

**Intercultural Dynamics in the Mercedes-Benz Narrative:
Perceptions vs reactions in business & commerce communication**

“Your perception of me is a reflection of you. My reaction to you is an awareness of me.”

**Dinâmica Intercultural na Narrative da Mercedes-Benz: Percepções vs reações na
comunicação empresarial e comercial**

“A tua perceção de mim é um espelho de ti. A minha reação a ti é um entendimento de mim.”

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ABSTRACT: This essay dives into the intercultural dynamics within the global business landscape, focusing on Mercedes-Benz as "Subject A". The exploration goes beyond linguistic skills, emphasising the critical importance of grasping cultural codes, implicit norms, soft skills and cross-cultural interactions. The article portrays multinational businesses as living beings, with Mercedes-Benz expressing a dynamic role that bests its identity as a product, building on the studies of Geert Hofstede and Edward T. Hall. The metaphorical lens captures the soul of the brand, shaping and mirroring global perceptions. The essay's approach includes an explanation of core concepts in intercultural communication, followed by case studies and critical reflections on Mercedes-Benz. The essay adopts a qualitative methodology, actively involving readers in delving into the complexities of intercultural dynamics. The guiding statement of the analysis is "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me". The narrative unfolds across multiple dimensions, exploring Mercedes-Benz's advertising tales as significant cultural artifacts that reflect and affect social beliefs. It examines the influence of social media platforms as arenas in which the brand interacts in a reciprocal dance of perceptions and reactions with its worldwide audience. The essay delves into the cultural iceberg, revealing the implicit values, feelings and traditions that define the collective lens through which the brand is viewed.

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This essay adds insights to the shifting landscape of global commerce by scrutinising the interaction between Mercedes-Benz and its global audience. It takes readers on a journey where theory and practice collide, analysing cultural relations and their implications for businesses operating in an interconnected world.

KEYWORDS: Mercedes-Benz, Automotive Industry Branding, Cultural Iceberg analysis, Cross-cultural Dynamics Perceptions and Reactions, Intercultural Communication Technologies, Global Business, Communication Strategy, Advertising Narratives, Digital Storytelling, Social Media Impact

RESUMO: Este artigo analisa a dinâmica intercultural no panorama empresarial global, centrado-se na Mercedes-Benz como “Sujeito A”. A reflexão vai para além das competências linguísticas, salientando a importância crítica da compreensão dos padrões culturais, das normas implícitas, das competências transversais e das interações interculturais. Este documento retrata as empresas multinacionais como entidades ativas, com a Mercedes-Benz a exprimir um papel dinâmico que melhor representa a sua identidade enquanto produto, com base nos estudos de Geert Hofstede e Edward T. Hall. A análise, em forma de metáfora, capta a alma da marca, modelando e espelhando as percepções globais. Este artigo aborda uma explicação dos conceitos centrais da comunicação intercultural, acompanhada por estudos de caso e reflexões críticas sobre a Mercedes-Benz. O estudo adopta uma metodologia qualitativa, envolvendo ativamente os leitores no debate das complexidades da dinâmica intercultural. A premissa orientadora da análise é “A sua perceção de mim é um espelho de si; a minha reação a si é uma consciencialização de mim”. A narrativa é apresentada em múltiplas dimensões, explorando os conteúdos publicitários da Mercedes-Benz como artefactos culturais significativos que representam e influenciam as concepções sociais. Este artigo examina a influência das plataformas de redes sociais como arenas em que a marca interage numa dança recíproca de percepções e reações com o seu público mundial. Este estudo apoia-se no icebergue cultural, analisando os valores, sentimentos e tradições implícitos que definem a estratégia colectiva através da qual a marca é vista. Este texto acrescenta uma perspetiva à realidade mutável do comércio global, analisando a interação entre a Mercedes-Benz e o seu grande público, transportando os leitores numa viagem em que a teoria e a prática se encontram, face às relações culturais e as suas implicações para as empresas que operam num mundo globalizado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Mercedes-Benz, A Marca da Indústria Automóvel, Análise do Icebergue Cultural, Dinâmicas Interculturais, Percepções e Reações, Tecnologias de Comunicação Interculturais, Estratégia Global de Comunicação Empresarial, Narrativas Publicitárias, Narrativas Digitais, Impacto das Plataformas Digitais

Introduction

Navigating in global business involves linguistic proficiency and an awareness of cultural traces, implicit norms and different cross-cultural relationships (Hofstede, 1980; Hall, 1976). Geert Hofstede and Edward T. Hall's writings establish the theoretical groundwork for understanding the dimensional role of culture in shaping global business context.

Multinational firms are living organisms on this metaphorical expedition via intercultural interactions. Within this framework, Mercedes-Benz transcends its identity as a product to become "Subject A". This conceptual lens depicts the brand as an entity engaged in a dynamic interaction of perceptions and reactions within the global marketplace, rather than a commodity. Authors mentioned throughout the essay contribute to the theoretical foundations of the statement "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me".

The purpose is to examine intercultural communication concepts and apply them to the case of Mercedes-Benz. To achieve this, the essay takes a structured approach, beginning with a basic analysis and application to Mercedes-Benz and then moving on to a synthesis of exemplified situations. Such study is set to unravel the complexities of intercultural dynamics, providing insights that contribute to the evolving landscape of global trade, using a qualitative methodology, through case studies, real-world examples and critical thoughts. This methodology engages readers to the depth of cultural interactions, highlighted through entities such as Mercedes-Benz, turning this exploration into an interconnected narrative of theory and practical applications.

Self-empowerment coaching provided the motivation for this essay's investigation, guiding through a discourse that improves the understanding of the relationship between culture, perception and reaction in the dynamic arena of global commerce.

1. Foundations of Intercultural Communication in Business

The notion of intercultural communication stresses how successful cross-cultural relationships are formed in the frame of global business. This chapter looks over the invisible dimensions of the cultural iceberg, revealing layers of interculturality, digital storytelling and agency that shape interactions between Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) and the miscellaneous Subject B, representing a range of individuals, societies and technological interfaces. The metaphorical dance of "us" and "the other" within this environment needs an examination of perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices - factors that shape the structure of international/intercultural relationships.

Mercedes-Benz stands out as a car manufacturer but as Subject A - an entity that mirrors and changes perceptions globally. The interactions between Mercedes-Benz and its dynamic environment capture the concept of "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me". This chapter examines these notions, providing a theoretical prism through which the

exploration of Mercedes-Benz relations will be analysed, using insights from Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), as theorized by Richard Bandler and John Grinder (1979).

As we explore the two dimensions of the axiom central to this essay, exploring the fields of perception and reaction of the Mercedes-Benz brand in interactions with social media, employees, the public, competitors and the complexities of digital storytelling in advertisements, we introduce, with our perspective, the idea of Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

NLP becomes a critical lens through which we understand how Mercedes-Benz communicates with the worldwide audience in the "me vs. you" dynamic. We can also learn about how NLP effects perceptions and reactions by examining the language, symbols and narratives used in digital storytelling. As people interact with Mercedes-Benz via media (social platforms, digital marketing, etc.), the use of NLP approaches becomes clear. The brand carefully tailors its communications to resonate with its audience's cultural and linguistic backgrounds, producing a story that extends beyond the tangible features of its products. This use of language and storytelling strategies becomes embedded in the "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me" dynamic.

Richard Bandler's insights into NLP provide the theoretical basis for understanding how linguistic and communication choices influence the construction of brand perceptions. We acknowledge the interaction between Mercedes-Benz and its worldwide audience by including this reference to NLP into our study, revealing insight on how the brand's messaging influences and is shaped by different cultural perspectives.

Through this analytical journey, the significance of these concepts is revealed through real-world examples. Consider people, and civilizations, worldwide communicating and interacting using different technologies, navigating a society managing the complexities of virtual environments and technology interfaces during the digital revolution.

1.1. Uncovering layers, perceptions and narratives

The cultural iceberg, as conceptualised by Edward T. Hall (1976), acts as a guiding compass in the examination of core intercultural notions. The visible top of culture includes observable components such as language, behaviour and traditions, but there is a multilayered beneath, harbouring embedded rules, values, soft skills and implicit assumptions. Mercedes-Benz, our Subject A, materialises as a reflected mirror as we travel this conceptual iceberg, recording both the evident transactions on the surface and the hidden cultural currents beneath. This layered structure is a dynamic interplay between Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) and Subject B (society, individuals, employees, customers and the digital world), rather than a unidirectional lens. In its global exchanges, Subject A interacts with the cultural iceberg, showing surface-level cultural manifestations while

navigating the deep culture fluxes. Subject B, representing the larger landscape, uses the cultural iceberg to analyse and react to Mercedes-Benz's actions at the same time. The visible and invisible parts of culture become important touchpoints affecting how Subject B perceives, interacts with and interprets Mercedes-Benz's cultural characteristics. Through the lens of Mercedes-Benz, Edward T. Hall's conceptualization unravels a back-and-forth of cultural distinctions, establishing the basic framework for understanding the dynamics of intercultural relationships in the world of global commerce.

We turn our attention to the triangle of perception, stereotype and prejudice as we explore the landscape of intercultural communication. Geert Hofstede (1980) revealed these premises as pillars influencing the dynamics between Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) and Subject B (society, competition, individuals, customers and the digital world). Perception, being the filter through which interactions are sorted, shapes how both participants take cultural traces. Intercultural meetings are shaped by stereotypes, established cultural shortcuts and prejudices, as predetermined assumptions based on ethnic backgrounds. Hofstede's insights consider how these cognitive frameworks influence Subject A's activities and Subject B's reactions in the global commercial arena. Mercedes-Benz, like Subject A, is not immune to the biases inherent in perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices. Simultaneously, Subject B, representing the stakeholders, navigates the intercultural ground influenced by these cognitive lenses. These concepts have an impact that goes beyond simple cognitive processes, filtering into behaviours, judgements and interpretations in the dance of global trade. Understanding how perception, stereotype and prejudice contribute to biases provides a lens to examine what Mercedes-Benz faces. It contributes significantly to our understanding of the interaction between cultural cognitive frameworks and their practical manifestations in the global business landscape.

We need to understand the subjective and objective elements of personality in the field of intercultural dynamics. Subjective personality, based on an individual's self-perception, coexists with the objective personality's external perceptions (Fournier's, 1998). Within the intercultural context, subjective aspects of brand personality, such as associations with luxury and innovation, are intertwined with how external entities - individuals and societies - objectively perceive and influence the brand's image. Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) crosses the junction of its subjective identity and the external, objective perspectives held by Subject B (individuals, societies) in the global commerce. The brand's interactions are shaped by the interaction of subjective and objective personality characteristics, which reflect a synthesis of self-perception and external factors. This chapter helps to obtain insights into how Subject A is perceived and influenced within the intercultural landscape by dipping into these layers.

The transforming processes of self-awareness and empathy, articulated by Hall (1976), emerge as components in intercultural communication. We explore the impact of these concepts in forging

meaningful connections across cultural landscapes. Recognising one's own cultural biases, predispositions and perspectives is a transformational force. This awareness is essential for effective intercultural interaction, helping Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) to navigate Subject B's (individuals, societies) cultural complexities. Empathy, another transforming factor, promotes intercultural communication beyond surface. Subject A goes beyond transactional relationships by gaining an empathetic awareness of Subject B's cultural environment. In the setting of global commerce, the transformative interaction between self-awareness and empathy is strong, changing how Subject A perceives and reacts to the cultural setting. As we move through this exploration, Hall's insights help us understand the transforming power of self-awareness and empathy, two critical factors that drive intercultural dynamics.

By examining the reflecting features of intercultural confrontations, we shift our attention to the development of cultural identity through narratives and representations. Edward T. Hall's review on reflection becomes a key aspect, encompassing how Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) considers its own narrative and representation within global interactions, resonating with the cultural suggestions beneath the surface. In this situation, representations go beyond visuals to include the larger communicative aspects deployed by Subject B (societies, individuals, competition, etc.) in influencing impressions. These representations, whether through media, discourse, or cultural practices, are crucial in the construction of cultural identities. Subject A not only reflects on its own narrative, but also decodes the narratives constructed by Subject B, contributing to the mutual formation of cultural identities in global business.

Cultural sensitivity, privacy and data security emerge as key components in establishing ethical and effective intercultural communication in business. Beyond Edward T. Hall's core notions, Helen Nissenbaum, a privacy and ethics specialist, wrote in her book "Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy and the Integrity of Social Life" (2010) about the dynamics required in crossing cultural landscapes while protecting privacy and data security. Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) must carefully manage the expectations and values contained in different cultural contexts as it interacts with Subject B (societies, individuals, digital domain). Cultural sensitivity emerges as a critical assumption, ensuring that Subject A's interactions are sensitive to the expectations of stakeholders. Simultaneously, in an interconnected world, the lens of privacy and data security takes relevance, where Subject A's dedication to ethical procedures underlines its integrity and accountability.

Emotional intelligence and the subjective aspect of beauty - in the example of the axiom "Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder", are brought as considerations in navigating intercultural interactions. Building on Edward T. Hall's (1976) core ideas, emotional intelligence, which includes qualities of awareness, empathy and flexibility, is critical in shaping meaningful connections between Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) and Subject B (societies, individuals, digital environment). In this relationship, the

perception of beauty is shaped by societal and individual factors and acts as a mirror of one's internal frameworks. This aligns with the idea that "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me." Subject A, as a personification of Mercedes-Benz, reflects and responds to the cultural ideas represented in Subject B rather than projecting an image of beauty. Hall's perspective emphasises that beauty is intrinsically subjective, influenced by cultural, societal and individual factors. As a result, Subject A's emotional intelligence serves as a guiding force, allowing it to navigate different beauty perceptions with cultural comfort while cultivating a dynamic/reciprocal relationship with Subject B.

The next section explores the dimensions of intercultural communication. This part, as a conceptual anchor, displays foundational concepts to understand the interaction between Mercedes-Benz and the broader global context. Furthermore, these concepts show how Subject A not only reflects the perceptions of Subject B but also crafts a self-aware response, embodying the statement, "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me".

1.2. Communication, agency and brand in business interactions

In cross-cultural communication, the dynamics of verbal and nonverbal exchanges go beyond Mercedes-Benz (Subject A). Subject B, reflecting the broader societal and human circumstances, contributes to the complexities of these discussion. As individuals from different cultures engage in economic transactions, the interaction between Subject A and Subject B becomes an interpreter of communication. Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions show how individuals within Subject B, impacted by their cultural origins, interpret and reply to verbal and nonverbal cues. For example, the difference between high and low context communication styles influence how Subject B sees Subject A's communication strategies. Additionally, society values, norms and expectations have an impact on nonverbal expressions, thus influencing the overall success of crosscultural communication. Recognising Subject B's range becomes critical for multinationals. As a global brand, Mercedes-Benz not only communicates its identity but also adapts to the expectations and perceptions of Subject B. Businesses can nurture relationships with audiences by recognising and adjusting to these variations, establishing a more inclusive and effective communication environment.

Fournier's examination of consumer behaviour (1998) unravels the relationship between agency and brand, revealing cultural influences that shape perceptions and interactions across different settings in our analysis of intercultural communication dynamics involving agency, brand and Freud's three types of egos (id, ego and superego). Within this conceptual framework, agency extends beyond organisational structures, embodying cultural and individual capacity to act intercultural circumstances/contexts. Brands such as Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, display a dynamic brand personality that influences cultural values. Subject B, representing societies and individuals, analyses

and responds to these brand prompts using the lens of their cultural background, adding complexity to the intercultural relationship. In intercultural interactions within business culture, Freud's triad concepts of id, ego and superego amplify the definition of agency in intercultural dimensions, expanding from the typical corporate-centric perspective. "The Ego and the Id" (1923), Freud's work, provides a theoretical prism through which we can examine the relationship between agency and brand. These psychological ideas are drawn into cross-cultural encounters, shaping individual and business behaviours. The id, driven by primal instincts, the ego, balancing instinct and societal norms, and the superego, embodying cultural and moral ideals, all contribute to intercultural dynamics, which extends beyond the conventional opposition of individual and corporate entities. The concept of "persona" emerges as a critical component, as explained by Carl Jung's writings. Persona, according to Jung, refers to the social mask humans display to the world, masking their true selves. Companies like Mercedes-Benz use their brand identity as a symbolic mask in the context of intercultural dynamics, displaying a designed image to Subject B (societies, individuals and customers). A brand's persona, like an individual's, captures the projected personality, values and traits designed for public consumption. Mercedes-Benz's dynamic brand personality (Subject A) serves as the public-facing character, impacting cultural values and identities. Subject B, made up of different nations and individuals, perceives and interacts with this brand persona through the lens of their cultural heritage, adding levels of complexity to the intercultural relationship. These concepts shape human and corporate behaviours, as well as brand perception and reception in the environment of cross-cultural partnerships.

The need of healthy relationship management is clear in the dynamic ground of cross-cultural communication, acting as a hub for minimising biases and facilitating effective connections. Edward T. Hall's (1976) predicts that healthy relationship management is a tool for bridging gaps, increasing mutual understanding, and creating an environment positive to productive communication. Subject A, as represented by Mercedes-Benz, participates in a dance with Subject B (the overall audience). The success of this intercultural contact depends on building relationships that go beyond ordinary transactions, while also acknowledging the components of cultural variations. Biases, whether implicit or apparent, can disrupt the harmony of cross-cultural interactions. As a countermeasure, healthy relationship management provides a framework for recognising and minimising cultural differences. Organisations like Mercedes-Benz may avoid problems and develop resilient relationships by encouraging open communication, actively listening and understanding the perspectives of Subject B. In today's interconnected global corporate world, where perceptions are impacted by an abundance of cultural influences, the capacity to manage relationships has become a strategic essential for overcoming biases and ensuring meaningful cross-cultural partnerships.

The interaction between behaviours, corporate missions and actions becomes a driver of how a brand is interpreted across multiple cultural contexts in cross-cultural relations. Geert Hofstede (1980) highlights how cultural factors impact organisational conduct and communication. Actions, as reflected by a brand like Mercedes-Benz (Subject A), resonate across cultural boundaries, leaving a mark on the perceptions of Subject B (the target audience). The connection of these behaviours with a company objective gives depth to the brand narrative, resulting in a unified and culturally meaningful identity. The dedicated website section on Mercedes-Benz's mission plan defines their strategy, stated through the mission statement, serving as a compass, guiding the brand's connections with different cultures. The mission evolves into a shared value system with which Subject B, including competitors such as BMW, may identify and embrace. Achievements, whether they are innovations, societal contributions, or market accomplishments, serve as tangible expressions of the brand's goal in action. They contribute not only to the brand's reputation, but also to the cultural narrative it crafts. Brands like Mercedes-Benz may establish connections by identifying and proactively aligning activities, missions and capabilities with the cultural contexts in which they operate. In the fluctuating world of global business, the trinity of actions, mission and accomplishments emerges as a force in cross-cultural brand perception.

Sherry Turkle's (2011) work on technology and society examines contemporary business communication difficulties, the dynamics of human communication and technology, the impact of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and global connections on intercultural communication. The transformative nature of digital communication emphasises the importance of understanding the ramifications of these technologies in cultural contexts that go beyond traditional cultural types. Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) negotiates cross-cultural communication with the sociological and technological landscape, including social media and other technologies (Subject B), coping with the impact of digital technologies and global relationships. These difficulties have an impact on how Mercedes-Benz communicates and on how it is viewed in different cultural contexts. Mercedes-Benz promotes the intersection of technology and culture because it wants to portray a brand personality that resonates with cultural values and identities.

The next topics aim to show the synergies between technology, culture and communication within the context of a broader scale of cross-cultural partnerships. As this article continues, Mercedes-Benz remains the reference point for navigating the present intercultural landscape in the context of evolving communication challenges.

1.3. Contemporary business digital dynamics, branding strategies and cross-cultural perceptions

In the context of international communication and the dynamics faced by a worldwide entity like Mercedes-Benz (Subject A), it is important to analyse the interaction of the halo effect, misinformation and the use of deep fake accounts. The halo effect, coined by psychologist Edward Thorndike (1920), refers to a cognitive bias in which positive traits in one element impact perceptions in others. In the case of Mercedes-Benz, this means that positive brand behaviour such as innovation and luxury may impact how Subject B (the larger audience) recognizes other aspects of the brand's identity. However, misinformation and the growth of deep fake accounts aggravate this dynamic. The dissemination of false information poses a substantial danger to Mercedes-Benz's brand image in cultural situations. As the brand works to create a carefully designed persona that reflects its values and identity, false narratives fuelled by misinformation might modify Subject B's perception. Deep fake accounts, which use advanced technologies to create convincing but false content, add to the problem. In the digital era, these factors present difficulties to maintaining a favourable halo effect, as misleading narratives can damage the authenticity and cultural resonance of Mercedes-Benz's brand reputation. Subject A (Mercedes-Benz) deals with these issues as it travels through intercultural communication in business, emphasising the significance of dynamics of the halo effect, disinformation and deep fake accounts. Mercedes-Benz needs to maintain an authentic and culturally relevant brand perception in the complex dance with Subject B.

In cross-cultural communication, the combination of tools such as chatbots, thinking hats and cultural exchange platforms revolutionises the dynamics between Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) and Subject B (the audience, the others). Chatbots, self-contained conversational agents powered by artificial intelligence, are emerging as components for accelerating communication and information exchange, functioning as mediators, bridging linguistic and cultural barriers, increasing Mercedes-Benz's global reach. Subject A can also use Thinking Hats, a conceptual framework developed by Edward de Bono (2008), to navigate cultural perspectives during intercultural communication. Each "hat" reflects a cognitive mode that promotes a comprehension of cultural opinions. This methodology provides Mercedes-Benz with the tools it needs to communicate effectively and culturally with Subject B. Cultural exchange platforms, which are dedicated digital areas for the sharing and satisfaction of cultural experiences, enable Mercedes-Benz to actively participate in cross-cultural meetings. These platforms promote the interchange of ideas, beliefs and cultural insights, which helps to build a cultural brand identity. Mercedes-Benz increases its capacity in cross-cultural interactions by strategically using chatbots, thinking hats and cultural exchange platforms, simultaneously, into its communication strategy.

The implications for leadership and decision-making become clear when examining the interaction of generational differences and the glass cliff effect within intercultural business scenarios, for a brand like Mercedes-Benz, named after a woman, Mercédès Jellinek, as stated on the car brand's website (Subject A). The glass cliff phenomenon suggests that women and individuals from underrepresented groups are usually appointed to leadership roles during times of crisis or organizational turbulence (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010). Generational gaps, shaped by cultural and historical contexts, have a role in forming leadership dynamics within Mercedes-Benz and its relationships with societies and individuals (Subject B). Mercedes-Benz experienced gender representation in corporate leadership when Eva Wiese became the first female CEO of Mercedes-Benz Canada in 2021. Her appointment came at a time when the automotive industry was influenced by technological developments related to shifting consumer demands (Canadian Business, 2022). According to the Mercedes Website, Wiese's tenure focused on innovation and customer experience, aligned with the strategic goals of Mercedes-Benz in Canada. Analysing Mercedes-Benz's leadership transitions, it provides an understanding of how generational shifts and gender dynamics influence leadership within cross-cultural business contexts. As a brand's history is linked to an individual and his/her term, generational variations and gender representations in leadership influence the company's decision-making processes and its public image. This analysis aligns with the axiom "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me", highlighting the reciprocal nature of perceptions and reactions in leadership and organizational contexts. Wiese's leadership exemplifies how societal perceptions of women in leadership roles of traditionally male-dominated automotive industries, are reflected in the decisions made by organizations and the impressions that these decisions leave on both internal and external stakeholders.

The phenomenon of multimodal communication, as studied by Sherry Turkle (2011) and Philip Kotler (2012), refers, in cross-cultural communication, to the use of different media to express messages in cultural landscapes, such as text, images and audio. This method recognises the diversity of communication preferences between cultures and changes strategies. In today's corporate world, when digital platforms and social media lead, brands like Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) use these multimodal channels to build a cultural dynamic narrative. The use of emojis, especially the Mercedes emoji, shows how companies use visual features to boost cross-cultural connections, crossing language barriers and building a global connection with Subject B.

Simultaneously, the role of podcasts and hashtags as components of current communication cannot be overlooked. Marketing, according to Kotler (2012), establishes brand narratives and communication methods across cultures. The use of hashtags, for example, enables marketers to categorise and amplify their messages on a worldwide scale. Mercedes-Benz's use of hashtags demonstrates its dedication to encouraging cross-cultural discussion. Podcasts, as noted by Douglas

Holt (2004), add an audio dimension to brand storytelling, presenting Subject B with a personalised way of engagement. This dynamic approach matches with the preferences of other cultures, contributing to an inclusive cross-cultural communication landscape. However, the growing digital landscape also has obstacles. Misinformation, which can be intensified by digital channels, can influence how Subject B receives brand communications, emphasising the importance of careful communication methods.

Brand shaming impacts perceptions of multinational brands like Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) among societies, individuals and customers (Subject B). This trend, characterised by public criticism on digital platforms, has an impact on the brand's reputation in cultural contexts. Sherry Turkle's (2011) *Alone Together* undoes the twists and turns of digital brand shaming, highlighting the web of intercultural communication. Subject A's strategic communication channel selection becomes critical, as Mercedes-Benz negotiates cross-cultural connection. This connection between brand shaming, communication methods and Subject A's reactions is consistent with the essay's theme: "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is a perception of me". Brand shaming has drawn the attention of researchers such as Scott Galloway (2017), who evaluates brand vulnerability to public scrutiny and the consequences of bad exposure, highlighting the implications of brand shaming for firms in cultural contexts. Brands like Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) use Galloway's insights to examine the influence of brand shame on identity and perception by Subject B. The interconnected structure of global business intensifies the impact of brand shaming, requiring firms to consider communication tactics. This is consistent with the essay's thesis, emphasising the reciprocal nature of perception and reaction in international relationships. Galloway's view on brand dynamics helps to understand the roots of intercultural communication in a digitally driven global world.

Scott Galloway, moreover, outlines the transformative effects of digital platforms on business strategies, in advertising and communication. The intersection of the digital revolution's impact on advertising tactics and the role of digital storytelling in the corporate context provides insights to the discussion. Content strategist Karen McGrane (2012) voices that digital storytelling emerges as a dynamic means of transmitting cultural values and identities for global corporations like Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) connecting with societies and individuals (Subject B). Proactively incorporating digital storytelling into advertising strategy indicates a strategic response to the changing business environment, improving awareness of the foundations of intercultural communication in the technologically driven global corporate world.

Through the rivalry between Mercedes-Benz and BMW, this article will explore the concept of digital storytelling in the automobile business. We can consider how each brand generates narratives to appeal to worldwide audiences, under the competitive dynamics of Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) and

competitor player BMW (Subject B), thanks to Jonah Sachs's (2012) exploration of the value of storytelling in marketing. The narratives that these brands create, emphasising luxury, innovation and performance, contribute to an analysis about how automotive manufacturers use digital platforms to communicate stories that resonate with different cultural contexts. Sachs understands the role of digital storytelling in shaping the narratives of automotive brands such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW within the context of cross-cultural communication.

In summary, by examining conflict relationships' resolution within cultural experiences in the corporate world, this chapter sets an exploration of intercultural dynamics in business. The incorporation of digital algorithms, a component of communication technology, as well as self-reflection to bounce understanding, emphasises the role of corporate culture in shaping perceptions. While this relationship may not be immediately visible, it will be clarified in the upcoming sections of the article. As we transition to the next phase, exploring the strategies and tools employed for effective intercultural communication between Subjects -

"A/Us/Mercedes" and "B/the other/the audience" - it is critical to cross the background of leadership support, collaboration and inclusion. Core themes arise, such as bias and discrimination mitigation, identifying the projection of attitudes and interpersonal interactions inside the corporate narrative. Lateral thinking, defined by Bono (2008) as the ability to think creatively and beyond conventional constraints, becomes an important component in intercultural communication, emphasising the need to think outside the box. Combating "miscommunication" is relevant to the challenges and misunderstandings developed in cross-cultural relationships. Emotional intelligence-driven responses and the creation of a holistic immersive story become focus points. It is now time to examine these notions and apply them to Mercedes-Benz's identity and interactions with employees, the digital world, competitors like BMW and the culturally diversified audiences reached through Mercedes' advertisements. This exploration emphasizes on diversity across gender, race, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. The upcoming examination is inspired by principles, including self-discovery wisdom, personal responsibility acceptance, the cultivation of a corporate image, different perspectives, the role of agency as a vocal force, the projection of personality, beliefs and interpersonal experiences. This combination represents an approach to intercultural communication in the context of global business dynamics.

2. Exploration of the central quote's two dimensions

In the last chapter, we examined the aspects that define visible and hidden parts of our identity, searching about the interaction of values, emotions and relational structures. We disclosed reactions to attitudes in the worlds of business and daily interactions, revealing how we perceive relationships. As we go on, the article aims to reveal more levels to the two components of the essay's core quote.

Through this exploration, we hope to gain an understanding of the intercultural relationships that impact perceptions and reactions. The quotation “your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me” requires an analysis of each component in this statement, as the goal is to develop an understanding of the processes that support intercultural interactions, with emphasis on Mercedes-Benz as it navigates global commerce.

The first section “your perception of me is a reflection of you” expresses the premise that how people perceive Mercedes-Benz, our Subject A, reflects their own beliefs, values and cultural perspectives. The perceptions generated about Mercedes-Benz relate to the cultural backgrounds, experiences and biases of the observers, not just the brand's characteristics. Positive perceptions, for example, may result from shared cultural values, whereas unfavourable perceptions may result from preconceived beliefs or biases linked with the brand. Turning to the second section “my reaction to you is an awareness of me”, we can see how intercultural exchanges are dynamic. Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, not only reacts to external stimuli, but also with an awareness of its own identity, values and brand image. In the face of different perceptions and interactions with Subject B (employees, competitors like BMW and the culturally diversified audiences addressed through Mercedes-Benz’s ads), the brand adjusts its reactions in a way that matches with its self-awareness and desired corporate identity.

The combination of these two sections produces an assumption that allows us to examine how Mercedes-Benz’s external impressions/perceptions reflect the cultural lens of the observers and how Mercedes-Benz, in turn, replies with a strategic realization of its own identity. This essay stresses the need of understanding intercultural communication, as we look at Mercedes-Benz's dealings in the global business landscape.

2.1. Mercedes-Benz and cultural perceptions: introducing the first part of the quote's argument, exploring interpersonal dynamics and employees' perceptions

This section opens the argument for the first fragment of the axiom "your perception of me is a reflection of you". The focus is on the intercultural relations surrounding Mercedes-Benz, emphasising both verbal and nonverbal communication among the global human resources at factories and subsidiaries of Mercedes-Benz. We explore issues such as employee identification with the company's values, labour strikes and the sense of inclusion employees have within the organisation. Positive aspects will be stressed, emphasising the values characteristic of interculturality, information dissemination and technology inside the organisation. We get on Mercedes-Benz's intercultural dynamics, exploring the perceptual space shaped by its global staff. The motto "your perception of me is a reflection of you" hits the organisational levels, revealing the

cultural traces. The significance of this axiom becomes evident as we decompose employee perspectives, embodying a dynamic interaction of diversified identities within the corporate level.

Ratings on platforms like Glassdoor (2024) emerge as an indicator of employee attitude. Employees affirm professional satisfaction and a peaceful integration of cultural values with a 4.2/5 rating. This ranking contains a collective statement of shared identity and intercultural coordination within the Mercedes-Benz workforce in addition to individual happiness.

Examining worker strikes is important to undo the complexities of intercultural collaboration. For example, the 2022 strike in Brazil, which is focused on layoff issues, is a visible sign of disapproval. Reuters (2022) news pieces provide a lens through which we can assess the intercultural dynamics at work during the events, uncovering the complexities of employee unhappiness and the interaction of cultural elements in influencing collective actions.

Mercedes-Benz's global combination of people from different backgrounds creates a canvas of cultural perceptions. Employees, as Subject B, embody the spirit of the motto: their collective perspective/perception of the brand reflects their different cultural origins. Each person gives a distinct perspective influenced by their cultural setting to the collective narrative that determines the organisational identity. As Mercedes-Benz navigates the intercultural landscape, the brand transforms into a scenery on which the different reflections of its personnel converge, forming a narrative that surpasses individual perceptions.

Digital media, such as Twitter, increase Mercedes-Benz's global significance, by acting as a virtual stage for employees' voices. Hashtags and online conversations measure brand popularity and reveal the global community's collective appreciation. Mercedes-Benz is boosted beyond geographical boundaries by the interaction of technology and interculturality, producing a virtual interconnection that matches the real-world collaborative spirit. This analysis demonstrates that the brand's digital presence is a dynamic zone built by the intercultural voices of its personnel, rather than a reflection of corporate strategy.

2.2. The influence of social media and digital technologies in shaping brand perceptions: Lewis Hamilton and the digital landscape

This subsection continues the argumentative analysis by exploring the role of social media, specifically in the context of Lewis Hamilton's former connection with Mercedes-Benz. Through their strategic collaboration, Lewis Hamilton, a Formula One driver and cultural Influencer, improved Mercedes-Benz's digital presence. This collaboration created online debate, promoting the brand on social media platforms. The relationship, characterised by using hashtags such as #MercedesInMotion or #LewisHamiltonDriving, not only highlights the synergy between an Influencer and a worldwide brand, but also reflects the brand's spirit of intercultural values. The positive tone of this digital

relationship shows the brand's digital narrative on cultural values, technological integration and information dissemination.

Active user participation in the digital debate surrounding Mercedes-Benz is evident on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Hashtags like #MercedesInMotion and #LewisHamiltonDriving serve as virtual cultural markers, reflecting a blend of Formula One commitment, sports car enthusiasm and ethnic diversity. The level of follower participation acts as a review of digital popularity and of the brand's capacity to resonate with people from different cultural backgrounds, connecting linguistic and geographical barriers.

The strategic collaboration between Mercedes-Benz and Lewis Hamilton works as a narrative in the digital world, emphasising the brand's presence/visibility across social media platforms. The motto "your perception of me is a reflection of you" disperses into the digital domain, capturing the dynamic interaction of perceptions within a global audience. The digital collaboration between Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes-Benz offered an immersive experience that went beyond traditional marketing methods, building a relationship with users and shaping brand perceptions.

The interaction of values rooted in the company's intercultural strategy is visible in the digital arena, impacting not only brand perceptions but also cultivating a sense of inclusivity. As the digital narrative progresses, it becomes clear that Mercedes-Benz is more than just a brand; it is also a dynamic cultural participant in the online discourse. The article's exploration wants to demonstrate how the brand's intercultural dimensions/characteristics transcend beyond the physical world, generating a digital narrative that mirrors the global audience's scope.

Individuals, who actively shape the online discourse, embody the essence of the expression "your perception of me is a reflection of you" in this digital theatre. The analysis focuses on digital social media users from different backgrounds, perspectives and cultural contexts, to understand how the brand's intercultural dimensions outdo the physical world. Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, interacts dynamically with a multilayered Subject B in the digital world, influencing perceptions and fostering inclusivity within the global online community. Subject B is represented by the users who shape online conversation, exemplifying the central principle of "your perception of me is a reflection of you." Their perception and participation reflect not only their individual identities, but also their collective identity as members of the brand's larger digital community. Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, actively shapes this impression and promotes inclusivity within this virtual community.

2.3. Untangling contradictions: challenging assumptions in the corporate network, digital landscape and social media perception

As we go deeper into Mercedes-Benz's corporate world and its intercultural dynamics, it is critical to recognise contradictions and challenges to the positive narratives previously given.

Examining the corporate network suggests that the Glassdoor ratings, used as an indicator of employee happiness with Mercedes-Benz (Subject A), may not fully capture the experiences within the company. While the aggregate rating may be excellent, dissident voices may exist, reflecting the range of employee perspectives (Subject B). The different reviews reflect the interaction between subjective individual experiences, job roles and geographical regions and the company's overall image, challenging the correlation between scores and cultural alignment.

The assumption that a high Glassdoor rating directly correlates with employees feeling identified with the company's values may oversimplify the dynamics at work. Corporate values and their practical execution at different organisational levels may diverge. Employees' feelings of inclusivity may differ, given cultural differences and different workplace expectations. The interactions call into question the association between ratings and cultural alignment, emphasising the need for a full knowledge of employee experiences.

Furthermore, in real-world events, the concept of a happy workplace free of strikes may face problems. Strikes reflect underlying difficulties in the employment relationship. Exploring Union sources, such as the

Unite is the Union (2023), reveal cases of labour disputes, providing a picture of the business landscape. Understanding the motivations behind such actions provides an understanding of the obstacles that employees experience as well as potential areas for improvement in intercultural communication. Strikes indicate underlying flaws and opportunities for change within the organisation, prompting an analysis of the employee/employer relationship.

In the digital realm, the assumption that Lewis Hamilton's partnership automatically boosted positive comments may be subject to scrutiny. While Hamilton is an influential celebrity, contrasting perspectives on his public image and behaviours may have an impact on the online narrative and Discussions about the partnership, as controversies or opposing perspectives may emerge, casting doubt on the premise of an improved brand image. Despite his popularity, Hamilton has not been without controversy and these conflicts have the potential to polarise opinions within the internet community. The diversity of viewpoints within the digital community challenges the homogeneity of positive discussions, highlighting the need for an understanding of online discourse. It is critical to recognise that the digital network is diversified and people in Subject B may have different viewpoints on the brand based on their perceptions of Hamilton's activities and public persona. These viewpoints complicate the digital conversation by shaping perceptions in ways that may not align with the expectation of a universally positive online presence.

Examining social media metrics like follower engagement and hashtag popularity requires interpretation. High engagement may not always suggest positive resonance; it may imply disagreements or discussions about the brand. Hashtags can be used in different circumstances, such

as criticism or conversations about societal concerns of environmental sustainability. A critical examination of the digital landscape involves acknowledgment of these complexity. The multilayered structure of digital discourse, in which Subject B shapes perceptions, is represented in discussions that may not imply positive unanimity.

To summarise, understanding Mercedes-Benz's intercultural dynamics requires solving conflicts in the corporate network and digital environment. By challenging preconceptions and examining opposing feelings, this article's perspective appreciates the complexities inherent in the intersection of company values and digital perceptions.

Transitioning to the second part of the axiom "my reaction to you is an awareness of me", the analysis goes into the complexities of how Mercedes-Benz perceives and reacts to stakeholders in the following chapter. This exploration attempts to identify the reflecting character of reactions within intercultural dynamics, highlighting the brand's awareness and reaction in the corporate world and digital landscape. The article examines the layers of consciousness and self-perception that are embedded in the corporate narrative, with a focus on the reciprocal nature of intercultural communication and its impact on shaping Mercedes-Benz's identity.

3. Unveiling identities, introducing the second part of the quote's argument: Mercedes-Benz ads and the perception/reaction dynamics

In this section, we examine Mercedes-Benz commercials in the context of intercultural communication technologies for business, exploiting the premise "my reaction to you is an awareness of me". By considering the power of advertising as a component of digital storytelling, this approach will highlight the connected elements of perspective, perception, consciousness and reaction. The chosen medium to observe the commercials, YouTube, serves as a dynamic canvas on which interlocutors engage in discourse, represented in the advertising by Mercedes-Benz as Subject A and the diversified audience as Subject B.

We'll verify how Mercedes-Benz applies digital storytelling to create a sense of humour, sustain tradition and navigate mixed cultural landscapes as we go through these ads. The commercial narratives will reveal the brand's approach to diversity and inclusivity, addressing issues such as race, gender, social class and cultural heritage. We will discover the conscious impressions and reactions deliberately linked to the brand's digital communication by analysing the portrayal of different generations, sustainable practices and the concept of family.

It's critical to understand Mercedes-Benz's historical context. This exploration focuses into the emotional responses stimulated by commercials, providing an examination of holistic and immersive narratives. This analysis incorporates the strategic use of technology and its intersection with cultural values, offering insight on how Mercedes-Benz creates an engaging and reflective digital story.

This analysis is essentially a fusion of visual content within advertising, embracing characteristics such as comedy, traditions, generational dynamics, sustainability and the company's response to charges of being a luxury automobile brand. We hope to untie the layers of meaning through a reflective lens, providing an insight of how Mercedes-Benz shapes its identity, perception and reactions in the evolving world of intercultural communication technology for business.

3.1. Driving perceptions: Mercedes-Benz and BMW

When celebrating BMW's 100th anniversary in 2016, Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) displayed a outgoing competition in the advertising arena (Thinking Marketing Magazine, 2016). Mercedes published a short advertisement², using humour, that was seen across multiple media, including cinema, television, social media and stadiums. The ad congratulated BMW (Subject B) in this interaction, on its centenary, joking that the preceding 40 years “were boring without them”. Mercedes complimented BMW on its achievement, emphasising the importance of healthy competition in improving the overall quality of Mercedes-Benz vehicles. This 16-second clip, which is available on YouTube and Instagram, depicts the two legendary automotive brands' friendly rivalry.

Soon after, BMW, assuming the role of Subject A in the ad, repaid the joking camaraderie by making an advertisement to bid farewell to Mercedes-Benz's outgoing CEO³, depicted in the commercial as Subject B, upon his retirement (Marketing Interactive, 2019). The commercial congratulates the retiring CEO, emphasising that with his departure, “he would no longer be required to drive the business vehicle, a Mercedes-Benz. Instead, he could now enjoy driving his personal vehicle, which happened to be a BMW”. This amusing discussion demonstrates how Mercedes-Benz, as our Subject A, and BMW, as Subject B, engage in pleasant mockery, using humour to portray mutual respect and competition.

These examples of competition between Mercedes-Benz and BMW demonstrate their corporate sense of humour but also help to shape their public image. The use of digital storytelling in commercials acts as a dynamic platform for both businesses to establish their identities while also cultivating a sense of solidarity within the automobile sector. The interaction of perception, reaction and awareness between Subjects A and B, in Mercedes-Benz and BMW's advertisements, demonstrates a smart use of humour to engage viewers and generate memorable narratives.

² Mercedes-Benz celebrate BMW's 100th Anniversary: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0X_qwca5cgo ³
Retirement is about exploring your wide-open future: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rx7-cc0p0A>

3.2. Driving change: Mercedes-Benz's narrative on female empowerment

In this exploration of Mercedes-Benz advertising, we uncover the brand's perspective on female gender empowerment. Mercedes-Benz (Subject A) sends a message through its advertisements, deliberately constructing a narrative of inclusivity and breaking established gender stereotypes.

Mercedes promotes itself as a brand devoted to the evolving perceptions and expectations of its audience against the backdrop of a changing landscape in which female voices have gained significance in societal spheres following sex scandals. A 2018 commercial³ (Mercedes-Benz website), broadcasted in the United States of America, makes a statement about the brand's awareness of cultural developments and dedication to gender equality. Mercedes positions itself in the context of "my reaction to you is an awareness of me", demonstrating its involvement in shaping attitudes/perceptions. The 2019 commercial⁴ dives deeper into the brand's history, highlighting Bertha Benz as the brand's first female driver. This narrative serves as a mirror, reflecting Mercedes' awareness of its own path and the impact it has on society consciousness. Mercedes' decision to combine the brand's history with the theme of female empowerment shows the company's commitment to providing more than just a product; it is actively engaged in delivering a history and progress lesson.

Despite these narratives, it's worth noting that Mercedes-Benz's advertising has primarily featured male drivers. This new approach raises questions about the brand's commitment to gender diversity in its marketing. While we discuss Mercedes-Benz's improvement in fostering female empowerment, the gender imbalance in their driver selection for ads is also worth examining. This feature can be considered further in another section, providing depth to the analysis.

Mercedes-Benz's portrayal of female drivers in commercials delivers a message that extends beyond the automotive arena. The brand's decision to disrupt established gender conventions and promote diversity corresponds with its mission to being a cultural participant. The story of women driving Mercedes-Benz vehicles becomes a conscious endeavour to change attitudes and create inclusivity.

In summary, this analysis provided the opportunity to understand how Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, uses its commercials to actively participate with and contribute to the conversation on female empowerment. The brand's intentional use of storytelling becomes an instrument not only for reflecting societal changes, but also for shaping and influencing views, embodying the dynamics of "my reaction to you is an awareness of me". In this narrative, Mercedes-Benz emerges not just as a manufacturer of luxury automobiles, but also as an advocate in creating change and encouraging woman empowerment.

³ Bertha Benz (The First Driver): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBL_G-C51Dk&t=1s

⁴ Bertha Benz: the journey that changed everything: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsGrFYD5Nfs>

3.3. Mercedes-Benz's cultural message across generations

This section explores Mercedes-Benz's strategic communication through commercials, in which the brand, positioned as Subject A, actively communicates with a multicultural audience, portrayed as Subject B, to carry a message that crosses cultural and generational boundaries.

Mercedes-Benz sets the stage for its acceptance to cultural diversity in the 2017 ad⁵ "King of the Jungle", in the context of Singapore being referred to as the "Lion City" due to its legacy and economic rise in Asia (Singapore's National Heritage Board). This intentional association with Singapore's symbolism can be seen as a marketing tactic but it also represents a dedication to embracing and celebrating other cultures. The use of expensive Mercedes vehicles as symbols of wealth reinforces the brand's compatibility with cultural horizons. This strategy is represented in commercials and in cinema, as seen in the 2018 film "Crazy Rich Asians", in which Mercedes luxury vehicles, symbols of economic power, are portrayed in the backdrop of Singapore.

Mercedes-Benz orchestrates a narrative that goes beyond ethnic issues in a 2019 commercial⁷ named "Junge Sterne, best to impress". The advertisement depicts a wealthy adult man in a Mercedes-Benz interacting with a group of people, emphasising the brand's ability to connect with people of different social backgrounds. The inclusion of young and old generations emphasises the brand's adaptability, transcending generational boundaries. The title "To Impress the Rowdies" captures the spirit of the narrative, emphasising that the portrayed older generation needs a strong car to leave a lasting impression, in contrast to the youth, who do not rely on a luxury car to impress and thus do not impress much.

As Mercedes-Benz strategically navigates cultural and generational landscapes, these ads become tools in changing perceptions. The brand actively participates in global discourse, representing the outlook of "my reaction to you is an awareness of me". In this narrative, Mercedes-Benz emerges as a luxury vehicle manufacturer but also as a global cultural player, contributing to the creation of a society where diversity is celebrated and appreciated. This exploration aligns with our earlier discussions on Mercedes-Benz's intercultural dimensions and the depiction of generational gaps, highlighting how the brand's actions, as portrayed in its commercials, actively contribute to the growing dynamics of global cultural interactions.

3.4. Mercedes-Benz's sustainable vision in 2023

Mercedes-Benz builds a narrative that surpasses traditional vehicle commercials in the dynamic landscape of 2023. The Roger Federer commercial⁸ takes centre stage, emphasising the brand's

⁵ King of the City Jungle (Mercedes-Benz Singapore): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnUe0CeRwSc&t=9s> ⁷
Mercedes Benz Junge Sterne, Best to impress The Rowdies: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuAQIvMsl0c> ⁸
Roger Federer x Mercedes-Benz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPa9-Zd4iME&t=96s>

dedication to sustainability and responsibility. Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, actively communicates with its audience, as Subject B, to suggest a message that outdo the limits of luxury automobile advertising. Sustainability emerges as a theme in this campaign, indicating Mercedes-Benz's effort to align with worldwide concerns about environmental impact. The selection of Roger Federer, a tennis player outside of automotive culture, emphasizes the brand's dedication to collaborative efforts in developing a sustainable future. Mercedes-Benz uses the connection with a global representation to express a broader message about environmental issues.

The commercial's emphasis on neighbourhood and community emphasises Mercedes-Benz's recognition of its position in local and global ecosystems. This choice of setting depicts the company as a responsible player in the communities it serves, not just as a provider of luxury vehicles. The narrative extends beyond the bounds of the campaign, establishing Mercedes-Benz as a brand that actively contributes to the creation of a sustainable and matching world.

Mercedes-Benz blends with creative businesses, such as fashion, in a parallel ad⁶. The brand's dedication to being more than just a car manufacturer is emphasized by exploring the convergence of art and culture. Mercedes-Benz's role in crafting cultural narratives is emphasised by imagery and collaborative efforts. The brand provides a message that surpasses the traditional limitations of the automobile sector as Subject A engages with the audience (Subject B) through these creative initiatives.

These 2023 commercials represent Mercedes-Benz's evolving vision. The brand wants to show that not only provides luxury vehicles but also actively contributes to a sustainable future and engages in broader cultural discourse. We see the brand's active connection with the audience as we scroll through these advertisements, capturing the disposition of "my reaction to you is an awareness of me". Mercedes-Benz emerges as a force in this narrative, directing the conversation towards responsible luxury and peaceful coexistence in this changing world.

3.5. Festive evolution: Mercedes-Benz's transformative Christmas narratives

Mercedes-Benz's Christmas ads in 2021 and 2023 reveal an unusual shift in the brand's strategy, with Mercedes positioned as Subject A and society as Subject B.

The 2021 Christmas commercial⁷'s strategy focused on appealing to luxury automobile fans, men who enjoy speed. Mercedes-Benz strategically aligns itself with individuals who value the finer things in life in this narrative, emphasising a relationship with wealth and a passion for high-performance vehicles. The intentional choice to feature miniature cars adds a playful touch, engaging with a specific demographic while maintaining the essence of luxury. This focused approach to

⁶ Festival d'Hyères: Paving the way in sustainable fashion design: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fej9rOOXsTo>

⁷ Happy Holidays 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1Ceg2U40UU>

audience interaction displays Mercedes-Benz's awareness of its target demographic and effective usage of aspirational elements.

In the 2023 Christmas campaign⁸, there is a shift in narrative strategy. Mercedes-Benz expands the scope of its storytelling to include themes of family, gender dynamics, race, seniority and the heart of Christmas traditions. This approach refrains from focusing solely on the car, instead choosing for a narrative that appeals to a broader audience. The emphasis on sustainability and nature aligns with contemporary concerns, demonstrating the brand's adaptability to evolving societal values. The inclusion of a man and a woman in the car, rather than a single focus on the male driver, reflects the brand's dedication to gender diversity/inclusion. Mercedes-Benz's 2023 Christmas ad becomes a tool for addressing current societal concerns, fostering human healing and emphasising the importance of collective rituals. The concept of agency is used to obtain emotional responses, resulting in an immersive experience for the audience. In this narrative, technology is not just a widget, but a strategic element that is blended to suit the larger theme.

In conclusion, Mercedes-Benz's Christmas campaigns represent an evolution in the brand's messaging strategy. From a targeted focus on luxury car enthusiasts in 2021 to an inclusive narrative in 2023, the brand modifies its storytelling to align with shifting societal norms. Delving into these Christmas advertisements, we witness the brand's active engagement with its audience, embodying the essence of "my reaction to you is an awareness of me". Mercedes-Benz emerges not just as a provider of luxury vehicles, but also as a cultural participant in these storylines, adding to the festive spirit with narratives that resonate on an emotional, human level.

The analysis of Mercedes-Benz advertisements in the context of "my reaction to you is an awareness of me" reveals the brand's navigation of perception and reaction dynamics. The data shows Mercedes constructing its brand, connecting with different audiences to contribute to broader societal conversations, from corporate networks to digital landscapes. Recognising the interconnected nature of narratives, the next section will address counterarguments, aiming to achieve an understanding of Mercedes-Benz's advertising influence while respecting different perspectives and criticism. The purpose remains an exploration into the interaction between identity, perception and reaction in corporate advertising.

3.6.Examining Mercedes-Benz Ad campaigns: unmasking potential divergence

A critical evaluation of Mercedes-Benz's advertising fictions reveals perspectives that justify attention. While the brand's commercials aim to reveal a range of identities, sceptics may argue that these images of diversity are smart marketing strategies. This raises concerns about the authenticity

⁸ Happy Holidays, with Love (2023): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNPoIN4XMkU>

of Mercedes-Benz's commitment to diversity. According to Belk and Costa (1998), the presence of strategic diversity initiatives in marketing raises the possibility that such portrayals might be driven more by market strategy than by a true commitment to diversity.

Similarly, in the context of friendly rivalry with BMW, critics may argue that the humorous facade masks the competition for market control, potentially deflecting attention away from the competitive suggestion between the two automotive giants, according to a conducted study by Eisend and Langner (2010) on how corporations employ humour in advertising to restrain competition and build a good brand image.

Moving on to the female empowerment narrative, a counterargument may emerge, suggesting that the company selectively displays empowering moments without a commitment to gender equality. This scepticism questions whether Mercedes-Benz's image reflects cultural and societal trends rather than a genuine, long-term commitment to foster empowerment. Nina Åkestam's (2017) work addresses the topic of selective empowerment in advertising, highlighting the potential gap between portrayed ideals and corporate behaviour.

Furthermore, Aaker, Benet-Martínez and Garolera (2001) study the phenomenon of cultural appropriation in advertising, raising concerns about superficial representations of other cultures for marketing and business purposes. In the context of global cultural harmony, scholars may argue that the emphasis on cultural inclusion is a strategic makeover shift to hit miscellaneous markets. This could perhaps lack an understanding or authentic celebration of different cultures.

Ottman, Stafford and Hartman (2006) explore the challenges of corporate greenwashing and the significance of examining environmental claims made by businesses. Examining the 2023 sustainability goal, sceptics may doubt Mercedes-Benz's commitment to environmental initiatives, raising concerns about the possibility of greenwashing.

Broniarczyk and Griffin (2014) discuss the trend of emotionally-driven marketing over the holiday season and its implications for consumer behaviour. While exploring the brand's Christmas narratives, some individuals may claim that these festive messages are seasonal strategies, functioning as attempts to capitalise on holiday feelings rather than dedication to values such as family, sustainability and inclusivity.

This critical analysis prompts an evaluation of Mercedes-Benz's advertising techniques, considering contradictions between the brand's stated assumptions and the underlying motivations/implications in its selection of commercials.

Conclusion

The axiom "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me" is important in the era of intercultural communication technologies, where digital storytelling,

social media and globalisation generate corporate narratives. Exploring the fields of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, as discussed in this essay, adds another layer to this interaction of perceptions, reactions and emotions. With its emphasis on understanding how individuals structure their subjective experiences, Natural language processing (NLP) becomes a lens through which we analyse the complexities of corporate communication, branding and the relationship between Subject A, represented by entities such as Mercedes-Benz, and Subject B, which includes individuals, societies, competitors and technological interfaces. This awareness, influenced by NLP values, emphasises the interaction of influences shaping the narrative landscape in the digital age. In this technological canvas, the automotive company Mercedes-Benz emerges as a cultural influencer negotiating the complexities of intercultural communication. Social media platforms are transformed into arenas in which the brand and its audience, represented by Subject B, engage in a reciprocal dance of perceptions and reactions. Intercultural communication, in the digital age, amplifies the connection of brand perception and society reflections. Social media, a force in shaping public opinion, provides a canvas where the collective perceptions of Mercedes-Benz's audience paint its image. As a cultural standard, the brand is perceived, reinterpreted and changed by the values and expectations of its global audience. Individuals' opinions of Mercedes-Benz on social media sites become a reflection of their own cultural filters, beliefs and aspirations. In turn, the brand becomes a repository of collective ideals, an icon that represents not only luxury and performance but also a fusion of many cultural narratives. Each like, share and comment become a brushstroke, contributing to the evolving portrait of Mercedes-Benz in the digital landscape. Additionally, digital personas and influencers serve as tools for these cultural narratives. Influencers, with their own cultural contexts and followers, contribute to the brand's diversified representation. The "me vs. you" dynamic comes to life as individuals build their reactions to the brand based on these personas, resulting in a network of interconnected cultural narratives.

Mercedes-Benz engages not only with its customers but also as a vital participant in the automobile narrative with its competitor BMW, while navigating this intercultural landscape. The friendly rivalry between these automotive giants, as depicted in their commercials, highlights a shared cultural language that tops competition. The interaction of the two brands becomes a microcosm of the cultural dynamics at work, demonstrating how perceptions and emotions become cultural touchpoints.

Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, emerges as a dynamic player in the dance of perceptions and reactions with its global audience, as Subject B. Mercedes-Benz's digital storytelling, agency dynamics and brand strategies reflect the cultural values of its audience and the company's intentional efforts to shape and influence these values. This intercultural dance, however, is not one-dimensional. The second part of the motto, "my reaction to you is an awareness of me", has an impact on the brand's

agency and strategic communication. Mercedes-Benz, aware of the cultural mirror's reflections, intentionally creates tales and projects that draw reactions. The brand's reactions reflect a conscious recognition of its role as a cultural influencer, shaping views, supporting inclusivity and contributing to global discourses.

Rising technologies and evolving social media platforms will continue to change intercultural communication within the business sector. With the integration of artificial intelligence into marketing strategies and the expansion of digital engagement through virtual and augmented reality, brands can manage perceptions and reactions. This vision highlights the dynamic nature of intercultural communication technology and the importance of the catchphrase "your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me" in the ever-changing global economy. In the age of augmented and virtual reality, Mercedes-Benz can change how consumers perceive and interact with the brand. Consider a situation in which clients may virtually immerse themselves in Mercedes-Benz's luxury and innovation from the comfort of their own homes. Potential purchasers might be transported into immersive digital landscapes by augmented reality showrooms, providing a realistic examination of the brand's latest models. This game-changing strategy reshapes the typical car-buying experience and demonstrates Mercedes-Benz's commitment to embrace cutting-edge technologies. Furthermore, virtual reality storytelling can enrich the brand's narrative, absorbing people in adventures that cross cultural boundaries. Users' judgments of Mercedes-Benz become linked to the brand's narrative as they interact with these virtual experiences, resulting in a fusion of cultural elements. This engagement fosters a relationship, amplifying the "me versus you" conflict in the digital arena. Mercedes-Benz could use augmented and virtual reality to shape perceptions and reactions in the future. Mercedes-Benz, as Subject A, leads this technological symphony, operating augmented and virtual reality to create global stories. In this digital context, the reactions suggested from consumers become brand awareness - insights into the tastes, cultural details and goals of a multicultural/intercultural audience. As we look forward to this augmented future, Mercedes-Benz can stand out, navigating the intercultural dance and reinventing the outlines of brand perception in an ever-changing global marketplace.

As we conclude this exploration, the catchphrase captures the common nature of perceptions, reactions and soft skills, but also the bidirectional role of intercultural communication technology in amplifying and altering this dynamic. As Subject A, Mercedes-Benz organizes transformative narratives that pulse globally, leaving an impression in the digital and cultural landscapes. "Your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me" emerges as a practical guide to understand and negotiate the difficulties of intercultural dynamics in the digital age. Mercedes-Benz has a discourse that transcends borders of international dynamics, leaving a stamp on the global cultural landscape with its audience.

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