

“Around the world in 90 years”

The history of the Braun brand from 1921 to today

Braun has grown from its origins as a small manufacturing workshop into a globally leading producer of electric appliances. The basis of the company's success is the core values which have guided it from the beginning right up to the present: technical innovation, sustainable development and outstanding design. Today, 90 years after its founding, Braun is the world leader in the foil shaver, epilator and handblender market segments. With its acquisition in October 2005 by Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati, USA, Braun became one of 23 global brands in the consumer goods group that achieve annual sales of more than one billion US dollars.

The beginning: founding++first radio sets++battery-powered portable radio

In 1921 the engineer Max Braun (1890-1951) establishes an equipment manufacturing workshop in Frankfurt am Main. From the start, he takes advantage of the latest technological developments and the market opportunities they open up for his innovative ideas.

Max Braun builds radio components for the emergent broadcasting industry. From 1925 he utilizes newly developed plastics powders in fabricating these components in self-constructed presses. In 1929 he begins manufacturing complete radio sets comprising both a receiver and a loudspeaker, and quickly advances to the forefront of Germany's radio production industry. In 1932 Braun becomes one of the first manufacturers in Europe to combine a radio and phonograph in a single appliance.

Braun builds his first battery-powered portable radio in 1935. This pioneering achievement earns him his first international awards. At about the same time, the Braun trademark is given its form with the raised 'A' that still identifies the company. This marks the birth of the Braun brand.

The Fifties: S 50++Multimix++Artur and Erwin Braun++health service++“Braun design”++SK 4

In 1950 Braun launches series production of its first dry shaver, the S 50, which Max Braun had worked on since the earliest days of the company. This product features an oscillating cutter block enveloped by a very thin, yet strong steel foil. The construction of the foil assembly, especially, is seen as a pioneering achievement in precision engineering. This principle is still used in Braun shavers today. From 1952 the American company Ronson builds Braun shavers under license. Up to this time, this is the largest transatlantic business deal involving a West German producer of consumer articles since World War II.

Braun launches its household appliance line in 1950. The Multimix food processor sets a decisive design precedent for the entire product category. The Multimix 3/31 appears in 1957 and remains in production almost unchanged until 1993, making it one of the longest-lived industrial products in history.

On Max Braun's death in 1951, his sons Artur (then 26 years) and Erwin (30 years), assume the company leadership. They continue their father's work, striving, as he had, to recognize and capitalize on technological and business opportunities. Their progressive thinking, even outside of their core business, is demonstrated in their founding of a company health service to provide preventive medical care to Braun employees. The Braun brothers' attitude of social responsibility thus comes to the fore in what is recognized as a pioneering entrepreneurial decision.

The years that follow witness the shaping of the Braun brand and "Braun design", which has been emulated up to the present. Wolfgang Schmittl lends the Braun trademark its form with the raised 'A' that is still familiar today. In 1955 Braun attracts international attention when it presents its entire redesigned line of radio sets at the Düsseldorf Radio Fair. Aiming to enhance Braun's market chances through an innovative design concept, Erwin Braun had commissioned Wilhelm Wagenfeld and the Ulm School of Design to rework the company's radio and phonograph range. One of the primary exponents of the new design is Dr. Fritz Eichler.

The new design finds a prominent representative in the SK 4. This combined radio-phonograph designed by Dieter Rams and Hans Gugelot is the first postwar example of functional design in a utilitarian device produced in high volume. For its revolutionary plexiglas cover, which soon becomes standard in phonograph design, the SK 4 is nicknamed "Snow White's Coffin."

The Sixties: Dieter Rams++sixtant++Gillette company++BraunPrize

In 1961 Dieter Rams succeeds Dr. Fritz Eichler as head of the company design department. From this point until 1995, Dieter Rams decisively shapes Braun Design, giving it its distinctive clarity. Many of the products that he and his team create become, like the SK 4, classics of modern design.

In 1962 Braun puts a true bestseller on the market. The "sixtant" sells 10 million units in the period until 1973, breaking all sales records and establishing Braun internationally as experts in shaver technology.

The 1960s bring international competition driven by increasing financial power, resulting in new market challenges. As of January 1, 1962, Braun is transformed into a joint-stock company with 12 million Deutschmarks in starting capital. The Gillette company, based in Boston, USA, acquires a majority share in Braun stocks in 1967. Under the new ownership, large-scale investments are possible, especially in research and development and in the further expansion of production capacity. More than half of Braun's sales are now generated abroad.

In the course of these changes, the brothers Artur and Erwin Braun leave the company of their own volition. Braun has moved its headquarters to Kronberg im Taunus.

The BraunPrize is awarded for the first time in 1968. Founded at Erwin Braun's initiative in 1967 under the name "Braun Prize for Technical Design," its aim is to promote young designers. Otl Aicher, Dr. Fritz Eichler and Dieter Rams are all on the original jury of this first German-based international design-promotion prize.

The Seventies and Eighties: ET 33++micron plus++KF 40++record sales

During the years that follow, Braun continues to introduce innovations in its various product lines.

In 1976 Braun brings the ET 33 pocket calculator onto the market – a product still viewed as especially successful for its ergonomics and design. Its convex keys are a worldwide novelty. The design of its successor, the ET 44 – which remains current right up to today – inspires Apple 30 years later in the development of the iPhone.

The 1982 "micron plus universal" is an innovative shaver design in more ways than one. In addition to its Braun-developed hard-and-soft technology, it introduces a removable shaver foil cartridge and a separately operable long-hair trimmer. The shaver's patented sliding mechanism is still in use today.

The Aromaster KF 40 appears on the market in 1984 and becomes a bestseller, with over 3 million units sold by 2006. It is groundbreaking in coffeemaker design and features a further innovation in its swiveling filter holder.

Over time, the company advances to become a leading producer of small electric appliances. The numbers document this success: In 1984 Braun AG sales surpass one billion Deutschmarks, with exports accounting for 75% of this volume. And in 1988, the 100-millionth Braun shaver leaves the assembly line at the Walldürn plant.

The Nineties: last edition++takeover of Silk-épil++Plak Control

Braun briefly resumes in-house hi-fi production, which it had spun off from the company several years previously, to bring out the limited-volume Last Edition in 1990. With this, the company makes a first-class departure from hi-fi manufacturing after some sixty years. From this point forward, Braun concentrates on the more profitable small electric devices and in particular the areas of personal grooming and household appliances.

The early 1990s see the emergence of two new company business segments that have maintained their importance up to the present. Braun ventures into epilator production with its takeover of the French firm Silk-épil in 1988, thus opening up the new – and still-thriving – business area of female hair removal. And in 1991 the introduction of the electric toothbrush Plak Control with its round oscillating brush head revolutionizes the market, laying the cornerstone for the successful electrical oral care segment, which is later assigned to the Oral-B brand.

2000 to the present: world market leadership++Procter & Gamble++50 years of Braun Design++BraunCollection++current innovations

The most recent decade of Braun's history also brings many innovations, at both the product and company levels.

In the segments foil shavers, epilators and handblenders, Braun is now the world market leader.

In 2000 Braun embarks on a new generation of shavers with the "Syncro System". This model features the Clean&Charge system, which automatically cleans the shaver by means of a special fluid, saving the trouble of manually cleaning the shaver head. It simultaneously recharges the shaver. The four-way flexibility of the Syncro shaver head effectively enlarges the shaving surface by 60%, minimizing shaving time and skin irritation.

The year 2005 is an eventful one. The Procter & Gamble group acquires Gillette and, with it, Braun. The company celebrates "50 Years of Braun Design" with exhibitions in Europe, USA and Japan. This is also the year of the opening of the BraunCollection, which displays the icons of Braun design on 450 m² of exhibition space and regularly organizes special exhibitions.

Right up to the present, Braun continues to innovate. The Series 7 shavers introduced in 2006 provide a yet closer shave using a new sonic technology that transfers micro-impulses via the shaver head to the skin. In 2008 the Silk-épil Xpressive heralds a new generation of epilators that offer improved handling by means of an innovative flexible, pivoting head and new design. In 2010 Braun launches the Multiquick 7 cordless, a newly liberated version of its kitchen classic. And this year of the 90th company anniversary brings the product debut of the Dual Epilator, which unites the Silk-épil epilator with a Gillette Venus blade.

To date, Braun has received over 100 internationally recognized design prizes for its products and holds more than 8,000 active patents. The focus of the company today is on its four core business segments: electric shavers and beard trimmers, female hair removal, hair care and styling devices, and kitchen and household appliances.

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About Braun

Braun, a subsidiary of Procter & Gamble founded in Germany in 1921, develops and manufactures a wide variety of small domestic appliances that marry technical innovation, reliable quality and distinctive design. These range from electric shavers and beauty products to household appliances. Braun products enjoy worldwide distribution. Please visit <http://www.braun.com> for the latest news and in-depth information about the Braun brand.