



Saint Charles Apotheke breaks the usual German pharmacy codes, providing an eclectic environment for premium, own label and OTC products as well as a treatment menu in the building next door

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### Saint Charles Apotheke is a pharmacy with a difference

- Saint Charles Apotheke looks and acts very differently to standard German pharmacies
- The pharmacy stocks premium and organic products
- It also offers homeopathy and anthroposophic consultations and spa treatments

#### *Saint Charles departs from the usual pharmacy codes*

The German pharmacy market is strictly regulated. Pharmacies sell prescription medications, OTC and medical supplies and offer basic health services like monitoring blood pressure. In addition they sell French dermatology brands such as Avène, Vichy, La Roche-Posay or Liérac as well as German brands like Medipharma, Sebamed, Eucerin and Claire Fisher, some of which are pharmacy-exclusive in Germany.



As a rule, most pharmacies look alike, too. With wide glass frontages and the distinctive red pharmacy symbol outside and clinically white and brightly lit interiors, they tend to be business-like places.

#### *Different angle*

Saint Charles Apotheke in Berlin-Wilmersdorf takes a different approach. The entrance is narrow and elegant and even the pharmacy sign is unobtrusive. From the outside, the store looks more like a classy perfumery that also offers beauty treatments.



And that's precisely what Saint Charles does. It dispenses all the usual prescription medications but a key aspect of its business is its strong focus on natural cosmetics and alternative medicine. The pharmacy offers consultations on homeopathy, Bach flower remedies, anthroposophic medicine, Schuessler salts, Ayurveda and herbal treatments. It also sells premium and niche beauty brands as well as its own range of organic cosmetics, and offers beauty treatments in the Small Hideaway treatment room.



### *Viennese origins*

Saint Charles Berlin is a partner of the Vienna-based Saint Charles pharmacy. The Viennese flagship manufactures and sells its own beauty and nutritional products along with a wide range of international and niche organic C&T brands and spa treatments.

German pharmacist Sabine Zeeck came across the Saint Charles concept in Vienna, liked it and decided to open her own store in Germany. In May 2009 Saint Charles Berlin opened its doors on Pariser Strasse in Berlin's Wilmerdorf area, a prosperous residential and boutique district.

### *Luxury organics*

Zeeck had very specific ideas about how she wanted her pharmacy to look. She bought an antique wooden apothecary desk, put in dark wooden floors and shelves and invested in a chandelier, so the look and feel of the store is luxurious and soothing.

The store is compact, with a retail space of 40 sqm. The treatment room, which has a separate entrance next to the pharmacy, covers roughly 20sqm. Most of the shelf space in the pharmacy is given over to premium cosmetics.



Saint Charles sells UK brand The Organic Pharmacy (which is otherwise only available in Berlin's luxury perfumery Quartier 206), German organic premium brand Santa Verde, US cosmeceutical brand Perricone MD (Saint Charles is one of only two Perricone stockists in Berlin), German spa brand Biomaris as well as the entire range of Dr. Hauschka and a small Weleda assortment. It also sells its own label brand Saint Charles Cosmetics as well as



Saint Charles nutritional supplements and teas.

Other brands include dermatology skincare brand Siriderma, premium home fragrance brands Neom from the UK and Lichtjuwel from Germany, and Sapofaktur, a range made to old pharmacy recipes by Southern German pharmacy Nierle.

### Customer magnet



Saint Charles gets a good mix of local customers and clients who travel across Berlin to buy the products, treat themselves to a facial, massage or pedicure, or have a consultation about ayurvedic or homeopathic treatments.

The treatment room is located next to the pharmacy but has its own entrance. German law forbids pharmacies from offering beauty treatments in their retail area, so Zeeck opened her spa area in the building next floor. There is space for just one client at a time so everything feels very individual and private.

The spa menu offers a range of treatments, ranging from lymphatic facials through anti-ageing, relaxing to moisturising skin treatments, taking in ayurvedic face and body massages, ear candling, hand and foot treatments, manicures and pedicures, lash and brow tinting, and waxing.



### What's next

Prescription medications account for about 80% of turnover in German pharmacies so there is not much room for creativity in this part of the business. The remaining sales come from sales of OTC, supplements and medical supplies, with approximately 3% of turnover derived from cosmetics and body care.

However, there are no regulations that forbid making the pharmacy retail area a more welcoming space. Creating a comfortable and soothing interior design makes customers feel welcomed, and happy customers are more inclined to linger and browse the shelves. Saint Charles offers customers fresh tea when they enter the store, which makes a visit even more relaxing.

A pharmacy can also try out more unusual brands, concentrating on certified organic cosmetics or developing an own label range. By departing from the norm, these pioneers can turn themselves into destinations.

And while beauty treatments cannot be offered in the actual retail area – at least not in German pharmacies – a store can cooperate with a beautician or manicurist who might set up shop next door.

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