

## Corporate History

# DOUGLAS: 115 Years of Success in Beauty Retail

- Anniversary: the first “Parfümerie Douglas” store opened on June 1, 1910, in Hamburg
- Continuous growth to become Europe’s leading premium beauty retailer with online offer and stores in 22 countries
- Female Empowerment: Supported by Berta Kolbe, and founded by Anna and Maria Carstens
- Between June 16 and June 21, the DOUGLAS Group is celebrating its 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the DOUGLAS store at Jungfernstieg 24 in Hamburg

**Düsseldorf, May 27, 2025** – The DOUGLAS Group celebrates its 115th anniversary as a retail company. On June 1, 1910 the sisters Anna and Maria Carstens opened the first store of “Parfümerie Douglas” in Hamburg, which has since grown into Europe's leading destination for premium beauty with around 19,000 employees and online and store presence in 1,900 locations in 22 countries. At the same time, the history of the DOUGLAS Group stands for female entrepreneurship and innovative spirit – values that remain integral parts of the company culture to this day. Between June 16 and 21, the company will celebrate its 115th anniversary at its Hamburg store at Jungfernstieg 24.

### From Soap Factory to “Douglas Parfumery”

The origins of the DOUGLAS Group date back to 1821, when Scotsman John Sharp Douglas founded a soap factory in the city of Hamburg. He revolutionized soap production with his bold ideas: by using coconut oil, he managed to reduce the production time for soap from several days to just a few hours. He also had a keen sense of public relations, which is why the “J. S. Douglas Sons” brand quickly became popular beyond the city limits of Hamburg. In 1851, the “Chinese Sky Soap” was awarded a medal at the first World's Fair in London.

In 1910, Anna and Maria Carstens built on the success of “J. S. Douglas Sons”. They signed a license agreement with Berta Kolbe, the then manager of the soap factory, and obtained permission to use the company name, under which they opened the first “Parfümerie Douglas” on the high street Neuer Wall in Hamburg on June 1, 1910. With entrepreneurial foresight, strict customer focus, and a feel for the spirit of the times, the sisters created a brand that quickly established itself as a staple in Hamburg's shopping world and beyond, laying the foundation for an exceptional success story in German retail.

“With courage and passion, the Carstens sisters wrote German retail history that continues to this day,” said Sander van der Laan, CEO of the DOUGLAS Group. “We are carrying on this legacy by constantly providing new impulses and actively shaping trends – whether in our stores, in online shopping or in social commerce. Wherever our customers come into contact with DOUGLAS, we offer a comprehensive shopping experience that consistently puts them at the center of attention.”

### **How the DOUGLAS Group is carrying on the legacy of the Carstens sisters**

The history of the DOUGLAS Group shows that female entrepreneurship has always been an integral part of the company's identity. Born out of the vision of two sisters, many women have since driven the Group's continuous growth with passion and dedication. And this is still the case today: more than 80% of the DOUGLAS Group's managers are women. In 2024, Forbes Magazine and Statista named the company one of the best employers for women, ranking number three worldwide in the wholesale and retail sector and number one in Germany.

Continuous development and innovative strength have made DOUGLAS one of the best-known and most successful German retail brands in Europe. Thirty years ago, the company introduced a customer loyalty program that is now one of the most successful of its kind, with around 62 million Beauty Cards held across Europe. The first online shop was launched 25 years ago. Now the DOUGLAS Group generates around one-third of its annual consolidated sales in digital retail, with sales of around 1.5 billion euros. DOUGLAS has thus successfully transformed itself from a purely brick-and-mortar retailer into an omnichannel provider like hardly any other retail company. In numerous countries, the name "DOUGLAS" is synonymous with premium products, shopping experience, and expert advice, and the company's mint color has iconic status.

Today, the DOUGLAS Group is placing its "Let it Bloom" strategy at the heart of its activities. At its core is the continuous development of the omnichannel model: DOUGLAS offers a cross-channel shopping experience that combines advice and inspiration in its stores, online shop, and app. This is based on a very broad product range and an outstanding brand, combined with a clear guiding principle that builds on passion, appreciation, and ownership: "Make Life More Beautiful."

### **Anniversary celebrations at the DOUGLAS store at Jungfernstieg 24 in Hamburg**

To mark its 115th anniversary, celebrations will be held at the DOUGLAS store at Jungfernstieg 24 in Hamburg between June 16 and 21. Customers will have the opportunity to take part in a series of exclusive promotions and benefit from discounts. The offer creates a link between tradition and a modern shopping experience. The Jungfernstieg location, with its historical significance as the direct successor to the first "Parfümerie Douglas," provides the ideal setting to bring 115 years of DOUGLAS to life for the public.

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### **About the DOUGLAS Group**

The DOUGLAS Group, with its commercial brands DOUGLAS, NOCIBÉ, Parfumdreams and Niche Beauty, is the number one omnichannel premium beauty destination in Europe. The DOUGLAS Group is inspiring customers to live their own kind of beauty by offering a unique assortment online and in around 1,900 stores. With unparalleled size and access to customers, the DOUGLAS Group is the partner of choice for brands and offers a premium range of selective and exclusive brands as well as own corporate brands. The assortment includes fragrances, color cosmetics, skin care, hair care, accessories as well as beauty services. Strengthening its successful omnichannel positioning while consistently developing superior customer experience is at the heart of the DOUGLAS Group strategy "Let it Bloom". The winning business model is underpinned by the Group's omnichannel

proposition, leading brands, and data capabilities. In the financial year 2023/24, the DOUGLAS Group generated sales of 4.45 billion euros and employed around 19,200 people across Europe. It was named the World's Top Company for Women in 2025 among all retail and wholesale companies by Forbes. The DOUGLAS Group (Douglas AG) is listed at the Frankfurt Stock Exchange.

For further information please visit the [DOUGLAS Group Website](#).

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