



# Comparative Analysis of Advertisements - Catena Pharmacy Vs. Sensiblu Pharmacy

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## ABSTRACT

Pharmacy and/or medication advertisements place the patient at the centre of the action – the patient is the main pawn exposed to external attacks from the environment and the target of the main inappropriate consumption behaviours. The main theme of every such advertisement is already popular and may be predicted; however, there are pharmacies which stage and approach this sensitive issue (i.e. the disease – the main enemy of human existence) in a unique manner that mitigates the negative impact of viewing such advertisements. There are different opinions on the effectiveness and importance of advertisements; sometimes people are sceptical about them, other times they see them as a necessity. Nonetheless, limits or criticism relating to television advertisements may be counterbalanced by their strengths. We personally consider that it all relates to the individual's perception and capacity to understand the external world in all its complexity. We may be sensible or we may get carried away by emotions; yet, the decision is in our hands. We will enumerate below some of the benefits and criticism brought to television advertisements, one of the most controversial topics in terms of advertising.

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## 1. Introduction

The main goal of advertisements is to call attention so that the information may be stored and remembered and later stir an impulse to purchase a product. Being successful in this endeavour does not mean persuading someone; it all turns into an art of persuasion (MacRury, 2015). Fundamentally, advertising means persuasion; nevertheless, persuading is an art and not a science. Information is mainly conveyed through television, which is the most spread means of all mass media used in advertising towards all categories of public (Marcu, 2010). It is the only means of communication combining both visual and auditory elements. There is an increasingly higher tendency to have an interactive television; this becomes a growingly accessible reality supported by the evolution of technology; therefore, consumers may build their own universe (Toma and Mărgărit, 2012). Television is an instrument that is financially accessible to everybody, provides information on a constant basis and requires no effort to watch. For these reasons, television is the main popular means used to show advertisements and to feed people information. Therefore, the advertisement targets a large audience; it is efficient in time and in space.

## 2. Comparative analysis of Catena pharmacies and Sensiblu pharmacies

The main reason underlying the choice of these two pharmacies is their leading position in the chart of the pharmacies with the highest sales around the country (Catena followed by Sensiblu) (<http://www.zf.ro/companii/topul-celor-mai-mari-retele-de-farmacii-1-500-de-unitati-8-000-de-oameni-si-afaceri-de-un-miliard-de-euro-15381198>) and also in terms of the advertisement created and the ways chosen to convey the message through their advertisements.

The Catena logo shows vivid colours with an immediate impact on the visual by inducing an atmosphere of internal tranquillity and safety: classical straight and slightly wavy light green, orange and yellow lines. The frame is a combination of cold and warm colours with the name of the company and a little green leaf in the centre. They all symbolize getting close to nature and ecology, seriousness and confidence rendered by the rigour of the lines, energy through the orange used, warmth and a delightful atmosphere created with the help of yellow. The font and the size of the letters are a proof of modesty and measure. It is neither too large nor too little, rather clear and visible, with slightly bold lines to avoid getting the eye

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extremely tired while the focus is on the leaf placed on the letter E (which stands for ecological). This is the very first detail that one sees in the foreground, which distinguishes it from all other brands. It is the only pharmacy proposing a detailed yet well-emphasized brand combining more than two colours. Therefore, the pharmacy already promotes the most important values and goals of the company. The word Catena already anticipates its slogan; it makes you think of a well-structured family pharmacy, a pharmacy that is tightly connected to a unified structure, to a group of individuals.

The Sensiblu logo is simple, made of two colours and a non-colour - white, which inspires purity, green - ecology, nature, and blue - peace, confidence and safety. The message inspires you to be confident, to feel the purity, to lift yourself through your spirit; the cold blue helps people to calm down and heal. Two different writing styles and two fonts are combined: one cursive, in italics, and the other in capital letters - they capture your attention and invite you to enter a neutral, calm atmosphere inspiring confidence and reliability. The word *blue* written in white on a blue font made of an isosceles triangle of which base is the wavy side makes people think of the peaceful sea and may be associated to a wave or even a base underlying the word SENSI.

The Sensiblu logo focuses on the individual as a distinct person, seen not only as part of a family or belonging to a group, irrespective of their status. It is "A pharmacy for every person" (<https://publicitateromaneasca.wordpress.com/tag/sensiblu/>) - the approach is more objective and emphasizes the concept of utility. However, Catena, "The pharmacy of one's heart" (<https://www.catena.ro/sanatate/stiri/o-inima-sanatoasa-iubeste-mai-mult>) relies more on the concept of family, the idea of unity as well as the objective and emotional side - the pharmacy is seen as indispensable to every family and is compared to a large heart - the indispensable organ of life.

The Sensiblu medicine commercials lack power of persuasion over the large public as well as information. To get people's attention they show some essential moments of the individual's everyday life. They try to transpose moments and people in different situations or to make you think of certain moments in life (holiday, holiday joy, beach) and provide therefore a solution which they fail to define. You are given the opportunity to gather enough information on their products only by visiting their pharmacy. The advertisements are not clear and do not fully promote just one product, but a whole range of products. They unconsciously induce the idea that enjoying life to the full means being preventive and having medication at hand, whether or not you need them. The content of the Catena advertisements convey the same type of message. The advertisements are monotonous and show various situations and persons (childish people, loved ones, mothers and children). Lacking a very clear strategy (the commercial seek just to inform on the availability of some medication on stock or to offer discounts or promotions), every advertisement follows the same pattern:

description of the market share (undifferentiated strategy) → enumeration of some situations in people's lives

→ providing some vague healing solutions by mentioning a range of products which may help

→ stimulation of sales with every advertisement through new offers (buy 2 products for another person, you get the third one for you free - this phrase is not suitable for medicine. It is advisable to use it rather in the textile or food industry), promotions and discounts → the urge to visit and buy.

The slogan "We make sure we..." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Fm6OxHKssY>) inserted at the end of the commercial reminds us once again that the pharmacy is there to help (although it is not absolutely necessary to seek their help, when needed). Furthermore, they are constantly returning at the beginning of every season to refresh our memory on some medication available (which they do not mention or name), while their invitation to visit the pharmacy is practically an urge to avoid seeing a doctor whose recommendations may be more pertinent.

All television commercials do not refer to a particular medicine; they focus rather on the symptom (digestion, rheumatism), which is seen in a general manner and is considered natural. This induces the idea that some viewers must be in minimum one of the situations shown in the commercials. They do not promote specific medicine and do not seek to train the viewer to self-medicate. They only invite patients to visit the pharmacy and get assistance from the pharmacists. There is no warning on seeing a doctor or avoiding self-medication while watching the commercial.

The urge to buy is rather objective (you have to come and buy because you have to prevent even though you do not need to or you do not even need to know whether you need something; only one visit to the pharmacy will make you aware that anybody needs at least one pill - this is what the commercial unconsciously tries to convey). The voice used in all commercials of the Sensiblu pharmacy is always a warm male voice, an open voice which is always confident that everything will be all right as long as this pharmacy is there for you, while awareness of some disease or even symptom is inexistent.

We consider that promoting products on television pursues only to inform on the presence of this respective pharmacy on the market. Advertisements do not promote medication or a range of medicines, they only inform you that such medication is available in their pharmacy and this is not attractive to you as the only difference between them and the competitors are the promotions offered.

The interior design of the pharmacies is simplistic, usually white on both walls and shelves; there are no eye-catching products and it is rather difficult to spot on the shelves the medicine that is popular in other pharmacies where they are rather visibly displayed. The appearance is similar to that of a minimarket selling medication, with a slight air of an institution/medical practice.

In terms of content and presentation, the advertisements produced by Catena are highly different. The marketing strategy started from the idea of staging not only one celebrity recommending the products and the pharmacy, but four celebrities representing and becoming the pharmacy symbols, i.e.: Stela Popescu and Alexandru Arșinel (representing the timeframe 1930 – 1939, exclusively selected to stir the interest of the third-age category and Nico (Nicoleta Matei) and Adrian Enache (to get the attention of middle-aged people). They permanently use celebrities and choose some couples following therefore the unity pattern. The pharmacy relies on their popularity and the confidence they inspire common people (owing to their significant experience, pleasant stage presence, acting, stage and vocal skills). Nevertheless, we consider that this is an original unique approach demonstrating that people and their decisions may be unconsciously influenced by famous figures.

The commercials show them together and all four seem to be part of the same family (the gathering at the Christmas or Easter dinner, the mother-daughter or husband-wife discussions). The takes are mostly shot inside the pharmacy where the characters share opinions or seek the pharmacist's opinion, while outside the pharmacy the main character staged is still Catena, which attempts to send the idea of belonging, regardless of the time or the action. Therefore, the word Catena becomes the main topic in all discussions (over a barbeque, a family dinner, a simple phone or even family conversation). The habit of regularly visiting the pharmacy is triggered by the discounts offered, special discounts tied to holding a pharmacy loyalty card or it is simply the meeting place where you can socialize with other patients. The promotion becomes excessive when the advertisements claim that the pharmacy is the perfect place for a walk, a chat or even to wash away your boredom. Exhaustively mentioning all these reasons to visit the pharmacy means forgetting the essential aspect i.e. you can visit the pharmacy only if you have a health issue or you need a special beauty product, which is available at this location only. This urge to visit the pharmacy constantly and without good reason promotes self-medication or medication recommended and even unjustified self-prevention. Additionally, every time the pharmacy becomes a meeting place for people who have nothing else better to do, the pharmacists' time is wasted and the waiting time for the patients with urgent and real needs increases.

The slogan of the pharmacy is every time integrated into a song, whereas the lyrics are sung repeatedly, with no strictly pharmaceutical meaning, just to recall the groundless reasons to consume medication. For instance:

- The female singer wants to have a long life – this reason is insufficiently pertinent to visit a pharmacy; the lifestyle and length are not influenced and cannot be changed only by taking medication; or the pharmacy has nothing to do with your desire to stop sneezing.
- The lyrics of the song suggest that you have to address the pharmacy for every issue you might have in life; the pharmacy is where you still find the hope and the strength to hope for something wonderful in life. "The love tablet" is metaphorically introduced in this poem and may be interpreted only as the care of the pharmacy towards the patient by prescribing the medication, which may cause pain relief. This love is also found in the phrase "heart pharmacy".

The word "Catena" is overwhelmingly repeated throughout the advertisements and replies and the goal is to remind the public, in an excessive way, that this pharmacy has to be part of anybody's life. By comparison, the name Sensiblu is only present at the end of each pharmacy commercial for identification purposes. It is rather difficult to understand that this is a commercial promoting a pharmacy and it even creates confusion (due to the wide range of meanings, the commercial may refer to everything and nothing in particular). Pronunciation of the name is only intended to refresh the patient's memory; since it is not included in a song or a poem, mentioning the name is only an identification factor.

To adapt better to the large audience, Catena created commercials for every geographical area of the country, respectively: commercials for the inhabitants of Moldova, Oltenia, Banat, Transylvania, Walachia and Dobrogea. Each commercial mentions the specificity of the area and its inhabitants as well as the need to have a pharmacy in every area around the country. The characters wear traditional costumes representative of the area promoted and try to imitate the accent of each region. A weakness of these commercials would be the way the takes are shot: the viewer may easily see that everything is staged beforehand and there is nothing accidental about the people meeting inside the pharmacy; the video generates no emotion and fails to stimulate sales. In order to increase consumption, it only suggests that there are several pharmacies available. The pharmacy is promoted in the same manner as a supermarket; it is the place where one should get their supply of products constantly and uninterruptedly.

With reference to the length of the commercial, one may say that Sensiblu chooses to show short messages (between 20 and 25 seconds long), whereas Catena has slightly longer messages (30 to 35 seconds, 30 to 53 seconds for the regional promotion commercials and approximately 2 minutes and 50 seconds for

the video showing the tango steps taken by the four protagonists and the two professional dancers or the commercial intended for all categories of patients (the video for all generations).

The musical advertisement performed in tango steps (there is no communication or interaction with the public who gets confused and cannot identify the actual message of the commercial) has no obvious message; it starts abruptly by showing the celebrities dancing and trying to imitate the professionals' dance. When the song ends, the commercial ends suddenly with the already consecrated slogan. No further explanations on the dance performed are offered. On the one hand, the song and the lack of communication keep the viewer's interest alive throughout the entire length of the advertisement. On the other hand, there is no meaning for the viewer to grasp. In a subjective form of understanding, one may say that Catena pharmacy helped the four to be fit and able to perform the dance; yet, the messages are vague, are only partially staged and the public gets to see only glimpses or unsuccessful takes.

As for Sensiblu, the message is shorter and more concise (a series of situations presented from an objective, detached point of view, with no characters or celebrities, direct reference to purchasing medication and gaining benefits from the promotions offered). On the contrary, singing the slogan and sending the message through songs, the characters' roles and the little script staged make Catena advertisement much longer. As low as the level of confidence in the products promoted may be, the celebrities chosen and their acting and singing talent manage to increase it; this is the main reason why the pharmacy used this trick – to get way ahead of the competition; the sales figures are the best way to prove this successful endeavour.

Example: Easter dinner commercial Catena – the message stimulates and limits self-medication at the same time. There is a fine lining between good and bad. The message is generated so that it may not be banned on television; it only reminds the viewer of the medication required and very rapidly carries on by mentioning food should ingested responsibly.

In terms of television visibility – Catena is on top with the highest number of television advertisements compared to Sensiblu, which is very little visible and at times even reduces their television time to zero. The best moment to launch commercials are early seasons, around holiday time, once the television channels officially announce various cold or flu pandemics or when there is a corporate rebranding, change of venue or new locations are inaugurated.

The proximity of the two pharmacies are antithetical: you can find Catena anywhere (appreciatively 570 locations nationwide) ([www.catena.ro](http://www.catena.ro)), usually in the best custom areas (next to a market, close to hospitals, within walking distance of patients' home or even in the proximity of the competitors), while Sensiblu pharmacies are not so numerous (about 400 locations around the country) ([www.sensiblu.com](http://www.sensiblu.com)); even inexistent in some cities/towns or located too far away from the urban congestion (on the outskirts or far from the centre) or inside large supermarkets.

The comedy of situation is present in almost all Catena advertisements. It is what distinguishes this pharmacy from all other pharmacies; in this case, the four characters make the difference by skilfully acting and exhibiting each situation considered. There is always stage presence and good mood and each commercial ends in a positive, cheerful reaction-stimulating note. The newness of each commercial is what captures one's attention (it is innovative to see how the characters turn the pharmacy into a meeting place or into an alternative to spending time). By comparison, we cannot state the same thing about Sensiblu – there is no new element, there is no comedy of situation; it is merely an ordinary commercial informing the patients on the availability and possibility to purchase medication from their location. The entirely objective presentation, which makes no effort to persuade the consumer, is also a way to convince another category of patients (i.e. patients who dislike the commercials of the other pharmacy).

As a consequence, we can state that, even though the two pharmacies have adopted totally different strategies to attract customers and promote products, they are both successful.

On the one hand, a pharmacy uses all and any technique possible to attract the consumer (from retaining celebrities, combining various colours, word repetition, new situations, familiar events and comedy of situation); on the other hand, we have a totally objective pharmacy, which does not attempt to persuade but to suggest.

The main strengths and weaknesses of the two pharmacies were listed by the patients involved in a study conducted by the research agency Exact. They anticipate and come to complete the analysis above:

Sensiblu is seen as a provider of expensive products, with a wide range of products, some of which are unavailable in other pharmacies, their locations are large and bright. The emphasis is rather laid on other types of products than on pharmaceutical products (cosmetic products, beauty products or various baby devices or utensils). This makes the patients think of a supermarket. The staff is kind, yet extremely strict in terms of medication requiring a prescription.

At the other end, Catena pharmacy benefits from high visibility due to the repetitive and omnipresent advertisements, yet captivating for their prices and promotions. The patients are highly satisfied with the staff who is kind and shows genuine interest in the patients and their health conditions.

### 3. Studies conducted and reports prepared by specialized companies

Over the years, there have been several studies on the consumers' perception of pharmaceutical products and the influence of the advertisements on the patient nowadays.

According to a study carried out by the company Exact in Bucharest ([http://www.exactcc.ro/Photos/Studies/Perceptiile%20romanilor%20despre%20farmacii\\_by%20ExactCC.pdf](http://www.exactcc.ro/Photos/Studies/Perceptiile%20romanilor%20despre%20farmacii_by%20ExactCC.pdf)), Romanians consider that pharmacies are necessary. In addition, they acknowledge the aspect variety in case of pharmacies; the most important characteristics in this respect are the possibility to order online for less available medication, the option to explore their stock online, kind communicative staff and availability of separate cash registers for cosmetics purchased in pharmacies.

Another study completed in 2015 ([http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/care-criteriile-tin-contromanii-atunci-aleg-farmacie-percepute-consumatoriprincipalele-farmacii-romania\\_1\\_55a7b7e1f5eaafab2ca10aca/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/care-criteriile-tin-contromanii-atunci-aleg-farmacie-percepute-consumatoriprincipalele-farmacii-romania_1_55a7b7e1f5eaafab2ca10aca/index.html)) reveals the importance of proximity, notoriety of pharmacies, availability of medicine, medical support, diversity and promotions – the main decision factors in the process of choosing a pharmacy. What is more, there are other emotional factors involved in this process (behaviour and attitude of pharmacists or consultants inside the pharmacy – the customer needs to feel important, the customer needs attention in such location; this is followed by rational factors – prices, availability, ambience etc.)

There are also other factors influencing the consumers: recommendations made by people we trust, their previous or personal experiences and even advice. All these factors intervene in the process of selection, choice and customers' loyal increase.

In accordance with a study carried out by the same company in Bucharest in 2013 (<http://www.wall-street.ro/articol/Social/156432/internetul-al-doilea-medic-de-familie-cat-de-des-merg-romanii-la-medic-intr-un-an.html>), a fairly high percentage of persons living in Bucharest (54%) see the doctor two or three times a year, half of which fall into the third age category, while the main sources of information for the patients who seek a medical examination are the family doctors – first place – and the internet – the second channel of information.

Another study conducted by the medical research company JAMA, also entitled “double blind placebo-controlled study” (<http://mariusgeanta.ro/raport-devastator-al-nice-asupra-sistemului-de-compensare-a-medicamentelor-din-romania-cum-se-pot-economisi-pestele-16-milioane-de-euro-ta-ind-compensarea-medicamentului-cu-nume-de-discoteca-un-sf/>), which pursued to test the effectiveness of Ginko Biloba medicine throughout a seven-year timeframe, tested by elderly (72 to 96 years), proved that this medicine has none of the effects expected or promoted, brings no improvement to memory and fails to prevent memory loss among old people.

Placebo is another interesting phenomenon. Some researchers concluded that approximately 75% of the healing process supported by medication is entirely the result of the patients' attitude and expectations relating to their disease whereas about 35% of the cases studied were healed based on this effect alone (<http://www.descopera.org/efectul-placebo/>).

According to research performed between January and September in 2016, the drugs advertisements were the most numerous and exceeded in number all the other commercials broadcast on television. They amounted to approximately 23 hours of television broadcast time on all channels in Romania, while the relating cost was around 34 million euros (<http://www.tolo.ro/2016/11/24/23-de-ore-pe-zi-publicitate-la-medicamente-in-romania-cum-apara-ministerul-sanatatii-corporatia-sanofi-zentiva/>).

People may purchase some over-the-counter medicine only in Romania. Due to their side effects, other countries haven't removed such medicine from the market. The same type of studies was conducted on cases identified subsequent to medication use. Example: Furazolidon – may be purchased in Romania over the counter; nonetheless, countries such as Japan, Korea, Malaysia a.o. eliminated them from the pharmaceutical market as there is other medication which works faster, better and is safer for the patient ([http://www.economica.net/medicamente-interzise-in-strainatate-autorizate-in-romania\\_80091.html](http://www.economica.net/medicamente-interzise-in-strainatate-autorizate-in-romania_80091.html)).

### 4. Conclusions

Following the theme analyzed and the research conducted, we can state that the pharmaceutical market and industry is dynamic and increasingly growing. It is a market that will never cease to exist. Given the current economic, political and demographic situation in Romania, the demand for medication will be increasingly higher for all age categories. The motivation is as simple as it is complex: time and time management for the 21st century man becomes a concept that is more and more difficult to control. Health care in this light century keeps going down due to long hours spent at work, highly processed foods and lack of or continual postponement of physical exercise (Cristache et al., 2019). All these triggers a body weakness and implicitly a deterioration of one's health. Therefore, people are more prone to embrace more rapid and miraculous methods towards physical restoration. People tend to believe that their health issues are more numerous while television advertisements promise to solve all these issues for them.

We consider that it is firstly necessary to educate consumers in this respect, as they are the only ones able to decide on what is best for them; on the other hand, drugs advertising may only influence a potential consumer to the extent to which they allow this to happen. Pain and disease are notions that one should approach only in close connection to cure and treatment. However, the cheapest variant of treatment is always neglected, i.e. complete change of attitude, positive attitude which implicitly brings about lower rate of stress and change of lifestyle.

The drugs advertisements are aggressive. They attempt to induce a certain way of thinking and to generate addiction. Forbidding them on television and the radio could lower self-medication rate and people would start seeing the doctors several times a year, which would support among the patients the idea of treatment as prevention (Gabor et al, 2021). Advertisements may affect minors and adolescents – they pay little attention to details such as medical leaflets and may even purchase medicine for self-medication purposes without the consent of their parents.

The symptoms described in some commercials for a specific medicine may be similar to those typical of a more serious medical condition, in which treatment use of television promoted medication may even worsen the evolution of the disease.

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