 [S5].
- 미국 D2C 브랜드에 현실적인 가격대는 3~5만원대 매스티지 구간(추정).
- 1단계: 쿠팡 해외 셀러(한국 법인 불필요 [S10])로 수요를 테스트하고 인스타·네이버 블로그에 한국어 콘텐츠를 쌓기. 2단계: 화장품책임판매업자(수입사)를 지정하고 한글 표시·기능성 심사/보고를 마친 뒤 올리브영·네이버 브랜드스토어·카카오 선물하기로 확장.
- 기능성(미백·주름·자외선 등) 표방은 식약처 심사(60일) 또는 보고 후에만 가능 [S15][S16].