Jino Park – Founder & CEO, P&K Skin Research Centre, South Korea



The global success of the 'Hallyu' (Korean Wave) cultural phenomenon has made Korean beauty products more popular on a global scale

04.03.2019

Tags: Korea, Skincare, P&K, Dermocosmetics, Dermatology

Dr Jino Park, founder and CEO of P&K Skin Research Centre, offers his assessment of the success of the Korean pharmaceutical industry, and the potential cosmetic products of the future. Dr Park also explains the added value P&K's testing services bring to cosmetics producers.

As the founder of P&K Skin Research Centre, where was the gap in the market that gave you the idea to establish the organisation?

I began my career as a medical doctor having studied medicine. Following this, I took charge of Daebong LS, a company conducting research on raw materials for cosmetics and medicine. I am still the CEO of Daebong LS. Through my research on raw materials, I envisioned that there would be regulation or test guidelines for functional cosmetic products in the future. There were three reasons for this assumption: first, because the consumers were becoming more aware of cosmetic functions and safety. Secondly, more information is available to consumers regarding cosmetic products. Lastly, I thought there would be changes in related regulations and the market. For example, having scientific proof to advertise that a certain item has a certain function might become necessary in the future. That is why I decided to set up a research centre where it conducts necessary tests for the yet-to-come regulations. Consequently, I made the decision eight years ago to establish P&K Skincare Research Centre.

Could you provide an overview as to your main areas of expertise?

Daebong LS manages raw material manufacturing and P&K's operations are limited to clinical evaluation. We have about 200 protocols and we conduct tests on the safety and effectiveness of cosmetic products. We also advise our clients on which function has the most commercial value in the market. Therefore, evaluation of product safety and effectiveness is our expertise.

There are mandatory tests that should be completed to prove the effectiveness of their products. In addition, we offer test results on additional functions such as skin glossiness, which can be appealing to my clients' customers, so they use those features as a marketing tool. I think that is one of the benefits they get through using our service as the customers expect those additional functions as well on top of the main function. We also give them the images of the test result and data which my clients can use for advertising. This is particularly salient in the modern market given that many consumers purchase cosmetics online and those images that we provide can be used on web pages.

Sometimes P&K's clients want to advertise a certain function but there is neither a related protocol nor test results done. In such a case, we conduct research and test on the function and develop a new protocol. For instance, if a client wants to say that their product has an anti-pollution function that is helpful for protecting your skin from particle dust (severe air pollution), which is a recent problem, we develop a new protocol to verify such a function. P&K therefore essentially developed the anti-pollution protocol. We also apply for patents with the protocols we developed and publish academic papers with our test outcomes.

The Korean cosmetics market is now the eighth largest in the world, with 2.9 percent of the global market share. What have been the determining factors in anchoring Korea's leading position in the cosmetics industry?

Firstly, traditional Western cosmetics are less adventurous when it comes to choosing a raw material, despite conducting in-depth research. Conversely, Korean cosmetic companies have made bolder decisions with raw materials and have developed unconventional items such as cushion foundation, BB Cream – the combination of skincare and makeup items – and cosmetics made with volcanic ash. Such interesting products have reinforced Korea's image as a cosmetic innovator.

Secondly, there is a cultural phenomenon called ‘Hallyu’ (The Korean Wave). The global success of Hallyu has made Korean beauty products more popular on a global scale.

Thirdly, two of the largest cosmetics companies are based in Korea: Amore Pacific and LG. These two companies mainly produce high-end cosmetics with brands such as Sulwhasoo and Whoo. Their offering has created room for other cosmetic companies to have a secondary position in the market.

Finally, the high product turnover rate at the “road-shop” (high-street) cosmetic brands contributes to the popularity of Korean cosmetics. Some items are produced for a limited time only and disappear from the market after three to six months. This shows how consumers are sensitive to trends and that companies meet the consumers’ needs and wants. The Korean ODM and OEM manufacturing system was born to serve this market trend.

Korea is observing the trend of its local pharmaceutical companies entering into the cosmetics’ industry. What has been their success in this pursuit when facing established cosmetics brands?

There are two main approaches that pharmaceutical companies can take in the cosmetics market. The first approach is with a new brand name that has no connection with their existing brand and the other approach is with a brand name that reminds consumers of their existing signature products. Usually, the first method fails and the second one has a higher success rate. The companies that managed to success through the second route are forming the Korean derma-cosmetic industry. To illustrate this with an example, there is a well-known ointment called ‘ *Madecasso*l’ in Korea, and thus a cosmetic cream called ‘Madeca Cream’ was launched. It made a huge success in the market as most of Koreans were already familiar with ‘Madecassol’.

Regarding functional cosmetics and general cosmetics, how well developed are the regulations in Korea?

The Cosmetics Act enacted in 2001 is unique to Korea. Before the Act’s passing, there was no regulation mandating that advertisements for functional cosmetics should have scientific proof. Due to the Cosmetics Act, main cosmetic functions such as whitening, anti-wrinkle and sunscreen require scientific proof. When the act first came into law, people used to consider it as an obstacle because none of them were familiar with the procedure. However, now that time has passed to

adjust, most stakeholders are now reassured that we have this law as it is a guarantee from the government. This is also a good selling point when Korean companies export their products to foreign markets. In 2017, the authority has expanded to cover 11 product categories, rather than the original three. It now also includes atopy, stretch marks, anti-hair loss, and acne.

What is your ambition/vision for the future?

I try to anticipate what the cosmetics of the future will be. In my opinion, these will be then combined with machine technology, like products with LED lights or high-frequency technologies. We can proudly say that we are the leading research centre evaluating effective of these relatively new products and I can see the market will grow in the future. Therefore, I would like to exert further efforts into exploring that market too.

See more interviews