

The next wave of beauty: Retail innovation.

POSSIBLE • IDEAS
MADE

Retail *highlights*.

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TOP HIGHLIGHT:

Gymshark X Twists Sets Pop-up



Retail *highlights.*

Discovering *innovation* and *immersion* that stands out in the shifting beauty landscape.

This report highlights some of the most interesting retail and experience design, as well as defining some important cultural shifts occurring in the beauty sector now.

In this report we look at:

- The new beauty landscape
- Cultural representation and inclusive design
- Purpose-driven and ethical utility
- Rejecting minimalist hegemony





D4R VIEW

Crafting connection.

RETHINKING HOW BRANDS SHOW UP ACROSS RETAIL TO MASTER INCLUSIVITY

THE INDUSTRY IS EVER-SHIFTING

The **global beauty sector** is currently undergoing a pivotal transformation, fueled by consumer engagement and a shifting definition of self-care.

With global beauty revenue projected to **surpass \$650 billion by 2025** and the market continuing to grow at a healthy rate, this sector has proven resilient and innovative, consistently outpacing other consumer industries. This enduring growth is not simply a matter of volume; it is being redefined by consumer values, particularly those of **Gen Z and Millennials, who now control over 60% of the market.** They are demanding transparency, ethical practice, and highly personalised experiences that resonate with their digital lives and cultural identities.

The physical store is no longer a point of purchase; it has been elevated to a **community vista, a space for social validation, expert education, and holistic well-being.** This shift mandates that brands integrate their values, their service model, and their architectural presence to create **memorable, high-touch interactions** that secure long-term loyalty.

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01

The *layering* of architectural history.

MECCA, BOURKE STREET, MELBOURNE

CLINICAL SCIENCE INTO WELLNESS

The MECCA Melbourne flagship on Bourke Street, often dubbed "Mecca 3000," redefines experiential beauty retail by investing \$50 million into a vast, 4,000 square-meter, three-level space within a historic Art Deco building.

Designed by Studio McQualter, the concept brilliantly merges heritage restoration, uncovering original terrazzo floors and decorative ceilings, with modern innovation, featuring a multi-level beauty universe that extends far beyond product display.

Key elements include the centrally placed "Beauty Carousel" for communal makeup discovery, the wellness-focused Mecca Apothecary (offering naturopathy and holistic services), and dedicated clinical treatment rooms, all curated with over 25 commissioned artworks by women artists.

This ambitious physical blueprint is a strategic declaration of confidence in high-touch, in-person retail, transforming the store into a comprehensive cultural, wellness, and service destination that positions Melbourne at the forefront of global beauty innovation.

“We wanted to create a destination that transcends beauty retail; a place of imagination, joy and transformation.”

JO HORGAN, FOUNDER OF MECCA

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02

Digital kinship.

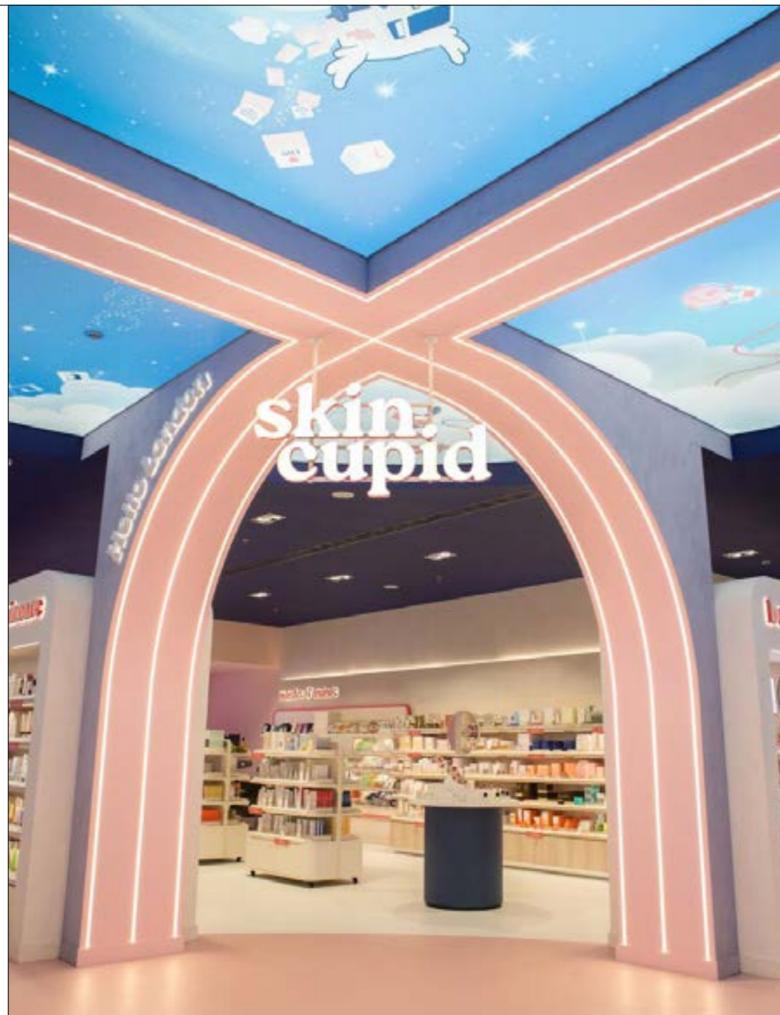
SKIN CUPID FLAGSHIP, LONDON

CULTIVATING TANGIBLE BRAND COMMUNITY

Skin Cupid has opened its first flagship K-Beauty store on Charing Cross Road in central London, marking its transition from a digital-first retailer to a physical retail space. Designed with YourStudio, the **3,000-square-foot multi-sensory environment** successfully translates the brand's online community spirit into a tangible, "community-first" hub.

The store's design fuses the purity of **Korean beauty rituals** with contemporary Korean aesthetics, featuring soft materials, bright colors, and sculptural architecture, all under a dramatic, glowing entrance.

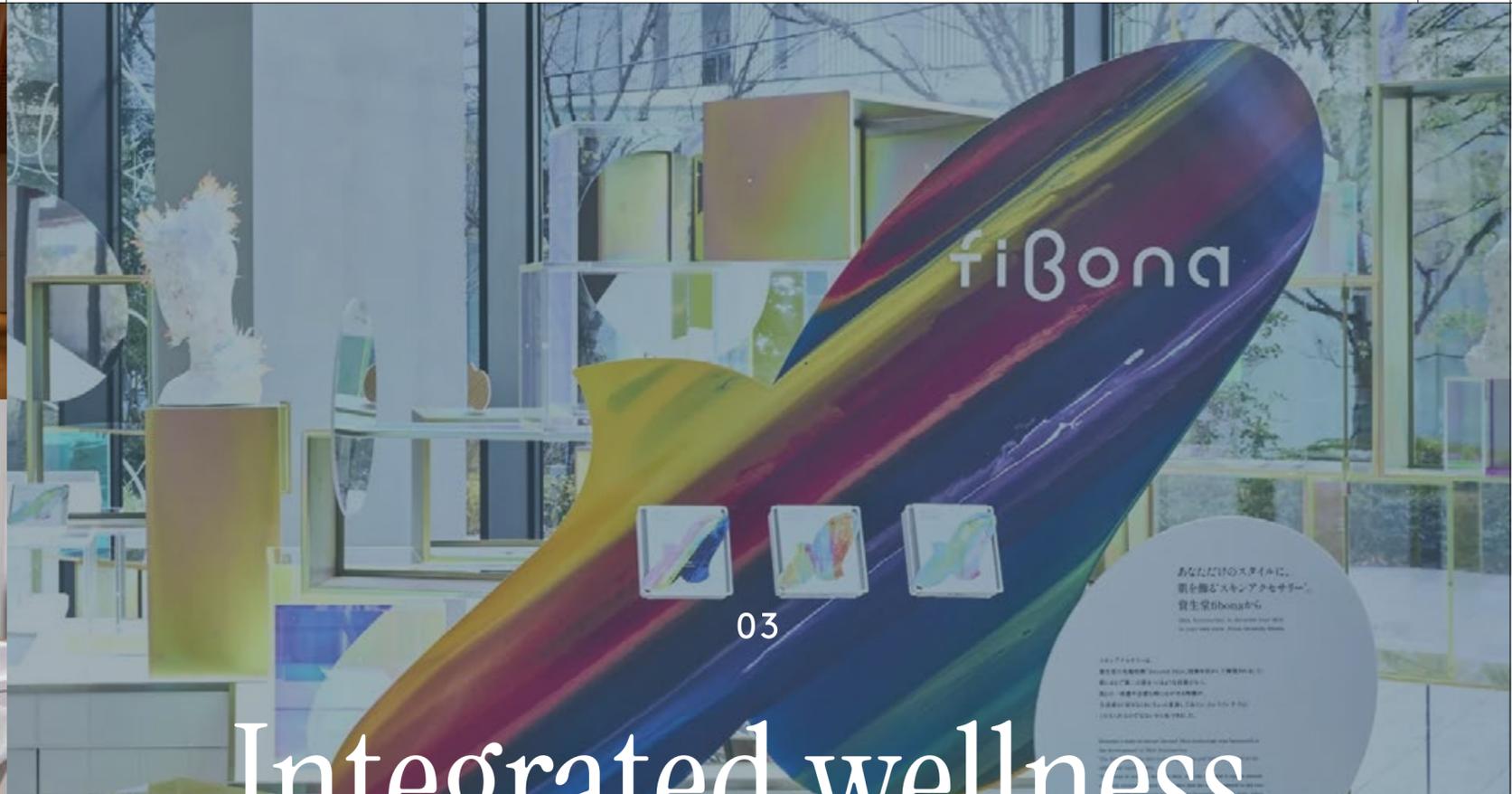
More than just a place to shop, the space encourages hands-on exploration through interactive zones and features "Cupid World," a dedicated community hub that creates connection and strengthens the bond with its loyal customer base, positioning the flagship as a **destination for education and storytelling in beauty retail**.



“Our store is community-first, a place where people feel seen and supported. We wanted a flagship that was more than just a shop.”

MELODY Y, SKIN CUPID CEO





CLINICAL SCIENCE INTO WELLNESS

The Shiseido Beauty Park is an **innovative retail and research center** dedicated to expanding the potential of beauty through science that connects the skin, body, and mind. It functions as a unique gathering place where researchers and visitors can interact to **awaken inner radiance and vitality**. The park features several distinct laboratories: the **Shiseido Beauty Diagnosis Lab** offers specialised beauty assessments; the **Shiseido Kitchen Lab** focuses on dietary aspects of beauty, such as 'beauty yakuzen' meals; and the **Shiseido Art & Science Lab** explores the creative and scientific dimensions of skincare.

The **Fibona Lab**, contributes to the experience, with a focus on holistic well-being and the pursuit of beauty across various **interconnected aspects of life**.

This destination embodies Shiseido's commitment to over a century of scientific inquiry, creating an unprecedented approach to beauty that goes beyond simple product transactions to **encompass personal exploration, connection, and self-affirmation**.

“Shiseido Beauty Park is a place where researchers and visitors gather to experience and expand the potential of beauty, together.”

SHISEIDO BEAUTY PARK

Integrated wellness.

SHISEIDO BEAUTY PARK, YOKOHAMA

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04

Leave it in...

REDKEN POP UP, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

CULTIVATING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

The Redken 'Leave It In, Syd' pop-up in Sydney focused on **democratising professional-grade results through experiential retail**. The entire activation was centered on a single hero product, the 'acidic bonding concentrate leave-in treatment', and the influence of Redken global ambassador Sabrina Carpenter.

To give the reader a tangible benefit, the pop-up transformed a busy retail space, Pitt Street Mall, into a **temporary mini-salon that offered free "Short n Sweet" dry styling sessions with professional Redken stylists**.

This allowed consumers to **immediately see and feel the transformative power of the product** when applied by experts. This strategy generates a personalised, aspirational experience by providing complimentary, high-quality styling advice and application, directly **linking the brand's professional heritage to the consumer's at-home routine and boosting product confidence**.

“Offering free, confidence boosting treatments to random people perfectly shows how major brands can give back to consumers, promoting real life product application and instantly driving self-assurance.”

JASMIN SPRAKE
MARKETING AT D4R

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The texture gap.

GYMSHARK X TWISTS SETS, LONDON

RE-CENTERING TEXTURED HAIR

For Black History Month, Gymshark opened a specialised pop-up in London called 'Twists 'N' Sets' at 2 Hoxton Street in Shoreditch, designed to address a key barrier to fitness within the Black community.

The initiative, which ran over three days in partnership with Ruka Hair, was established to help remove the obstacle of hair maintenance concerns, a factor that research showed was preventing 45% of Black women from attending the gym. 'Twists 'N' Sets' offered attendees complimentary 1-2-1 hair appointments with a trichologist and a selection of free express hair styling services.

The space served as a retail platform for eight black-owned hair care brands, including Treasure Tress and Nylah's Naturals, alongside selling Gymshark's popular 'Diffuse Sweat Headband,' which was designed with textured hair in mind. This pop-up was a crucial brand action that went beyond transactional retail, offering valuable advice, services, and products to support its community in overcoming barriers to fitness without compromising on style.

“When our community let us know that they were avoiding the gym because of concerns about hair maintenance, we couldn't sit around and do nothing.”

AALIYAH DICKENS
GLOBAL BRAND CULTURE MANAGER, GYMSHARK

06

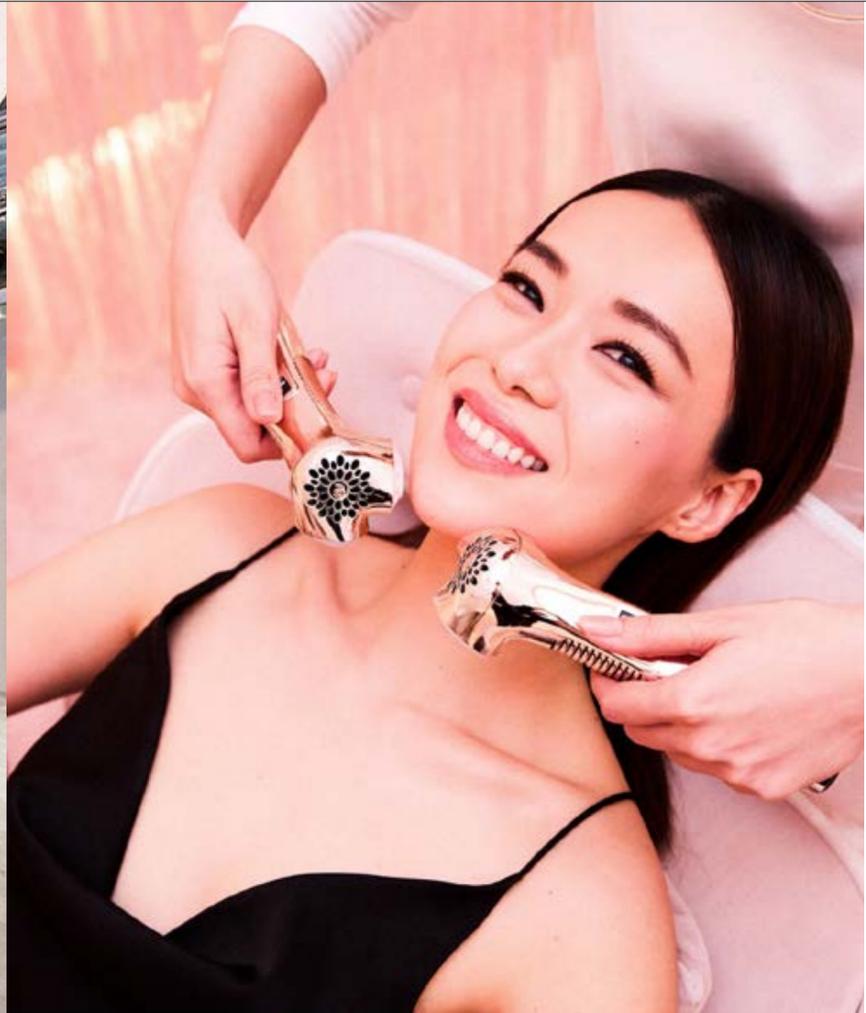
Beauty in transit.

L'OREAL, TRAVEL RETAIL SINGAPORE

L'Oréal Travel Retail's "Beauty Shopper-tainment of the Future" concept, showcased in a 510 square-meter experiential lounge in Asia Pacific, revolutionises airport retail by transforming dwell time into an intelligent, personalised luxury journey.

The concept strategically uses multi-sensory lounges, such as the Facial Cocoon for complimentary 10-minute Lancôme treatments and the Skin Mist Pods, which provide customised, climate-specific skincare recommendations based on the traveler's final destination.

This unprecedented fusion of beauty, relaxation, and bespoke service, supported by a proprietary "Pentarchy" model involving strategic collaborations with airports, airlines, and media partners, redefines the airport as an engaging destination, pushing the boundaries of beauty retail from a transactional stop to an immersive, integrated travel experience.



“As global travel accelerates and the appetite for beauty keeps getting stronger, we are proud to lead the reinvention of the category with world-class partners and future-facing innovations.”

EMMANUEL GOULIN,
PRESIDENT OF L'OREAL TRAVEL RETAIL



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07

The joy of being seen.

KULFI BEAUTY, SPACE NK BEAUTY COUNTER

“I struggled to find shades and undertones that truly complemented my skin. That disconnect made me realise there was a gap – not just in product, but in how beauty made people feel.”

PRIYANKA GANJOO
FOUNDER OF KULFI BEAUTY

CULTURAL REPRESENTATION

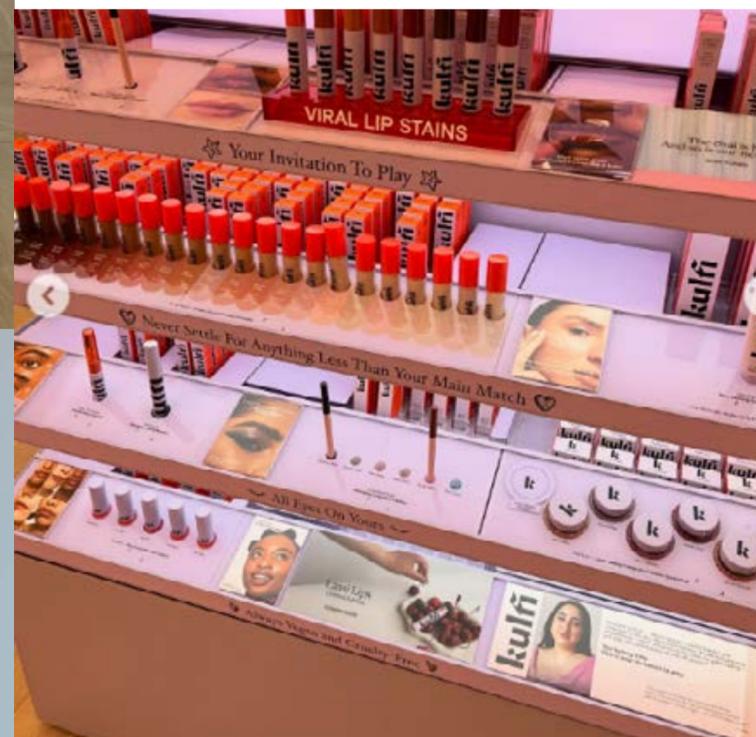
The female-founded Kulfi Beauty is a powerful exemplar of a confident brand utilising retail presence to advance cultural representation and inclusive shade matching.

Kulfi's message of 'joy' and 'self-expression' is rooted in South Asian heritage and resonates wholly with its discerning, multicultural customer base, as evidenced by its **enthusiastic welcome into Space NK UK**. Founder Priyanka Ganjoo, who brings a board-level understanding of the market from her previous roles, intentionally crafts products, like the Main Match Concealer with its nuanced undertones, that address the **historical frustration of shade-matching for minority skin tones**.

By securing a partnership with a major retailer like Space NK, Kulfi is physically claiming space in the high street to **spark a necessary dialogue around culturally rooted beauty** and demonstrating that authentic, inclusive representation is now a **commercially viable, high-performance retail strategy**.



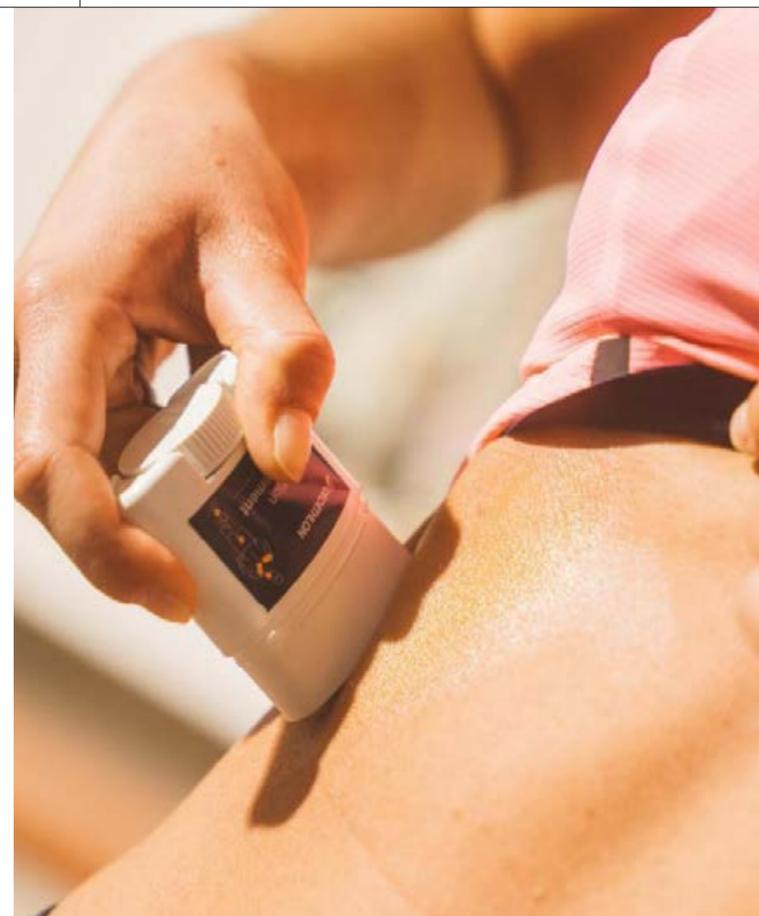
Medium - Deep



08

Championing sustainability.

DECATHLON & AMCOR'S SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVE



PRIORITISING ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

Decathlon's introduction of an **anti-chafing stick and an SPF50+ sunscreen stick**, featuring new 25ml applicators developed by Amcor, highlights the **critical emergence of skincare as an essential component** of the "sporting" category. The product format, a portable, dirt-free stick, directly addresses the athlete's **need for convenience and on-the-move application**.

Crucially, this initiative is a powerful case study in sustainable performance innovation. The stick pack is **mono-material (predominantly polypropylene)** and incorporates an impressive **87% recycled polypropylene (rPP)** sourced from Amcor's proprietary CleanStream technology.

This sustainable choice results in a **17% reduction in CO₂ impact** compared to virgin resin packaging, aligning directly with Decathlon's pledge to **significantly cut its greenhouse gas emissions**.

For the consumer, this means receiving a high-performance product in a format (the stick) that is both **highly functional for active use and environmentally responsible**. The partnership demonstrates a forward-looking retail approach where the convenience of a specialised product is **intrinsically linked to the brand's commitment to environmental stewardship**, setting a new benchmark for packaging in the sports and active beauty market.

“Our customers want a quality product that they can easily use on the move, so the stick format is ideal. We challenged ourselves to also provide a more sustainable option that would still deliver the high performance.”

LAURENT DUJARDIN
DECATHLON HEALTH & SPORT PRODUCT ENGINEER



09

Launching Huda Beauty into Selfridges.

DESIGN4RETAIL'S WORK WITH HUDA BEAUTY



LUXURY BEAUTY BRAND IMMERSION

Since we established the design blueprint for the **Huda Beauty retail experience**, notably with the successful installation in the **Harrods Beauty Hall**, the brand has significantly scaled its luxury physical presence by launching a brand new shop-in-shop into the **Selfridges Birmingham Beauty Hall**.

The installation represents **the largest single-brand refit space in the entire hall**. Achieving a sleek, contemporary luxury environment that looks and feels lavish while showcasing Huda Beauty's identity.

A standout feature is the pioneering bespoke solid surface material, which was precisely color-matched to Huda Beauty's **unmistakable 'Power Pink,'** providing instant, **high-impact brand recognition**.

Don't just take our word for it, here is what our client has to say..

“Collaborating with Design4Retail has been an incredible experience. I am pleased to say that the outcome has far exceeded expectations, with the team delivering outstanding results by creating a luxurious, inviting space.”

ANNA BROOKES
HEAD OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING, HUDA BEAUTY





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10

Adultification debate.

THE RINI SKINCARE BRAND



NAVIGATING THE TWEEN BEAUTY GAP

Rini, a skincare brand launched by Shay Mitchell, targets the teen and tween demographic, offering products like gentle sheet masks under the **guise of teaching self-care**. The brand's strategic intent is to normalise self-care rituals for young users, bridging the gap between children's curiosity and a **market saturated with adult-strength active ingredients** (the "Sephora kids" phenomenon).

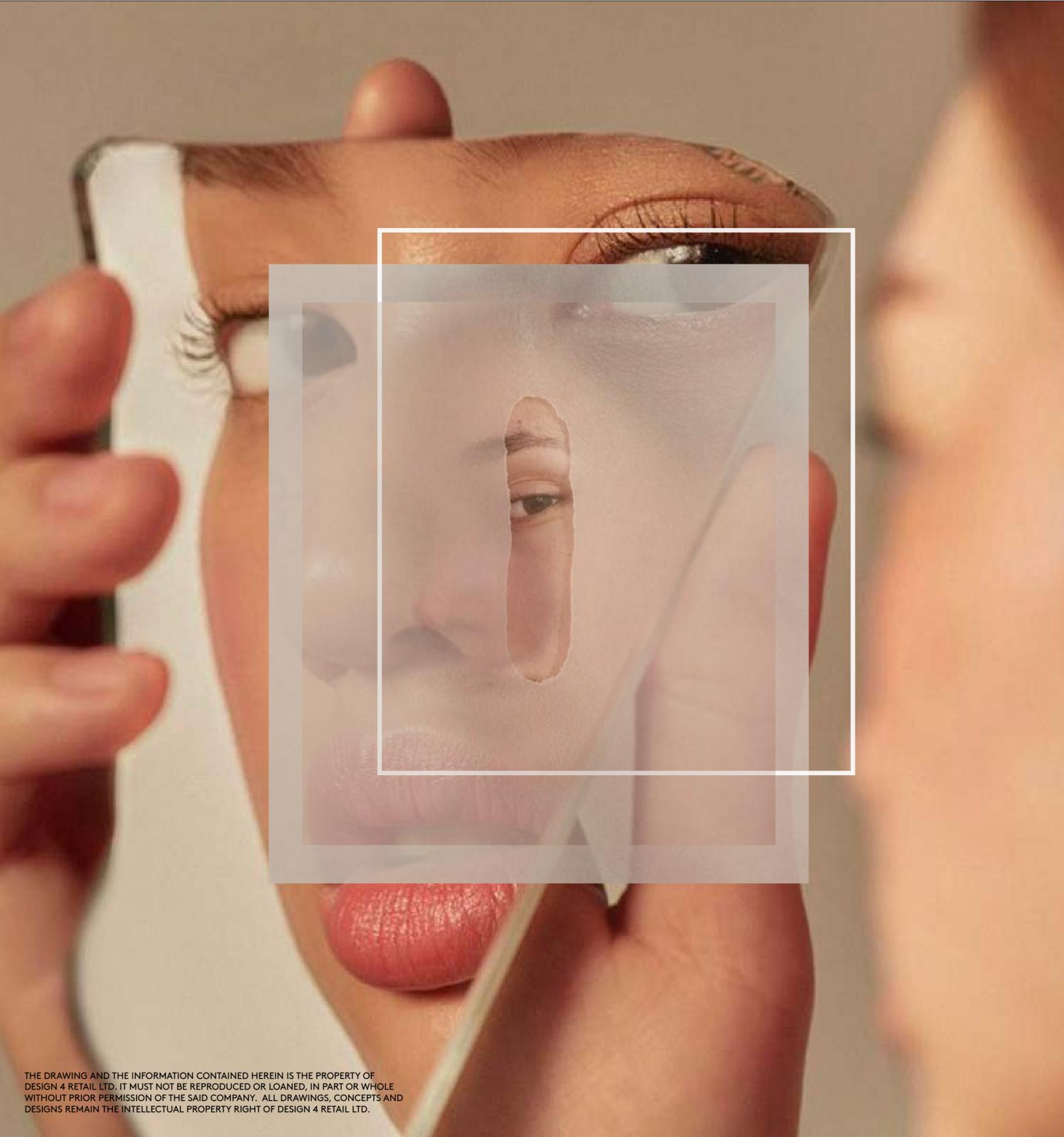
However, the launch sparked significant cultural backlash. Critics argue that Rini, despite its safe, gentle formulas, contributes to the **"early adultification" of young children**, subtly conditioning them to equate self-worth with maintenance and consumption—a concerning form of aspirational marketing.

This controversy underscores a profound challenge for the beauty industry, which **our Insight Report: The Future of Beauty** notes: **A brand has yet to successfully and uncontroversially deliver an authentic, healthy, and age-appropriate entry point to beauty rituals for this young demographic.** The backlash itself, therefore, becomes a powerful market indicator, confirming that the current solutions, even well-intentioned ones like Rini, are viewed as premature conditioning rather than genuine, functional wellness.

This failure to find the right balance confirms the market need for an entirely new, positive, and non-pressuring **retail strategy for teens and tweens remains unsolved.**

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“
In 2025, beauty is more than skin deep; it's about investing in our present and future selves and ensuring we feel as good on the inside as we look on the outside.
”

GRACE VERNON
HEAD OF GLOBAL TRENDS AND CULTURAL INSIGHTS
BOOTS & NO7 BEAUTY



The end of quiet luxury.

DECODING THE GYARU INFLUENCE ON SELF-IDENTITY

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CHALLENGING MINIMALIST HEGEMONY

The retail beauty landscape is witnessing a seismic **shift driven by Gen Z**, signaling the clear decline of minimalist trends like "Quiet Luxury" and the rise of maximalist, expressive aesthetics, specifically the resurgence of the **Japanese subculture, Gyaru and the birth of Y3K**.

Gyaru, defined by exaggerated features, bold makeup, and statement accessories, serves as the complete antithesis of the "clean girl aesthetic." This movement reflects a broader consumer **appetite for nostalgia and high self-expression over subtle exclusivity**, driving a renewed demand for playful cosmetics, vibrant colors, and bold product application.

This trend transition underscores that young consumers are **moving away from restrictive minimalism** toward a more colorful, character-driven visual language, creating a major opportunity for brands to lean into bold, fun, and **experimental product offerings**.

"For many fashion-forward Chinese Gen Zers, quiet luxury is looking to be just a blank slate for maximalist styling and accessorizing in 2026."

SADIE BARGERON, JING DAILY



FORESIGHT

Beyond the beauty.

BEAUTY AS A PLATFORM FOR VALIDATED SELF-EXPRESSION



RESPONDING TO CULTURAL SHIFTS

The preceding examples collectively illuminate a critical, ongoing **transformation within beauty retail**, emphasising cultural shifts that extend far beyond merchandising.

The move from transactional stores to **experiential destinations**, like MECCA's holistic wellness hub and Skin Cupid's community-first design, reflects a consumer demand for **validated self-expression and social connection over simple acquisition**.

This is paralleled by the ethical imperative driving brands like Kulfi, where the success of their Space NK launch is a

commercial validation of authentic cultural representation and boardroom-level commitment to inclusivity, demonstrating that niche relevance is the new mainstream.

Concurrently, the rise of the maximalist Gyaru aesthetic signals a **powerful consumer rejection of restrictive norms**, confirming the market's appetite for unapologetic, high-impact identity.

Initiatives like Gymshark's targeted pop-up and Decathlon's sustainable stick packaging highlight a brand responsibility that **links self-care to social activism and environmental utility**.

Ultimately, these shifts point to a future where **beauty retail succeeds not by dominating the shelf, but by serving as an integrated, multi-functional platform that actively affirms, educates, and empowers the consumer in their personal, social, and cultural journeys**.

Backed by insight, the D4R *difference*.

HELLO, WE'RE DESIGN4RETAIL

Our strategy teams stay up to date and tapped into culture, always keeping an eye on what's happening. That way, we can create more meaningful experiences by using strategic insights to guide every step of the project.

OUR DISCIPLINES,

- Brand storytelling
- Customer experience
- Pop-ups & activations
- Retail identity
- Store design & fit out





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