



SOUTH KOREA E-COMMERCE MARKET REPORT 2025

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Promise of the Korean Market



Jacob Cooke
CEO, WPIC Marketing + Technologies

Despite its compact size, South Korea punches far above its weight in digital commerce. As the third-largest e-commerce market in Asia-Pacific, it's a nation where 97% of the population enjoys internet access and some 76.9% shop online – including virtually all consumers in their 20s and 30s. At WPIC Marketing + Technologies, our work across APAC gives us a unique vantage point into trends shaping markets like Korea. The market's high-speed connectivity, mobile-first culture, and secure payment systems have fostered tremendous consumer confidence in shopping online.

For global brands, South Korea offers a compelling promise: an audience of savvy, trend-driven consumers with an appetite for quality and innovation. Mirroring trends we've seen in China, **the appetite for high-quality international brands among Korean consumers is stronger than ever.** Whether it's

Western luxury houses finding enthusiastic buyers in Seoul or foreign supplement makers riding a wellness boom, Korean shoppers are eager to embrace the best the world has to offer.

That's why WPIC Marketing + Technologies has invested in building out our Seoul office over the last few years – to help even more of our brand partners capitalize on this opportunity. Additionally, we've expanded our bonded warehouse in the Chinese port city of Weihai, a stone's throw from South Korea, which allows our clients to quickly fulfill cross-border orders from both China, South Korea, and Japan using a single source of inventory.

This report provides a snapshot of annual online sales across key product categories in 2024, along with insights into where growth is coming from. You'll find data on **market size, platform shares, and growth rates** for sectors ranging from **health supplements and athletic apparel to mother & baby, pet products, and beauty.** Our aim is to highlight the biggest opportunities and trends for foreign consumer brands.

A few themes stand out when analyzing the Korean e-commerce landscape. Korean consumers expect fast fulfillment and seamless service – exemplified by Coupang's same-day Rocket Delivery. Social commerce and live shopping are also on the rise – channels like Naver Shopping Live and Kakao Live are gaining traction, and live commerce accounts for ~1.3% of online sales (expected to reach 6% by 2028).

And while the market is fiercely competitive, it's also remarkably dynamic: just a decade ago, local players like Coupang were newcomers, yet by 2023 Coupang had captured nearly 40% of the e-commerce market. The landscape continues to evolve today with new platforms, niches and innovations (from midnight golf outings to AI-powered shopping assistants) that didn't exist a few years ago.

For brands, the **opportunities in Korea are immense** – but capitalizing on them requires understanding the local digital ecosystem. It's no longer enough to rely on one channel or a one-size-fits-all approach. Korean consumers engage with a blend of **search-based marketplaces, social platforms, and O2O (online-to-offline) experiences**. In 2025 and beyond, success will be defined by an omnichannel strategy: integrating marketplace storefronts with social media engagement, leveraging influencers and live streams, and delivering on the high expectations for speed and personalization.

We hope the data and analysis in this report help inform your strategy for South Korea. If the past few years have shown us anything, it's that this market can change quickly – but for those brands willing to adapt and innovate, Korea offers tremendous growth potential. As you'll see in the pages ahead, categories from health supplements to pet care are booming, often outpacing their counterparts in other markets, and Korean consumers are ready to reward brands that meet their needs.

Now is the time to invest in understanding Korea's unique digital commerce landscape – and to seize the opportunity of this vibrant, trendsetting market.

Sincerely,

Jacob Cooke

CEO, WPIC Marketing + Technologies



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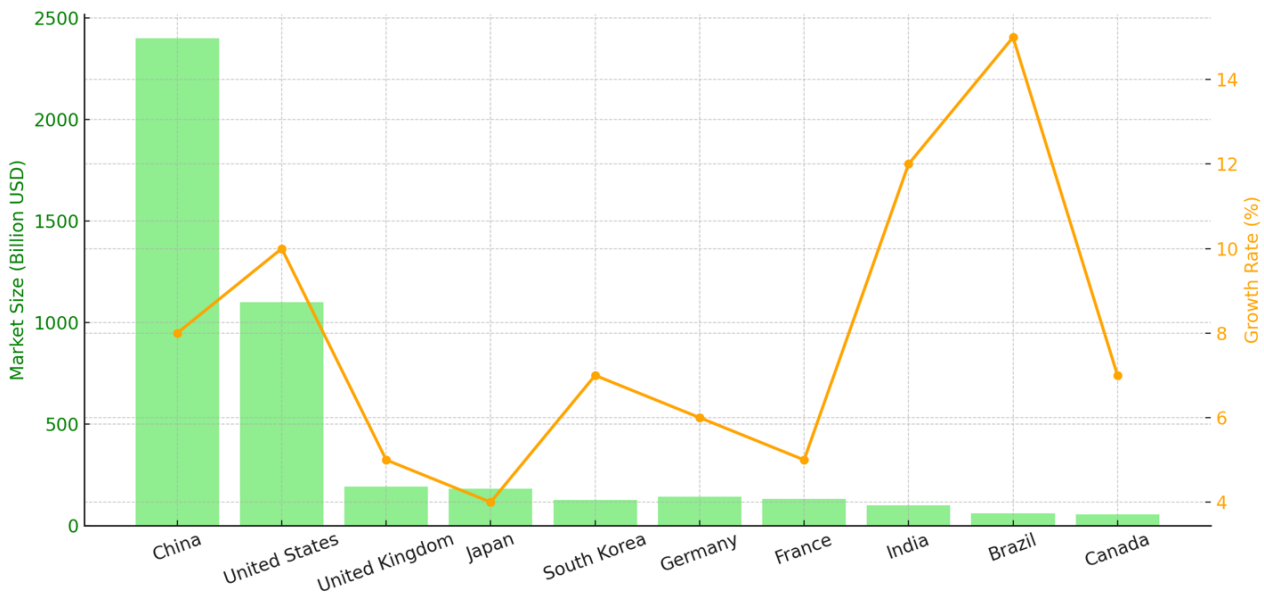


South Korea E-commerce Market Overview: Size & Platforms

South Korea's e-commerce market is huge and still growing. Total online retail transactions reached approximately ₩300 trillion KRW in 2024 (around US\$215 billion), which accounted for roughly one-third of all retail sales, and cementing Korea's status as the #3 e-commerce market in APAC (after China and Japan). Annual growth has normalized to high single digits – roughly 5–

10% in recent years – a robust pace for a now-mature market. Projections remain optimistic: industry forecasts see Korean e-commerce rising by 7–8% CAGR by 2028. In short, the pie is large and getting larger, driven by ubiquitous internet access and consumers' comfort with online shopping as a daily habit.

Top 10 Global E-commerce Markets by Country & Growth (2024)



Major E-commerce Platforms and Market Share

South Korea's e-commerce landscape is dominated by a few homegrown giants. Coupang was the single largest player with an estimated 40% market share and about

₩40 trillion KRW (US\$28 billion) in sales. Close on its heels is Naver Shopping, the e-commerce arm of Korea's top search portal, which together with Coupang accounts for roughly 65% of the local online market. Beyond these two, a handful of other platforms round out the market:

Coupang ~40% share

Coupang has revolutionized online retail with its Rocket Delivery (guaranteed next-day or even same-day shipping for millions of items) and a relentless focus on customer experience. It has built an integrated ecosystem – including streaming (Coupang Play), food delivery (Coupang Eats), and fintech (Coupang Pay) – which keeps users within its platform.

Naver Shopping ~20% share

Naver leverages its position as *the* search engine in Korea to drive e-commerce via the Shopping Search and Naver Smart Store marketplaces. Naver Shopping doesn't hold inventory itself; instead it aggregates thousands of sellers (from major brands to mom-and-pop shops) and provides tools like price comparison, user reviews, and one-stop checkout with Naver Pay. Its integration with the broader Naver ecosystem (search, Naver Cafe forums, Naver Pay wallet, etc.) means consumers often start their product searches on Naver. Live commerce is a strength: Naver's Shopping Live platform is a top destination for livestream shopping in Korea.

Gmarket ~5–8% share

Gmarket is an established open marketplace (along with its sister site Auction) historically known as eBay Korea, which caters to value-conscious shoppers with a wide range of products and frequent deals.

11st (11Street) ~5–6% share

Backed by SK Telecom, 11st is another established online marketplace known for competitive pricing and promotions

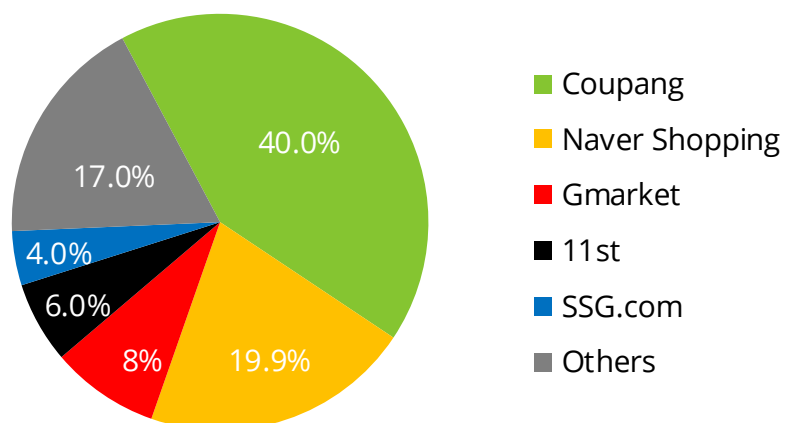
SSG.com ~4% share

SSG.com is the e-commerce platform of Shinsegae Group, integrating the online offerings of Shinsegae Department Store and Emart (Korea's leading hypermarket).

Others

The remaining ~20% of the market is fragmented among various niche and specialized platforms. These include Lotte ON, Kakao, Musinsa, and a long tail of smaller sites.

South Korea E-commerce Platform Market Share (2024)

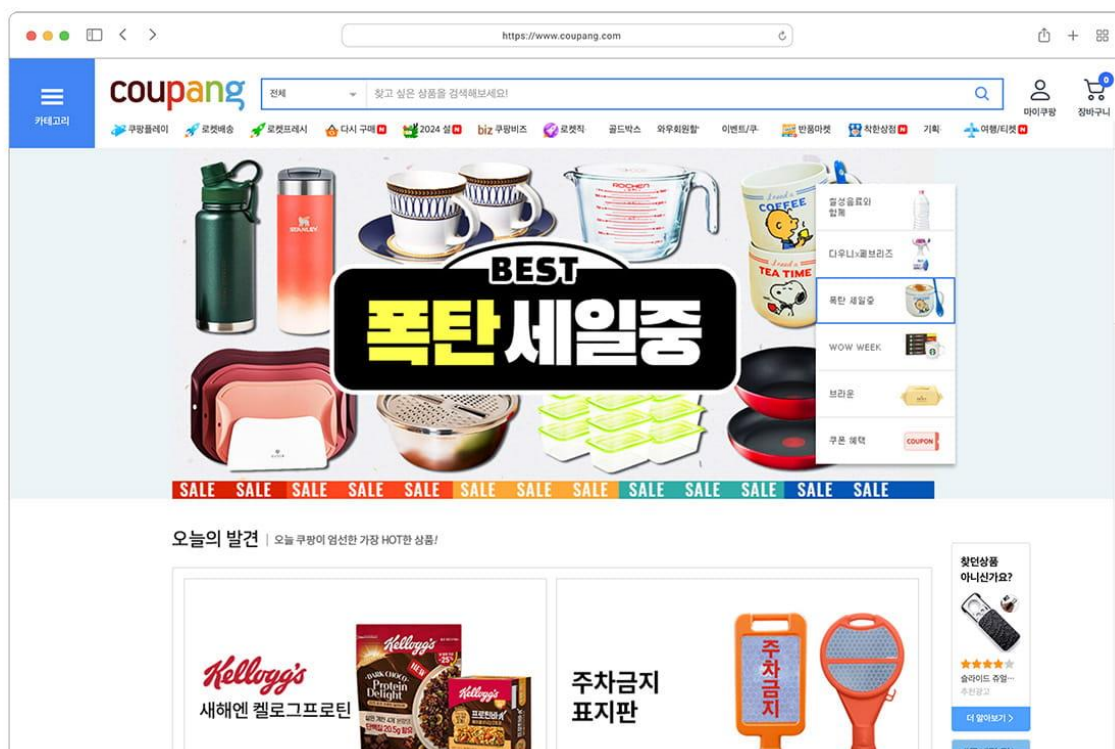


Platform Trends

The competition among these platforms is intense, spurring constant innovation. Fulfillment speed has become a key battleground – for instance, Coupang’s success pressured others to offer faster delivery or click-and-collect options. Membership programs are also prolific: Coupang’s Rocket Wow, Naver’s Green Membership, Lotte’s L.Point, etc., all aim to lock in customer loyalty via free shipping, streaming content, or discounts. Another trend is integrated services (as seen with Coupang’s ecosystem, Naver’s multi-service platform, and Lotte/SSG omnichannel offerings). For foreign brands, understanding the nuances – e.g., Naver’s algorithm favoring content and reviews, or Coupang’s direct buying model – is crucial to formulating a channel strategy. Many brands opt to have official stores on

multiple platforms to maximize reach, often using a mix of direct retail distribution and marketplace storefronts.

Finally, it’s worth noting that **Korean consumers are avid comparison shoppers** – they often browse multiple sites (or use Naver’s comparison features) to find the best deals. Therefore, pricing and promotions need to be managed consistently across platforms. The good news is that platforms like Naver and 11st facilitate cross-border selling, meaning overseas brands can test the market via cross-border e-commerce relatively easily before committing to local inventory. Korea’s high online shopping rate makes it feasible for new entrants to gain traction quickly if their product resonates.





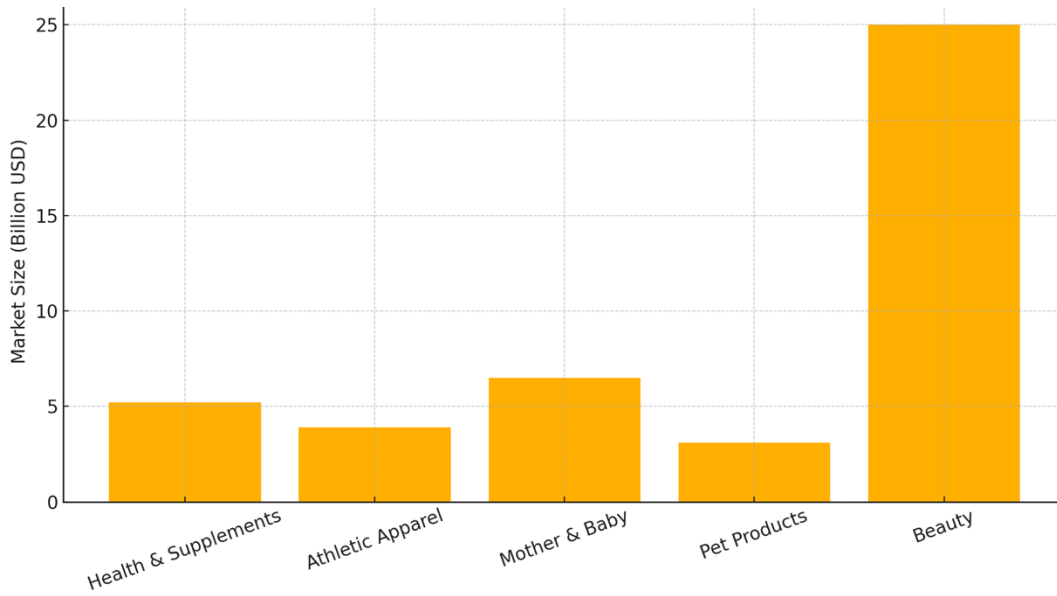
coupang

Fast-Growing Categories

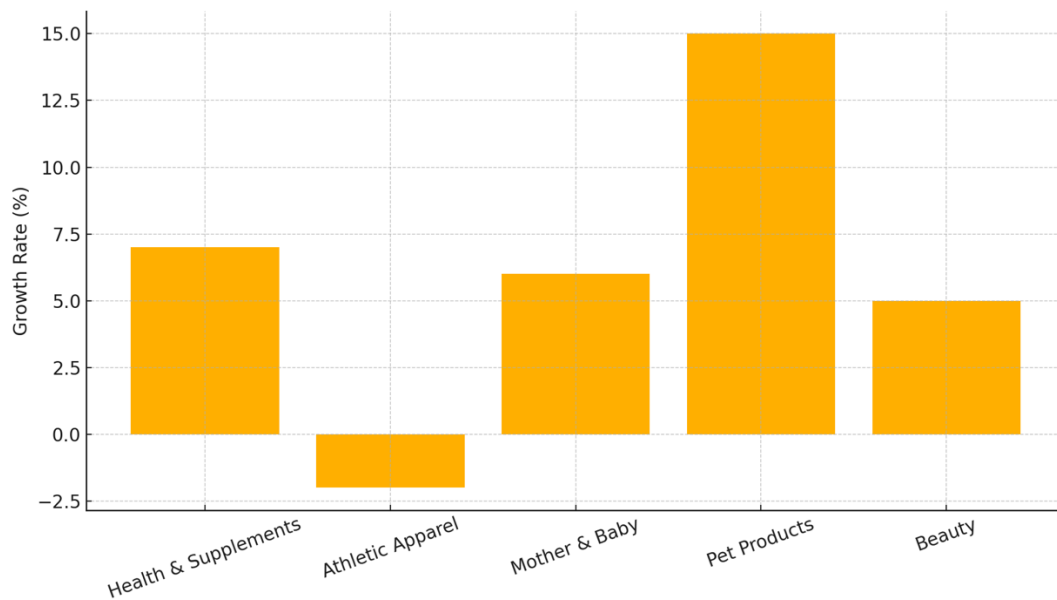
In the following sections, we delve into several key product categories in the Korean e-commerce market. Each of these sectors offers a unique window into consumer

behavior, and each presents distinct opportunities for foreign consumer brands.

South Korea E-commerce Market Size by Category (2024)



South Korea E-commerce Growth Rate by Category (2024)



Health & Supplements

Health and wellness products are a booming online category in South Korea. In 2023, the market for “health functional foods” (the local term for dietary supplements and nutraceuticals) exceeded ₩6.2 trillion KRW (about US\$4.4 billion). This marks a rapid expansion – over +27% growth since 2019 – as Korean consumers increasingly invest in vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies to improve their well-being. Driving factors include an aging population, heightened health awareness (exacerbated by the pandemic years), and a strong preventive health culture.

Approximately *8 in 10 households* in Korea purchase health supplements at least once a year, making it a mainstream shopping category.

Key Trends in Health & Supplements

Targeted Supplement Demand

Korean consumers are seeking specific supplements for specific needs. Popular categories include multivitamins, omega-3 fish oils, vitamin B complexes, probiotics, and red ginseng, each targeting different health concerns (energy, heart health, digestion, immunity, etc.).

Online & Cross-Border Boom

Supplements have a very high online penetration. Consumers value the convenience of recurring online orders for

daily-use products, and they avidly compare reviews and ingredient details on e-commerce sites. Notably, **dietary supplements are the #1 category in cross-border e-commerce** for Korea – they made up about **19% of all cross-border online purchases** by Koreans in recent years.

Preventive Health & Functional Foods

The government’s certification of “health functional foods” (over 400 approved functional ingredients as of 2023) has built consumer trust in supplements. There is a cultural emphasis on **preventive health** – taking supplements to maintain wellness rather than only to address deficiencies. We see growth in niche sub-categories like dietary fiber for digestive health, protein powders for fitness, lutein for eye health, probiotics for gut health, and even beauty-from-within supplements (collagen, biotin). Functional snacks and drinks (like vitamin waters, ginseng tonics) also complement pill-based supplements, blurring the line between food and medicine.



In 2024, online GMV for supplements continued to climb, with industry sources indicating mid-to-high single digit growth year-on-year. The bulk of sales occur on generalist platforms – Coupang and Naver Shopping carry extensive ranges of vitamins and supplements, often with competitive pricing and fast delivery appealing to repeat purchasers. Social commerce is also an emerging channel: influencers and fitness KOLs frequently promote supplement regimens, and Naver Live Commerce hosts nutritionists explaining products via live streams.

For foreign brands in this sector, Korea’s market is attractive but requires building credibility. Korean consumers scrutinize labels and certifications – they respond well

to products with scientific backing or local KFDA (Korea’s regulator) approval for functional claims. Many overseas supplement brands (from GNC to Jamieson to Swisse) have entered Korea, either via direct cross-border or local distribution, to meet demand. The success stories often involve localizing the approach: e.g. highlighting a specific ingredient known to Korean consumers (like ginseng or chlorella), or collaborating with Korean wellness influencers. Given the robust growth and the relatively high price-points consumers are willing to pay for perceived quality, health supplements remain a top opportunity in Korean e-commerce.

Athletic Apparel (Sports & Outdoor)

The sports and outdoor gear sector – encompassing athletic apparel, footwear, and outdoor equipment – has seen tremendous expansion in Korea’s online market, fueled by a nationwide boom in active lifestyles. In 2024, the sports/outdoor market surpassed **₩5.3 trillion KRW in sales (about US\$3.8 billion)**. This category enjoyed a pandemic-era surge: from 2021 to 2023, as people sought outdoor escapes and fitness pursuits, the sector grew around **6–7% annually**. Post-pandemic, growth tempered slightly – 2024 saw a **brief -2% dip** as some consumers shifted spend back to travel and leisure – but the overall market remains far larger than pre-pandemic and is diversifying into new niches. Koreans have embraced outdoor hobbies ranging from hiking and camping to golfing and home workouts, driving healthy demand for related apparel and gear.

Key Trends in Athletic Apparel & Outdoor

Outdoor Fashion and “Athleisure”

Outdoor apparel has transcended specialty use and become everyday fashion. Consumers now wear hiking jackets, fleece vests, trail shoes, and other functional gear as casual streetwear, blending style with utility. This is partly due to social media: hiking trails and campsites in Korea have become Instagrammable scenes where young people sport stylish outdoor outfits. The *athleisure* trend (fitness apparel for daily wear) means items like leggings, jogger

pants, sports bras, and performance T-shirts are in high demand, not just for exercise but for everyday comfort.

Golf Boom

South Korea is the **3rd-largest golf market in the world**, and golf has seen a renaissance among younger generations. A unique Korean twist is the rise of **night golf and screen golf**. Many golf courses now offer illuminated night play, catering to busy professionals golfing after work. Simultaneously, **screen golf venues** – high-tech indoor golf simulators that double as entertainment lounges – have exploded, introducing the sport to new audiences. Rising participation has boosted sales of golf apparel (performance polo shirts, skirts, etc.), as well as equipment like clubs and gloves. Golf fashion is especially hot – Korean golfers, including a large number of women and millennials, tend to dress very stylishly on the course, fueling a sub-market of trendy golf wear and accessories.

Camping and Urban Outdoor Lifestyle

Camping has become *massively popular* in Korea, evolving from a niche hobby to a mainstream leisure activity. There’s high demand for camping gear (tents, portable grills, folding furniture) and also for apparel that suits camping and glamping outings. An interesting trend is “urban camping”, where rooftop tent setups and car-camping in urban areas have become chic weekend activities. Consumers seek gear that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing for these purposes.



In terms of market structure, athletic apparel and outdoor goods are sold via multiple channels. Major e-commerce sites (Coupang, Naver) carry a wide array of sportswear brands and often partner with popular brands for official brand stores or special promotions. Specialty online retailers also thrive – for example, Musinsa (a leading fashion e-commerce platform) has a strong sport/casual section appealing to youths, and there are niche sites dedicated to golf equipment or hiking gear.

Foreign brands are very popular– Nike and Adidas remain top sellers in athletic footwear/apparel, and outdoor aficionados covet imported gear from Patagonia, Arc'teryx, and others. Korean consumers are willing to pay a premium for reputed quality; for instance, high-end Gore-Tex hiking jackets or imported golf clubs are status symbols among hobbyists.

After the slight correction in 2024, the outlook for this category is still positive. Consumer engagement in sports remains high, supported by government campaigns and social trends emphasizing fitness. The market is also segmenting: beyond the big categories of hiking, golf, and camping, there's growth in areas like home fitness equipment, cycling apparel, water sports gear (surfing, paddle-boarding are becoming more popular with younger people). Each of these micro-trends opens a niche for specialized brands.

For foreign brands eyeing Korea's athletic apparel market, a key is to recognize that style matters as much as performance here. Marketing should tap into the lifestyle element – e.g., showing how your running shoes or hiking pants complement the active and urban lifestyle of Korean millennials.

Mother & Baby

The Mother & Baby category in Korea's e-commerce is characterized by high per-capita spending amid low birth rates. South Korea famously has one of the world's lowest fertility rates (around 0.72–0.75 in recent years), yet paradoxically, parents are investing more in each child – a phenomenon often called “golden baby” syndrome. This has sustained a robust market for baby products even as the number of newborns declined. In 2022, the broad mother and infant products market was valued around **US\$6.5 billion**, and it has been growing at roughly **6% CAGR**, and projections indicate it could reach ~\$10–11 billion by 2030.

Key Trends in Mother & Baby

Premiumization & Safety

With fewer children per family, parents (and grandparents) are willing to spend for premium, high-quality products for infants. This includes organic and imported baby foods, gentle “derma” skincare for babies, designer strollers, and premium diapers. Product safety and trust are paramount – Korean parents favor brands with strong safety credentials. For example, foreign infant formula brands (like Germany's Aptamil or New Zealand's A2) have a market because they are perceived as high-quality.

Online Convenience & Mobile Shopping

Busy millennial parents in Korea rely heavily on e-commerce for baby supplies. Around 81.7% of online purchases in the baby/kids

category are made via mobile – one of the highest mobile-shopping rates across categories. It's common to have bulky staples (diapers, formula, wipes) on subscription or ordered on-demand for quick home delivery.

Key Sub-Categories

The mother & baby category spans diapers, infant formula, baby food & snacks, feeding accessories, skincare, apparel, and toys. In Korea, diapers and formula constitute a large share of spending for infants. Diapers are a fiercely competitive segment with frequent online promotions (e.g., bundle packs on Coupang). Baby skincare (shampoos, lotions) is growing thanks to concerns about atopic skin conditions; even mainstream cosmetics companies have introduced baby lines. Baby gear (strollers, car seats, high chairs) is another important sub-sector – these big-ticket items often see parents researching extensively online and even importing specialized models.



In recent years, educational and developmental products for toddlers (like learning toys, Montessori materials) have also seen increased online sales, as intense focus on early childhood development persists in Korea. Furthermore, maternity products for expecting and new mothers (maternity wear, nursing products, etc.) form part of this category; with an older average age of motherhood, these consumers also tend to have higher spending power.

One external factor: the Korean government has ramped up incentives for new parents (cash allowances, etc.) to encourage childbirth. Any uptick in birth rates – and indeed 2024 saw a small rebound in births (+3.6%) – can translate to increased demand for baby products. Even with modest birth increases, the underlying trend is that each child receives significant investment.

From a platform perspective, Coupang is a dominant channel for mother & baby products – its fast delivery and trustworthiness for genuine products resonate strongly. It's not uncommon for parents to be Rocket Wow members primarily for the baby benefits (like quick delivery of diapers at 2 AM if needed!). Naver Shopping also surfaces a lot of baby product retailers, including small boutique brands that sell via Naver Smart Stores.

For overseas brands aiming at this segment, the opportunity lies in niche premium products that are not readily available locally. Korean parents show a penchant for imported goods especially in food and health categories (e.g., DHA drops, organic rice puffs, etc.). However, entering the market requires building credibility – partnering with local mom influencer blogs, attending baby fairs (which are big in Korea), and obtaining any local safety certifications can help.

Pet Products

The Pet category in Korea has been on a meteoric rise, reflecting a societal shift as more people embrace pets as family members. The market for pet-related products and services has expanded rapidly and is now often compared in size and passion to the baby category – in fact, with birth rates down, spending on pets has eclipsed that on babies for many households. In 2023, Korea's pet product market (pet food, supplies, etc.) reached roughly ₩4 trillion KRW (around US\$2.8 billion), and it's projected to hit ₩6 trillion by 2027. The government is even more bullish on the broader pet industry (including services), aiming to double it to ₩15 trillion by 2027. This growth is underpinned by surging pet ownership – about 1 in 4 Korean households now has a pet – and a trend toward “pet humanization” where owners lavish care and money on their furry companions.

Key Trends in Pet Care

Premium Pet Food & Health

Korean pet owners are increasingly opting for premium, human-grade pet foods and supplements. Demand has shifted from basic kibble to higher-end fare: grain-free formulas, organic ingredients, customized diets (some even using meal kits for pets). The pet food market alone reached about US\$2.5 billion in 2024 and is growing

steadily. Within this, dog food is about 2/3 of the market (dogs remain the most common pet) and cat food ~1/3, but cat ownership is rising faster. Many brands now offer functional pet foods targeting issues like joint health or skin & coat, mirroring the functional trend in human foods. Pet supplements (like vitamins for pets, probiotics, dental chews for health) have seen strong double-digit growth as owners look to improve their pets' wellbeing, similar to how they treat themselves.

Pet Products and Accessories

Beyond food, Koreans are spending on pet fashion, toys, and accessories. It's common to see small dogs in Korea dressed in seasonal outfits – thus, apparel and grooming accessories are a notable sub-sector. Pet grooming supplies (shampoos, deodorants) are important especially with many urban pet owners bathing pets at home. There's also a trend of high-tech pet gadgets: automatic feeders, pet cameras, water fountains, even pet strollers (the sight of a dog in a stroller is increasingly common in Korean parks). With many young couples postponing children, expenditure on pets as “kids” has risen, leading to the coined term “pet kids”. A clear indicator: in 2024, a national news report highlighted that pet product sales have surpassed baby product sales for some major retailers, illustrating that pets are the new growth demographic.

Online Channels & Pet Services

Pet products have a significant online presence. Over 80% of pet-related purchases are done online (mostly via mobile), according to industry surveys. This is because pet owners frequently need recurring supplies (food, litter) and appreciate the convenience of delivery, especially for heavy bags of kibble or litter. Coupang and Naver are loaded with pet listings, and Coupang's Rocket Delivery is a godsend when you're low on pet food.



In terms of platform performance, Coupang and Naver Shopping dominate pet product sales much as they do other categories, but interestingly, some traditional retail players have also jumped in: both Emart and Lotte have been expanding their pet product ranges (Emart's own pet food brand and Lotte's Pet Garden sections) and pushing them online.

For an overseas brand targeting this segment, success can hinge on understanding the emotional bond Korean owners have with their pets. Marketing that speaks to pets as family, and products that

have a wellness or happiness angle for the pet, do well. One should be mindful of local regulations (the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs regulates pet food safety, etc.), but Korea's relatively high pet import activity means the market is open to foreign products. Newcomers might find opportunity in sub-trends like freeze-dried raw treats, vegan pet food, or smart pet tech which are still novel. Given the growth trajectory – the pet industry has government backing and social momentum – the pet e-commerce space in Korea is expected to remain one of the most dynamic retail sectors in coming years.

Beauty (Cosmetics & Skincare)

South Korea is globally renowned for its beauty industry, and domestically Beauty & Personal Care is a massive market with an outsized cultural impact. In 2024, the total beauty market (including cosmetics, skincare, personal care) is estimated around **US\$25 billion** in value, making Korea the world's **5th largest** beauty market and **#1 in per-capita spending**.

Online channels play a vital role in beauty retail: Korea's digitally savvy consumers often discover and purchase cosmetics through e-commerce and social media, contributing to a vibrant online beauty commerce scene. The online beauty market remained resilient through 2023–2024, with solid growth in 2024 (~mid single-digit percentage increase) even after a strong post-Covid rebound in 2023. While overall growth cooled slightly compared to the previous year, it was still robust, demonstrating that Korean consumers' appetite for beauty products is steady.

Key Trends in Beauty

Skincare First, Science-Backed Products

Skincare is the largest and most revered sub-category in K-beauty. Korean consumers famously follow multi-step skincare routines and are highly educated about ingredients. In 2024, there was a shift with some

consumers moving from premium to mass brands in skincare – likely as affordable brands improved their quality and as frugal shopping set in – yet the innovation level remained high across the board. Dermacosmetic (dermatologist-tested) and functional skincare are trending: ingredients like retinol, hyaluronic acid, niacinamide, probiotics are highlighted by brands appealing to ingredient-savvy buyers.

Makeup Recovery & the “Lipstick Effect”

After a lull during mask-wearing times, color cosmetics bounced back in 2023–2024. A clear sign was the dynamic growth in lip product sales, attributed to the “lipstick effect” – the idea that consumers buy small indulgences like lipsticks in tough times. As mask mandates eased, Koreans enthusiastically returned to wearing makeup, especially lip tints, glosses, and foundations. We saw new makeup trends such as “underpainting” (applying contour under foundation) go viral, and products catering to those looks sold briskly. Korean makeup styles continue to evolve (e.g., glittery eye looks are popular among Gen Z), and K-beauty brands are quick to drop new collections each season. Another interesting development: **men's makeup** remains a significant segment – South Korea's male grooming market (including BB creams, concealers for men) is the world's largest.

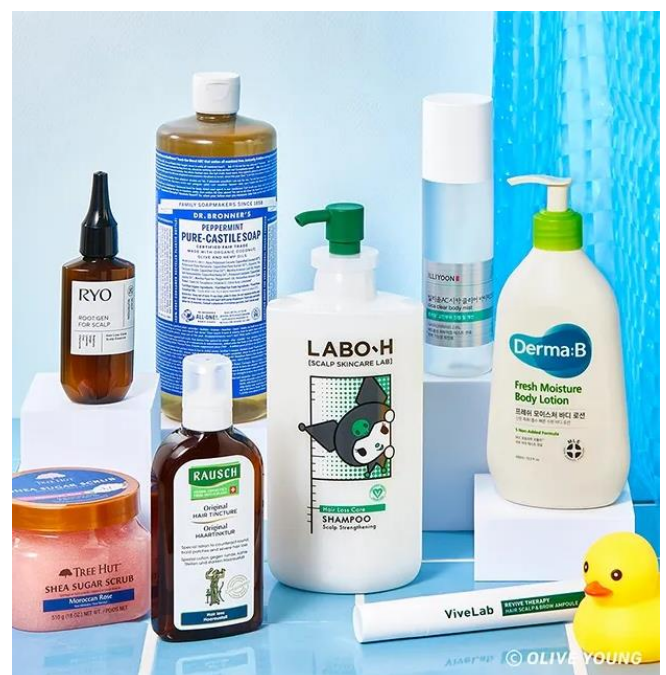
E-commerce & Social Commerce in Beauty

Korean beauty shoppers are extremely online-centric. Retail e-commerce is a dominant channel for beauty, especially for trend-driven items and international brands. A significant portion of cosmetics sales happens on marketplaces and brand.com sites, but social media plays a role in discovery. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and more recently TikTok (Douyin) and Little Red Book (Xiaohongshu) are influencing Korean consumers – in fact, Chinese social commerce trends are spilling into Korea to some extent. Live commerce is used for beauty demos on Naver Live or Kakao, where influencers or makeup artists showcase products in real-time. On marketplaces, customer reviews, before-and-after photos, and Q&A are critical; Korean consumers heavily

research beauty buys. Additionally, subscription commerce for beauty (like monthly contact lenses, or beauty sample boxes) has a following.

Local vs. Global Brands

K-beauty brands (Laneige, Innisfree, COSRX, Etude, etc.) are very strong domestically, but Korean consumers also love trying global brands. Sephora’s entry into Korea a few years ago and the success of brands like Fenty Beauty, The Ordinary, and La Mer in the Korean market show openness to foreign cosmetics. Essentially, Korean beauty shoppers are trend-driven but not strictly nationalistic – they curate their routines from both K-beauty and global offerings.



In 2024, the beauty market's growth drivers included categories like **sun care** (with high UV awareness, sunscreens sold exceptionally well, especially new hybrid formulas) and **fragrances**. Interestingly, premium fragrances continued to grow fast, with artisanal perfume brands finding a fanbase among young adults. E-commerce helped niche fragrance brands gain visibility through sample sets and influencer reviews. Hair care is another sub-category with growth, particularly products targeting hair loss and scalp health, given a stress-related concern prevalent in Korea.

For foreign beauty brands hoping to succeed in Korea, a few pointers: emphasize innovation and authenticity. Korean consumers will have likely heard of your brand through online buzz by the time you enter; ensuring the product b up to any hype is key. Engaging Korean customers through possibly a localized social media

presence or collaborations (e.g., a K-pop idol as an ambassador or a co-branded limited edition) can create big splash – K-beauty thrives on *newness* and *exclusives*. Also, understand the fast product cycle – Korean brands launch new products at a dizzying pace, so foreign brands need to keep consumers engaged with either new products or new ways to use existing ones. Finally, leverage the strength of Korea's e-commerce infrastructure: consider a flagship store on platforms like SSG or Coupang Global Store, and optimize presence on Naver (including getting your product on Naver's search DB with good images and info). With the right strategy, Korea's sophisticated beauty consumers can become loyal advocates – and given their influence across Asia, succeeding in Korea often amplifies a brand's prestige regionally.



Conclusion

South Korea's e-commerce market continues to demonstrate why it ranks among the most advanced and dynamic in the world. With **US\$215 billion in total online transactions** and online retail accounting for nearly **one-third of all retail sales**, the digital channel is no longer optional – it is the cornerstone of consumer engagement. This environment presents extraordinary opportunities for global brands, but only for those willing to adapt to the market's unique characteristics: mobile-first habits, fast delivery expectations, and a rapidly evolving social commerce ecosystem.

The five categories highlighted in this report – Health & Supplements, Athletic Apparel, Mother & Baby, Pet Products, and Beauty – offer clear growth pathways, albeit with nuanced strategies. Health supplements are riding a wellness wave, with functional and science-backed products in high demand. Athletic apparel, though briefly tempered post-pandemic, is set to rebound as outdoor lifestyles, golf, and athleisure continue to permeate Korean culture. The Mother & Baby segment, despite demographic challenges, remains resilient due to premiumization and a “golden baby” mindset. Meanwhile, the pet

sector is experiencing double-digit growth, surpassing baby products in some cases, driven by pet humanization trends. Finally, beauty continues to thrive online, where consumers seek innovation, authenticity, and social validation.

However, the competitive intensity of this market means success will not come from a one-size-fits-all approach. Brands must invest in omnichannel strategies, combine marketplace presence with social commerce and influencer-driven content, and ensure best-in-class fulfillment and customer service. In a market where trends shift overnight and consumers are highly informed, speed, agility, and localization are essential. Those who embrace these principles will not only capture share in Korea but also enhance their credibility across Asia, where Korean digital and cultural trends exert strong influence.

For brands ready to expand or optimize their presence in South Korea, WPIC Marketing + Technologies offers the expertise, infrastructure, and insights to navigate this complex landscape. Together, we can turn opportunity into measurable growth.

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