

Critical Argument Paper #1: Snail Mucin

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In the ever-evolving world of skincare and beauty, ancient practices and natural ingredients frequently resurface with a veneer of modern scientific endorsement. Among these, snail mucin has emerged as a highly sought-after component in skincare regimens worldwide. Its journey from a traditional remedy to a cornerstone of contemporary beauty culture exemplifies the intersection of history, culture, and science in pursuing health and beauty. It's important to explore snail mucin as a practice and product, its current popularity and applications, and its historical significance, drawing upon a limited range of cultural uses to maintain focus.

In the past recent years, social media has grown to be a powerful outlet and is used to influence beauty fanatics to sell products. One may not think twice about the historical context of certain practices, rituals, products, or ingredients behind the regimen. Snail mucin, or snail secretion filtrate, is a viscous substance produced by snails. “Snails generate mucin proteins within their mucus, serving numerous biological roles such as protection against microbes, sticking to surfaces, and facilitating smooth movement (McDermott,2021).” Snail mucin has found remarkable applications in various fields, leveraging its unique moisturizing, healing, and adhesive properties.

In the realm of skincare, snail mucin is praised for its miraculous benefits and is used to make creams and serums. It is believed to have allantoin, which is a natural compound known for its skin hydration properties, potentially offering anti-inflammatory benefits, and aiding in the healing of wounds. Snail mucin also provides Collagen and elastin, which are essential proteins that constitute the body's connective tissues. Collagen enhances the firmness of the skin, whereas

elastin contributes to the skin's ability to stretch and bounce back. And lastly, Glycolic acid, which is a peeling agent frequently employed to shed dead skin layers and reduce hyperpigmentation. The ingredient is rich in glycoproteins, hyaluronic acid, glycolic acid, and antioxidants, which are known to promote skin health making it a popular ingredient among consumers seeking natural beauty solutions.” In 2020, a study published in the Journal of Clinical Aesthetic Dermatology looked at how using a skincare routine with snail secretion filtrate affected women aged 45 to 65. After three months, the women who used the regimen saw noticeable improvements in their skin's texture, firmness, and elasticity (Helton & Casey, 2023).” Modern use involves incorporating snail mucin into various skin care products, including serums, creams, masks, and face washes. Its popularity hinges on its ability to enhance skin texture, reduce the appearance of wrinkles and scars, and improve overall skin hydration and brightness.

Its regenerative qualities also make it an effective component in wound healing agents, aiding the recovery of cuts and abrasions by accelerating the healing process. In the medical field, snail mucin's adhesive properties have inspired the development of bio-compatible surgical glues, offering a promising alternative that could reduce recovery times and improve surgical outcomes. Additionally, its protective and healing benefits extend to the treatment of gastric ulcers, where it's used to safeguard and heal the stomach lining, showcasing the versatile and impactful uses of snail mucin across healthcare and cosmetic industries. By deeply analyzing the molecular structure and functions of snail mucins, researchers can innovate and improve existing products or create new applications in fields like medicine and biotechnology. This opens up

exciting possibilities for the use of snail mucin-derived materials in various applications, benefiting society in numerous ways.

The global embrace of snail mucin can be attributed to a confluence of factors. The rise of K-beauty (Korean beauty) trends in the West has played a significant role in introducing snail mucin to a broader audience. The emergence of high-end Korean beauty brands like Dr. Jart+ in mainstream retailers like Sephora ignited a trend in the United States. Previously, Korean beauty products were primarily found in small shops in Koreatowns and Korean grocery stores. However, the availability of these products in major stores led to their widespread adoption. “Then, there's the 10-step beauty routine, which became a hit. It's a series of skincare steps like cleansing, toning, and moisturizing. This routine was different from the basic skincare many Americans were used to, which usually just involved washing the face and using basic moisturizer (Kim, 2021).” Korean skincare is renowned for its emphasis on natural ingredients, innovation, and meticulous skincare routines, making snail mucin a perfect fit for this narrative. Additionally, the growing consumer preference for natural and organic skincare solutions has further propelled snail mucin into the limelight. Its efficacy, backed by both influential evidence and scientific research, has solidified its status as a must-have ingredient for those seeking to achieve a radiant, youthful complexion through non-invasive means.

TikTok has played a significant role in the resurgence of K-beauty, particularly in popularizing skincare trends and products like snail mucin. Initially emerging in the US around 2012 with BB cream, the K-beauty craze evolved to include trends such as sheet masks, 10-step

skincare routines, and blemish patches.” In the late 2010s, the popularity of K-beauty was booming. Established Korean brands like Laneige and Tony Moly faced competition from both US brands imitating their products and new startups inspired by K-beauty, such as Glow Recipe, Then I Met You, and Peach & Lily (Flora, 2023)”. However, as K-beauty became mainstream, the term lost its selling power until TikTok revived it. Trends like "Korean glass skin" have seen significant growth on TikTok, translating into increased sales of products promising the desired look. Notably, the Cosrx Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence became the top-selling beauty product on Amazon after gaining traction on TikTok. This resurgence of interest in K-beauty is attributed to a new generation of "skintellectuals" who prioritize product efficacy and the affordability of K-beauty products, appealing to cost-conscious consumers seeking effective skincare solutions.

The use of snail mucin is not a new practice for the 21st century but has roots in ancient practices. Its historical significance can be traced back to ancient Greece, where the renowned physician Hippocrates reportedly prescribed crushed snails to relieve inflamed skin. “Hippocrates researched slime mucus and found it helpful for hydrating skin, easing irritations and redness, healing wounds, and treating skin issues. He also believed consuming snails could help with stomach problems. Both Hippocrates and Galen thought snails were useful for treating hernias and hypersensitivity (Flora, 2023).” The modern exploration of snail secretions in skincare took an unexpected turn in the 1990s. Chilean farmers, while handling snails, noticed something remarkable: their skin lesions healed faster and without scarring. This serendipitous observation sparked scientific interest in the potential therapeutic properties of snail mucus for skincare purposes.

In Greece and Cyprus, snails have been appreciated as a delicacy since ancient times. Archaeological excavations in places like Akrotiri, Santorini, and Paphos, Cyprus, have uncovered fossils of snails dating back thousands of years. This historical evidence attests to the long-standing presence of snails in the culinary traditions of these regions, highlighting their enduring significance as a valued food source. Similarly, traditional use in other cultures, such as the use of snail mucin in Italian folk medicine for skin conditions and its incorporation into South American traditional practices for its healing properties, highlights its longstanding value across different civilizations. The evolution of snail mucin from a traditional remedy to a scientifically endorsed skincare ingredient demonstrates a broader trend of revalidating ancient practices with modern research. While the specifics of its use have evolved transitioning from basic applications to refined, commercially available products the underlying belief in its therapeutic benefits remains constant.

Snail mucin exemplifies the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation within the beauty and skincare industry. Its journey from an ancient remedy to a cornerstone of modern skincare routines underscores the enduring appeal of natural ingredients in the quest for beauty and wellness. By joining historical practices with contemporary scientific validation, snail mucin not only enriches our skincare but also bridges cultures and generations, reminding us of the timeless pursuit of health and beauty. The exploration of snail mucin, from its biological origins through its cultural history to its present-day popularity, reveals a narrative of continuity and change. It stands as a testament to the human desire for natural, effective solutions to beauty and health challenges, a desire that transcends time and geography

## References

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