

# VISUAL IDENTITY ELEMENTS USED BY PHARMACIES IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** *In a highly competitive market, such as that of pharmacies in Romania, the elements of visual identity help to seduce consumers, to recognize the brand of a pharmacy, making it easier to recognize and more familiar to a consumer. The paper aims to identify the main elements of visual identity used on the Romanian pharmaceutical market and to determine the opinions, attitudes and perceptions of consumers regarding these elements. For this purpose, an exploratory analysis was performed combined with a quantitative market research.*

**Key words:** *design, aesthetics, visual identity, pharmacy, market research.*

## 1. Introduction

The design elements of the products, whether food or non-food, contribute in a sustained way to their promotion on the market and to the persuasion of the consumer in making the purchase decision. The design of the product is intended to allow it to sell itself. Through design, it is tried to maximize the benefits that the consumer has by buying it. Product design often provokes a reaction to the product, causing an aesthetic emotion based on emotional, cognitive, intellectual or psychological factors (Pamfilie, Procopie, 2002). Design elements, such as appearance, color, shape, graphics, light, expression, must clearly communicate the content, identify the product, but also seduce the consumer, attract him to the product on the shelf (Scortar, 2010).

The design of the commercial environment contributes to the interpellation of the senses of the consumer in the position of purchase. Problems are addressed that concern the structure, volumes, light, equipment, so that the final effect is as expected. Then comes the problem of commercial lighting, sound design, olfactory design, commercial design. The seduction of the client starts with the exterior, the façade sending the first message to him. The shop window and the entrance of the store, the inscriptions, the characteristics of the street on which it is located, all these suggest a certain image and a certain message (Pamfilie, Procopie, 2002). The olfactory design is another great attraction. Each store has specific smells: in a cafe the smell of coffee is appealing, in a pharmacy the antiseptic smell creates confidence. Even the dusty or stale

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smells of antiques can create nostalgia and thus attract an antiquity-hungry clientele (Mouton, Paris, 2009).

The design of the store requires the support of the designer, the details being very important. Interior walls, ceiling, floor, light sources all contribute to creating the right atmosphere for business (Melewar et al., 2006). They are differentiated according to the specifics of the store, the area in which it is located, the sensitivity to ecology, the degree of culture of potential customers (Qiao, 2018). The display of goods involves a set of procedures and rules for their presentation by which the product is valued, while providing information on its use, and the benefits that the buyer obtains through the purchase. The purpose of the display is: to warn the customer about the existence of the product, to attract and stop the customer for information, to create a demand for impulse, to materialize the impulse in an effective purchase (Paraian, Pascu, 2010).

The Romanian pharmacy market stands out through fierce competition. In 2020, the total number of pharmacies in Romania was 8,100 (Mihalache, 2020). In order to attract consumers and be competitive, pharmacies successfully use the elements of visual identity.

The paper aims to identify the main elements of visual identity used on the Romanian pharmaceutical market and to determine the opinions, attitudes and perceptions of consumers regarding these elements. For this purpose, an exploratory analysis was performed combined with a quantitative market research.

## **2. Analysis of the Elements of Visual Identity present on the Romanian Pharmacy Market**

The Romanian pharmaceutical market represents a special market segment, being the reference market for the medicine. The regional pharmacy networks, which are not part of a nationally expanded chain, remain in a highly competitive market, marked so far by large acquisitions. The largest players in the market are the pharmacy chains Catena, Dr. Max (Sensiblu), Help Net, Dona and Ropharma, which control hundreds of units nationwide.

The main visual identity for a pharmacy is the logo. The logos of Catena and Sensi Blu pharmacies are among the most famous logos in Romania.

The Catena brand was created in 1999, based on 100% Romanian capital. Starting from 30 units, Catena has managed to become, since 2012, the largest and most appreciated network of pharmacies in Romania. In its 23 years of existence, Catena has established itself not only as an authentic Romanian brand, but also as a profile leader in pharmaceutical retail. The Catena logo is composed of the name of the pharmacy that is associated with nature by adding a green leaf that reflects the state of health, and of course the green cross, the symbol of pharmacy in Europe.

A&D Pharma Group has been operating on the drug market for over 20 years, since 1994 in Cluj, through Plurifarm, which later became a division within Mediplus. In 1997, the distributor Mediplus and the first Sensiblu pharmacy started their activity on the medicine market. In 2017, the pharmaceutical group was sold to Penta Investments, a Czech investment fund that also bought the pharmacy division. In 2020, Sensiblu was

declared the second largest pharmacy network in the country, rebranding a large number of pharmacies under the name of Dr. Max (Mihalache, 2020). Dr. Max is the largest pharmacy chain in Central and Eastern Europe and in Romania where it currently has a huge network of former pharmacy chains Belladonna, Punkt, Arta and a large part of Sensiblu pharmacies.

The Sensi Blu logo has undergone some changes over time but the present result is very well chosen and thoughtful, being composed of the name of the pharmacy and the very appropriate combination from a chromatic point of view between the colors green and blue. Blue is a color that conveys confidence, credibility, professionalism, strength and concentration. Green has a relaxing effect and is a sign of peace, health and life.

The Dr. Max logo is a simple one, being composed only of the name of the pharmacy, written in a shade of red on a white background signifying purity. In the composition of the logo we can see the green cross, signifying the pharmaceutical field. The color red represents the symbol of life, power and vitality, signifying the will to face life.

Founded in 1998, Help Net is the third largest pharmaceutical chain in Romania, with over 420 pharmacies open nationwide. Starting with 2018, Help Net pharmacies, together with the Farmexim distributor, are part of the German concern Phoenix group, a leading provider of integrated health services in Europe. With an active presence in 26 countries, it offers unprecedented geographical coverage. In 2019, Help Net acquired the pharmacy networks Proxi Pharm, Ecofarmacia and 52 units of the Remedia chain, and in 2020, another 146 new pharmacies were added (Mihalache, 2020). The Help Net brand has built its notoriety and prestige over time due to the distinct colors it uses. From the very beginning, Help Net used a different color than those used in the pharmaceutical market. The Orange color used by Help Net offers elegance and style, it is a warm and pleasant color, which ensures a good exposure and visibility in the urban landscape.

The Dona Pharmacy Network was established in 1992 and is owned by S.C. Siepcofar S.A., currently having over 300 pharmacies open throughout the country, being also among the most appreciated in Romania. In 2000, the first pharmacy under the Dona brand was opened, and all the working points opened later will bear this name. Initially, the company started from the idea of creating cosmetics for women, hence the name Dona, which in Italian means "woman". It is the fourth largest pharmaceutical network after Catena, Dr. Max / Sensiblu and Help Net. In 2020, although the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the acquisition of large networks, Dona added another 35 units.

The logo of the Dona pharmacy is composed of the name written in a shade of blue, on a white background, in its composition being a green heart, representing the state of health. Blue on the one hand symbolizes confidence and professionalism and on the other hand, the shade of green symbolizes health and life.

### **3. Material and Methods**

The purpose of the quantitative research is to determine the opinions, attitudes and perceptions of consumers regarding the elements of visual identity used by pharmacies in Romania.

The objectives of the research are:

O1 - Identifying the opinions of the respondents regarding pharmacies in Romania;

O2 - Identify the criteria underlying the selection of a pharmacy;

O3 - Determining the opinions and attitudes of the respondents towards the elements of visual identity used by pharmacies in Romania.

The aim was to obtain as many completed questionnaires as possible. The study was conducted on a sample of 628 people, structured as follows: 58.28% women (respectively 366 people) and 41.72% men (respectively 262 people), of which 60.35% are from urban areas and 39.65% from rural areas.

The large geographical dispersion of the researched population led to the application of the questionnaire using the Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) technique. The questionnaire was completed using the Google Forms application. The questionnaire included 22 questions, of which 16 were aimed at collecting information on the analyzed topic, and the 6 final questions were aimed at characterizing the respondents. The period in which this study was conducted is January 2022 - February 2022. After collecting the information using the questionnaire, the processing of statistical data was done with the SPSS system (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The main results of the quantitative research are structured on the three specific objectives pursued.

*O1 - Identify the respondents' opinions regarding the Romanian pharmacies*

At the beginning, the research aimed to identify the frequency with which respondents visit pharmacies in Romania and which is the most frequented pharmacy. Following the results obtained, we can see that 38% of all respondents go to the pharmacy several times a year, 27.8% go to pharmacies every month and 22.8% go several times a month. The most frequented pharmacy among Romanians is Catena (32.5%), followed by Dr.Max (26.3%), Help Net (16.3%), Dona (14.97%) and Sensi Blu (7.96%). Other pharmacies that are among the respondents' preferences are Seti Farm and Medimfarm.

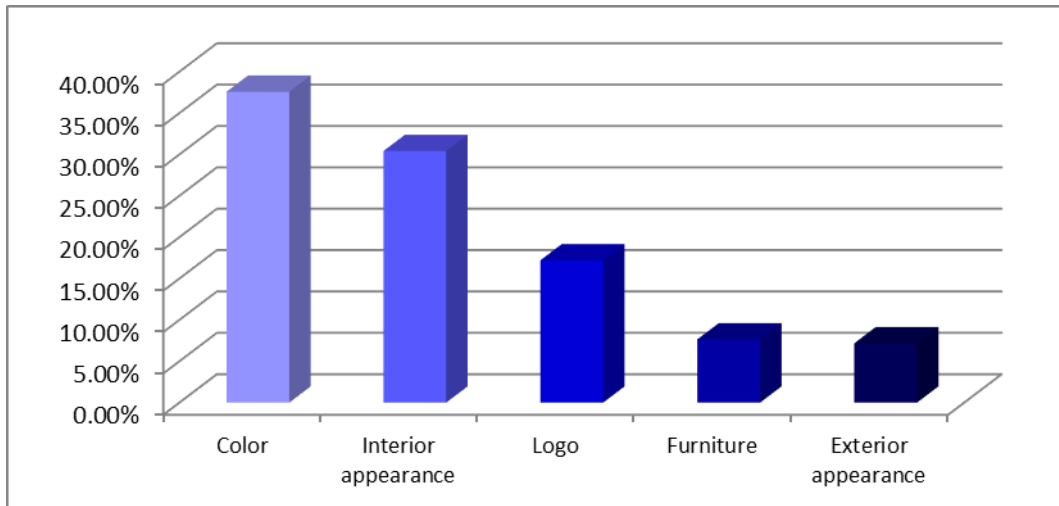
*O2 - Identify the criteria for selecting a pharmacy*

Respondents were asked to name the most important criteria for choosing a pharmacy. According to the answers received, the most important criteria are the kindness of employees and their willingness to provide information (32.17%), the wide range of drugs (22.45%), the reputation of the pharmacy (16.72%) and the promotions offered (15.76%). On the last places were: the location of the pharmacy (7.8%) and the exterior design (5.1%).

*O3 - Determining the opinions and attitudes of the respondents towards the elements of visual identity used by pharmacies in Romania.*

Respondents were asked to state what they consider to be the most important visual identity elements for a pharmacy. In first place was color (37.58%), followed by the interior appearance of the pharmacy (30.41%), logo (17.2%), furniture (7.64%) and exterior appearance (7.17%). From the point of view of the visual identity elements, the

most appreciated pharmacies are: Catena, Help Net and Dona, followed by Dr. Max and Sensi Blue.



**Figura2.** The most important elements of visual identity for a pharmacy  
*Source: Own research of the authors*

For 79.94% of subjects, color is an important element of visual identity. Respondents believe that the most appropriate colors to be used by pharmacies are: green and blue, which are located a short distance from each other. The green color is on the first place, with a percentage of 33.28% and on the 2nd place the blue color with a percentage of 27.71%, followed by the orange color with 26.59% and the red color with 12.42%.

Respondents were asked to identify the elements of olfactory identity that they associate with pharmacies. According to the results, the first place is the mentholated scent, giving an air of freshness, having a percentage of 36.5%, on the 2nd place is the floral scent, with a percentage of 28.4%, followed by the fruity and medicinal scent, with percentages of 14.9% and 12.2% respectively.

According to the results, Catena Pharmacy is seen as a futuristic pharmacy, with a futuristic look, Sensi Blu Pharmacy is considered a spacious pharmacy, Dr. Max Pharmacy is seen as a welcoming pharmacy, Help Net Pharmacy is perceived as attractive, and Pharmacy Dona is perceived as modern.

## 5. Conclusions

We all use our sense of sight and visual cues to interpret and make sense of the world in which we live. Logos can help us identify what we buy and help us associate different experiences with a particular pharmacy. A good logo will enhance the brand image of a pharmacy, making it easier to recognize and more familiar to a consumer. A good logo of a pharmacy strengthens the brand identity. This also increases the visibility of the brand,

as people will recognize the logo and immediately understand what the pharmacy is about and what products it offers.

Another important function of the logo is to establish contact with the customer. When someone sees the pharmacy logo, they should remember the range of medicines, the friendliness of the staff and the previous experiences they had with that pharmacy. The simpler the logo, the easier it will be for the customer to recognize and retain it. It should also be versatile so that it can be used for a variety of different ads.

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