Mercedes-Benz is a luxury automotive company based in Germany. They are currently investing in quiet and comfortable electric buses to combat the human and environmental cost of congestion. Mercedes-Benz is a global environmental leader that has invested heavily in the development of buses that are energy efficient and emission-free. The eCitaro is the first fully electric urban bus.¹

Since 2018, these buses have been operating throughout Germany, and many are still being ordered. It is also now being exported to various European countries, including Norway and Sweden.²

Mercedes-Benz would like to expand their public transportation offering to claim a leadership position in both automotive development and in how these vehicles are used.

While the main goal is to decrease commuter traffic and encourage the adoption of mass transit, Mercedes also intends to optimize these buses for major cities in the North American market.

Through qualitative research, Mercedes would like to innovate to create “eCitaro II”.

In order to do this, they need to understand the car and bus commuters’ behavior.

TARGET

Mercedes would like to leverage its luxury positioning in the marketplace to reach these two audiences:

1. Companies with large employee bases

2. High income earners who reject current public transit options

Mercedes believes large corporations would benefit from superior transit options as a point-of-difference to the employees. For municipalities, high-income earners present the biggest challenge to divert personal car use.

Breaking through with these audiences would allow Mercedes to create a branded experience that is not subject to the unpredictability of politics and still provides the positive benefit for the environment.
OBJECTIVES

Every phase of the methodology will address and answer one or more of these objectives:

1. Explore the perceptions and barriers to mass transit adoption
2. Understand what can assist or influence a faster adoption curve
3. Develop eCitaro II bus concepts
4. Assess if conversion is likely or sustainable, and optimize concepts to ensure and increase adoption
### METHODOLOGY

**Gathering**

**LUXURY AUDIT**
Secondary research, including social media research, will help develop a cultural analysis of what luxury is and means to Americans – especially in regards to the transportation world.

**RIDE-ALONG ETHNOGRAPHY**
In-person learning from large company stakeholders, non-riders and occasional riders to understand the complete Consumer Experience Journey.

**Executing**

**FULL-DAY WORKSHOP**
Present and align Mercedes-Benz stakeholders to findings from the luxury audit and ethnography phases. Generate concepts for testing.

**ONLINE COMMUNITY**
Create online communities in different markets to test and optimize concepts from the workshop. Conversion will also be assessed.
Gathering information about what is luxury in the North American culture, including in transportation. This will enable us to develop concepts for the eCitaro II bus that will be more likely to be adopted.

A cultural analysis will help us understand the tensions in the luxury world (especially in transportation), and what our North American consumers truly want.

We will then apply these learnings into the discussion guide of the 2nd phase to help explore what may be the barriers to adopting mass transit. This information will also be presented at the workshop.

Sample Output: “Premium” Defined through a Cultural Analysis

Throughout one month, we will gather secondary research about what luxury is today, and how it has changed throughout the decades. This information will be collected through the general search functions of the internet. We will also use a social media listening tool, called Sysomos, to help gather relevant information.

Key Deliverables:
- A full report
- Presentation of the results

Objectives being addressed: 1 2
RIDE-ALONG ETHNOGRAPHY

In 4 US Markets a moderator will ride along with company stakeholders, transit commuters and rejecters to understand their pleasure and pain points of their work/daily commuting journey.

Through 60-90 minute ride-along ethnographies the moderator will enter the commuter world of high-profile company stakeholders, transit commuters and transit rejecters.

Gathering information about what is happening at these commuter moments and what is missing (especially from mass transit). This information will be presented at the workshop and applied to create the eCitaro II bus concepts. Some interviews will be captured on video to create a Ride-along Reel that can be shared internally at Mercedes.

Sample Output:
Consumer Commuting Experience Journey Framework

Objectives being addressed:
1  2

Key Deliverables:
- A full report of the results that includes segment and market differences, including a detailed Consumer Commuting Experience Journey for each segment
- Ride-along video reel
- Presentation of the results

*High income earners, good mix of females/males, good mix of 30+ year olds, good mix of children in HH vs. no children

Recruiting
8 respondents per market over 4 markets. Total of 32 respondents.

- Large company stakeholders 2
- Moderate transit commuters* 3
- Rejecters of transit* 3

4 US Markets:
New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Dallas
FULL-DAY WORKSHOP

A full-day workshop with key Mercedes stakeholders to bring all the information to life about luxury, transportation and the commuters’ journey. Once this is enculturated, stakeholders will participate in an ideation session to create concepts for the new eCitaro II bus.

The report deliverables from the Luxury Audit and Ride-along Ethnography (including the video reel) will be presented at the beginning of this workshop.

Once this information is presented we will brainstorm as a team on ideas that should be incorporated into the concepts, specifically what is actionable. This is why all stakeholders from production to corporate should be involved.

These ideas will then help us create 10~ concepts, and will be further refined by the main project team. These concepts will be used for the next phase, Online Community.

Sample Output:

Sample Output: eCitaro II Bus Concept (mock-up)

Objectives being addressed:

Key Deliverables:

- A report of the workshop ideas and concepts developed – ready for the next phase (Online Community)
- Presentation of the final 10~ concepts

Workshop Schedule

9am-12pm: Presenting the Research Findings
12-1pm: Lunch
1-2pm: Brainstorming ideas/features that can be incorporated into the concepts
2-4pm: Creating the concepts out of the ideas
An online community in 4 different markets across the US will be used to **assess the 10 concepts** through the lens of 3 different consumer segments. Concepts will be **optimized** and the ones that resonate the most will also be identified.

**3-day online community** where respondents are required to spend **1-hour per day** on the board. **10 concepts** will be randomly tested.

**Day 1:**
- Day in the Life of stakeholders/commuters/rejecters
- Understand what luxury means to them, especially in transportation
- Barriers they face with the transit system/reasons they don’t use it

**Day 2:** Test 5 concepts in detail

**Day 3:** Test the other 5 concepts in detail

**Sample Output:**
Heat Map of Concept

**Objectives being addressed:**
1. 
2. 
3. 

**Key Deliverables:**
- A full report of the results that includes segment and market differences, including a heat map of likes vs. dislikes per concept
- Optimized concepts
- Presentation of the results

*High income earners, good mix of females/males, good mix of 30+ year olds, good mix of children in HH vs. no children

**Recruiting**
- 20 respondents per market over 4 markets. Total of 80 respondents.

- Large company stakeholders 4
- Moderate transit commuters* 8
- Rejecters of transit* 8

**4 US Markets:**
New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Dallas