



**University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

**Master of Business Administration**

**International Marketing: Principles and Practices (LCMB7026)**

***International Market Entry Strategy and Marketing Mix of Mercedes-Benz in South Korea and the United States***

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|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
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## **Executive summary**

Mercedes-Benz safeguards a strictly standardised international brand centre that is grounded on engineering professionalism, design esteem, safety management and growing software-driven luxury. But the mode of commercialisation of value is introduced in stark contrast between South Korea and the United States. South Korea is a thick, digitalized and extensively brand sensitive import market where Mercedes-Benz is able to compete on sedan legitimacy, imported-brand signalling, premium service choreography and enhanced control of price and customer journey. The US is a large, inventory-driven luxury market with geographical size and the breadth of the SUV, financing packages, and convenience of dealers and apps-enabled ownership services are stronger influencers of the buying rationale, as compared to imported exclusivity. The report posits that Mercedes-Benz does not fit in one market and fit out the other. Instead, it applies partial adoptions in the context of a guarded brand structure. In South Korea, adaption is trust sensitive and prestige sensitive as opposed to the United States where the process is convenience led and portfolio led. The comparison of the two markets in terms of PESTEL, STP and the 7Ps, a focal country directional development as South Korea, ethical challenges on transparency, data and sustainability and a more proactive strategy of trust in Korea and a more disciplined omnichannel luxury approach in the United States is analyzed and recommended.

## 1. Comparative market context and PESTEL analysis

Mercedes-Benz offers a good example of international marketing strategy since the central meaning of the brand is exceptionally consistent, but its market performance is determined by the way this meaning can be proved at the local level. Arguments traditional to the idea of globalization suggest that a high-end brand must enjoy steady border transmissibility in symbolism (Levitt, 1983), and that research about adaptation demonstrates that competitive edge in most contexts can be based on the locally specific suitability as opposed to message homogeneity (Douglas and Wind, 1987; Jain, 1989). The comparison between South Korea and the United States helps thinking of the latter. Both markets can support the demand at the premium level, yet they reward various types of legitimacy. South Korea is a high-status density import market where the absence of trust can be easily ruined by failures of disclosure. The United States is larger, more geographically divided and more reliant on the convenience of the omnichannel. It implies that the strategic question is not whether Mercedes-Benz needs to standardise or adapt, but what elements of value creation should not be altered but instead what should be kept fixed in order to retain credibility.

The main theses are that Merces standardises brand essence and the structure of luxury proof is modified. In South Korea, the digital sophistication of imported brands, the densities of aftersales and the visible technological assurance testify to the proof. Model breadth, inventory visibility, personalised digital ownership tools and availability of premium capability at scale are used as evidence in the United States. This conclusion questions the more old-fashioned dichotomy between simple standardisation and adaptation and is consistent with the more recent perspective that global performance usually requires selective and market-specific reconfiguration, as opposed to either full localisation or full replication (Levitt, 1983; Douglas and Wind, 1987; Jain, 1989; Hultman and Oghazi, 2024).

At the macro level, the demand in both markets is supported by economic capacity, which does not influence the strategy of Mercedes-Benz in the same way. According to World Bank data, in 2024, the GDP per capita in South Korea is approximately US\$34.8 thousand and that of the United States is approximately US\$81.7 thousand, which implies that the average consumer of America has a greater income base, but average income is not the key cause of premium success as Mercedes-Benz is targeting concentrating wealth, prestige-sensitive employees and higher-middle aspirational buyers

of its products (World Bank, 2026a; 2026b). The importance of South Korea is that the premium imported cars hold a symbolic position in a high-density urban society; the importance of the United States is that its luxury market is larger in terms of aggregate scale and able to consume a wider portfolio in terms of entry-premium SUVs and the top-end AMG and Maybachs.

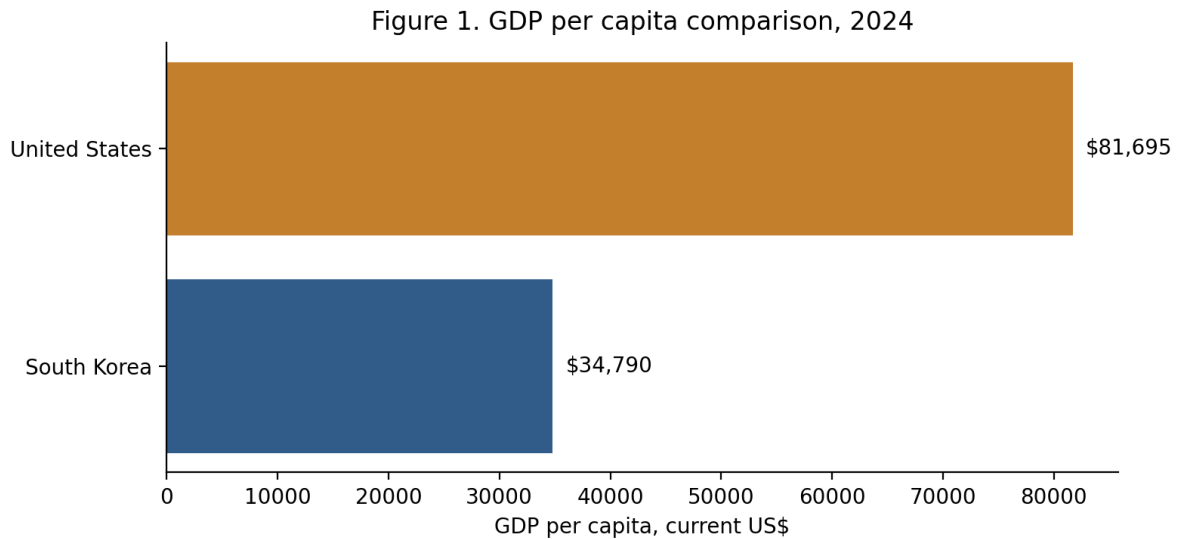


*Figure 1. GDP per capita comparison between South Korea and the United States, 2024. Source: author-created chart based on World Bank (2026a; 2026b).*

The economic gap pales before social and cultural differences. According to DataReportal, the median age and internet penetration in South Korea was 45.6 and 97.4 per cent respectively in early 2025, and the United States had a younger population with faster growth with 93.1 per cent internet penetration (DataReportal, 2025a; 2025b). The demand of the luxury cars in South Korea is in the type of socially visible environment in which the saloon models, exterior design aesthetics and imported badges can act as compressed status symbols. In comparison, the American luxury demand is more geographically and lifestyle fragmented. The brand should meet the suburban family mobility, long-distance driving, high-end commuting, performance passion and electric changeover in a single national market. This causes South Korea to be more prestige-concentrated and socially legible whereas the United States is more heterogeneous and utility-diverse.

Figure 2. Internet penetration, 2025



*Figure 2. Internet penetration in South Korea and the United States, 2025. Source: author-created visual based on DataReportal (2025a; 2025b).*

This difference is supported by the technological conditions. South Korea is a product of almost universal connectivity and high standards of digitally mediated service, remote vehicle control and high-quality charge. Mercedes-Benz Korea thus focuses on online live consultation, online reservation, charging via apps and digitally controlled service journeys on its official website (Mercedes-Benz Korea, 2026a; 2026b; 2026c). Digital features also play central roles in the United States that are characterized by transaction-oriented shopping logic that relies on inventory search, build tools, quotes, finance applications, ownership applications, and dealer access (Mercedes-Benz USA, 2026a; 2026b; 2026c). A different strategic role is therefore occupied by the connected-brand capacity: in Korea it is used to enhance the premium reassurance whilst in the United States it is used to eliminate friction in an even more decentralised and bigger market.

The two markets are regulated politically and legislatively although the implication on marketing is different. The United States requires cautious management of safe claim, software fix and price messages throughout a dealer-based network. Recently, the electric segment conceptualized transparency and consumer trust in South Korea. In March 2026, Reuters that South Korea antitrust regulator fined Mercedes-Benz because it had misrepresented several battery suppliers in some of its EQE and EQS models, but the regulator viewed this omission as a misleading marketing concern, as opposed to a technical one (Reuters, 2026). This is strategically important since in South Korea the

promise of the premium now has the element of the evidential transparency, and not just symbolic quality.

Another competitive connotation of the PESTEL comparison is that in each market, Mercedes-Benz has varying sets of reference and that reference sets determine the perceived luxury leadership by customers. The situation in South Korea is the German prestige rivals, domestic upgrading of premium, and increased scrutiny of EVs, where symbolic superiority is weak only unless supported by evidence of technical integrity. The brand is not only compared with BMW or Tesla, but also with the upsurge in the anticipation of imported high-quality companies to be able to substantiate their assertions with uncharacteristically transparent information. In America, the benchmark is less concentrated and more portfolio focused. Mercedes-Benz also has to be competing against other luxury brands, high-end electric propositions and higher-specification non-luxury alternatives that are capable of fulfilling functional requirements at a lower price. This renders American rivalry not just based on prestige, but on the capability of the brand to transform prestige into convenientness, financing rationality, digital portability and ownership assurance in an increased variety of customer circumstances.

**Table 1.** Comparative PESTEL summary for Mercedes-Benz in South Korea and the United States

| <b>Dimension</b>  | <b>South Korea</b>                                                                                           | <b>United States</b>                                                                                                           |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Political / legal | Trust and transparency are salient in EV marketing; tighter scrutiny after the battery-supplier controversy. | Multi-state regulatory complexity and strong attention to safety, software and advertising compliance across a dealer network. |
| Economic          | High-income but prestige-compressed market; import luxury remains symbolically powerful.                     | Higher income base and larger absolute luxury demand; broader class and regional spread.                                       |

|                   |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social / cultural | Dense urban setting, visible imported-brand signalling, stronger saloon legitimacy.                  | Lifestyle-diverse market with stronger SUV orientation and everyday luxury utility.                               |
| Technological     | Near-universal connectivity, strong expectations for app-linked service and charging support.        | High digital maturity, but technology is used more to simplify shopping, ownership and inventory access at scale. |
| Environmental     | Electrification expectations rising, with premium charging experience part of the value proposition. | Environmental pressure shaped by EV transition, but large-vehicle demand still materially influences the mix.     |
| Competitive       | Intense rivalry from BMW, Tesla and local sentiment shifts inside the import segment.                | Wide competitive field across BMW, Audi, Lexus, Tesla and multiple domestic premium substitutes.                  |

*Source: author synthesis from World Bank (2026a; 2026b), DataReportal (2025a; 2025b), Mercedes-Benz Korea (2026a; 2026c), Mercedes-Benz USA (2026a; 2026b) and Reuters (2026).*

## 2. Comparative STP strategy

In both countries, the key fault lines that segmentation starts with are affluent consumers, but the fault lines are different. In South Korea, Mercedes-Benz distinguishes more intensely on prestige sensitiveness, sedan inclination, corporate and professional self-identification, imported and technical conviction and belief. In the United States, the segmentation is wider and lifestyle-oriented and includes luxury commuter families, family-SUV purchasers, performance car customers, EV buyers and rich customers who require the best differentiation. The American market is thus in need of an extended operation spread despite the still unified brand architecture.

This is the case with targeting. The country which is targeted by South Korea is not so much by mass breadth, but rather by focused visibility. The brand has the advantage of high urban presence,

salience in the showrooms, and a high position of high business sedans and luxury status symbol. According to the Korea Times, Mercedes-Benz continued to dominate the Korean super-luxury sector considering a decline in EV sales, so the brand capital has not lost its power although it should be re-packaged into new trust and technological competence (Lee, 2025). Targeting in the US is more stratified. The retail sales of MBUSA in 2025 were aided by the demand in the SUV product range and the Mercedes-AMG models, which indicates that the American target market is more structurally wide and vehicle-class different than the Korean one (Business Wire, 2026).

Positioning is worldly and locally skewed. Mercedes-Benz is a positioning brand in both markets that the luxury cannot be discussed outside of the engineering sophistication and digital innovation. However, the emotional framing is different. In South Korea, it is more akin to high-status imported authority that is visible in technological reassurance. The role in the United States is more of versatile high-class mobility to integrate luxury, safety and convenience in various body types. This implies that the essence of the promise is standardised, but the reason-specific to the market is tailored.

**Table 2.** STP comparison of Mercedes-Benz in South Korea and the United States

| STP element  | South Korea                                                                                           | United States                                                                                                   |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Segmentation | Imported-brand aspirers, premium professionals, executive-saloon buyers, trust-sensitive EV adopters. | Luxury commuter households, premium SUV families, performance enthusiasts, EV upgraders, high-net-worth buyers. |
| Targeting    | Concentrated status-led urban demand with a strong premium-saloon and flagship bias.                  | Broader class coverage with strong SUV, AMG and app-enabled ownership audiences.                                |
| Positioning  | Imported authority, visible prestige and premium technological reassurance.                           | Versatile premium mobility combining safety, innovation, convenience and breadth.                               |

*Source: author synthesis from de Mooij (2011), Business Wire (2026), Lee (2025), Mercedes-Benz Korea (2026a; 2026d) and Mercedes-Benz USA (2026a; 2026c).*

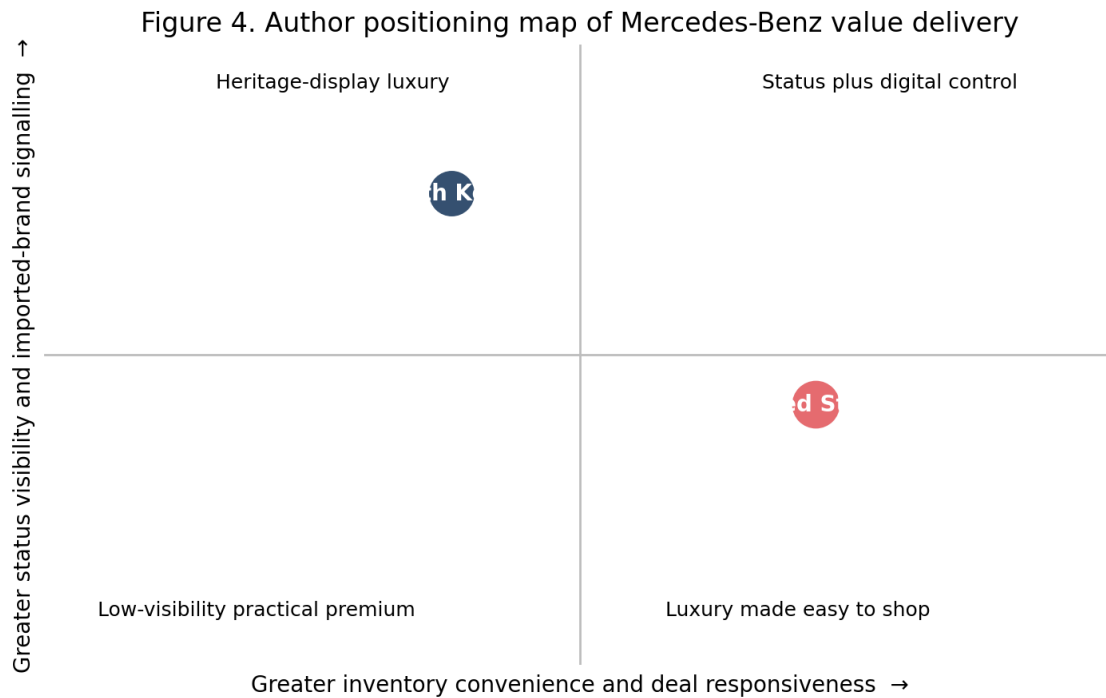


Figure 3. Author positioning map of Mercedes-Benz value delivery. Source: author synthesis from Mercedes-Benz Korea (2026a; 2026d), Mercedes-Benz USA (2026a; 2026c) and Lee (2025).

### 3. Comparative analysis of the 7Ps

There is selective adaptation and not mere replication in the product strategy. In South Korea, Mercedes-Benz will have to maintain the image of prestige of saloons and models of the upper segment as well as regain the trust in electric products. The revised smart business sedan known as the E-Class is preemptively announced on the official Korean site, as well as premium EV charging services, online consultation, implying the existence of a product system beyond the vehicle itself, an ecosystem (Mercedes-Benz Korea, 2026b; 2026c; 2026d). The official shopping architecture in the United States gives attention to SUVs, build tools, inventory, and electric models and driver assist features because the market value of luxury products includes the availability, usability, and versatility as much as symbolic elegance (Mercedes-Benz USA, 2026a; 2026d; 2026e).

Practice on price strategy is different as well. Luxury pricing does not merely comprise of taking advantage of willingness to pay; it involves maintaining a hierarchy and keeping it to local shopping standards. In South Korea, the existing strategic thrust is at a stronger manufacturer control over nationwide prices, lessening the inconsistency based on discounts and bringing the brand nearer to

an administered luxury retailing framework. Korea Times stated that Mercedes-Benz Korea would launch so-called Retail of the Future direct sales model according to which the company would regulate the prices of vehicles directly and eliminate the usual dealer-oriented discount campaigns (Lee, 2025). This helps to support prestige, yet can be lessening perceptions of bargaining latitude. In the United States, in turn, the structure of the websites itself is indicative of a more promotional and retail-receptive setting with special offers, search of inventory, applications and quote requests in finance, which shows that pricing is situated within a broader frame of convenience-and-offer (Mercedes-Benz USA, 2026a; 2026d).

The most apparent market opposition perhaps is place strategy. Premium distribution, aftersales service, and experiential control can also be concentrated without coverage loss in South Korea because it is densely populated. Mercedes-Benz Korea integrates online live consultancy, online booking, online booking of service and app-linked charging in such a manner that condenses the customer experience into a high-contact digital ecosystem (Mercedes-Benz Korea, 2026a; 2026c; 2026e). The United States needs a place system that is more geographically extended. It is more needed to have a greater physical presence, greater role of the local dealers and simple cross-state inventory search. This is supported by the American interface of the brand that includes search of dealers, viewing of the inventory, building-to-order routes, scheduling of the service, and app-based management of ownership (Mercedes-Benz USA, 2026a; 2026b; 2026c).

Promotion is also standardised in symbolism but it is customised in action. Innovation, performance and heritage are continually raised as a result of global Mercedes-Benz communications. Promotion should also serve as reassurance after trust damage caused by EV in the south of Korea. Not only high-technology storytelling is not enough without apparent service quality, battery disclosure and quality of best practices. In the United States, the heritage and product launches, offers, lifestyle content and model specific digital shopping can be more easily integrated into the promotion since people were used to more retail-focused discourse of luxury. Rashkova et al. (2024) demonstrate that the strategies of digital communication that are targeted at international brands tend to fit between standardisation and adaptation, and such middle ground is the case with Mercedes-Benz.

These tendencies are supported by the remaining three Ps. Both countries are people-oriented, yet in South Korea the human situation is becoming more mediated by digital consultation and controlled

service choreography, and in the United States more sales and service workers are more visible in dealer networks. In Korea, process is shifting to cleaner manufacturer control, whilst in the United States, process is geared towards internalizing scale, distance and consumer choice. The physical evidence is high-end in both markets, but with different connotations: in South Korea it enhances imported brand sophistication and urban identity whereas in the United States it promotes a feeling of confidence, comfort and luxury ownership.

The place-process-physical evidence interaction will be more to be considered as this is where the abstract brand value is converted into the lived experience by Mercedes-Benz. In South Korea, premium meaning is supported when the customers experience a well-coordinated sequence of signs: clean digital interfaces, effective booking layouts, organised consultation, efficient service check-in and premium charge rich spaces. Every touchpoint will assure that the imported badge is underpinned with a rigorous operation control. In the United States, the problem is not the same elegance at all times, but the decrease of fragmentation of a much bigger system. The customers can start with web research, proceed to dealer stock, discuss finance, install the application and subsequently rely on service notifications or updates. When these moments are disconnected it makes the premium promise weak. The 7Ps examination consequently demonstrates that operational integration is in itself an asset of marketing. Luxury is conveyed not just on what Mercedes-Benz is selling, but also on how well the entire ownership experience proves to be.

Figure 3. Relative marketing-system emphasis by

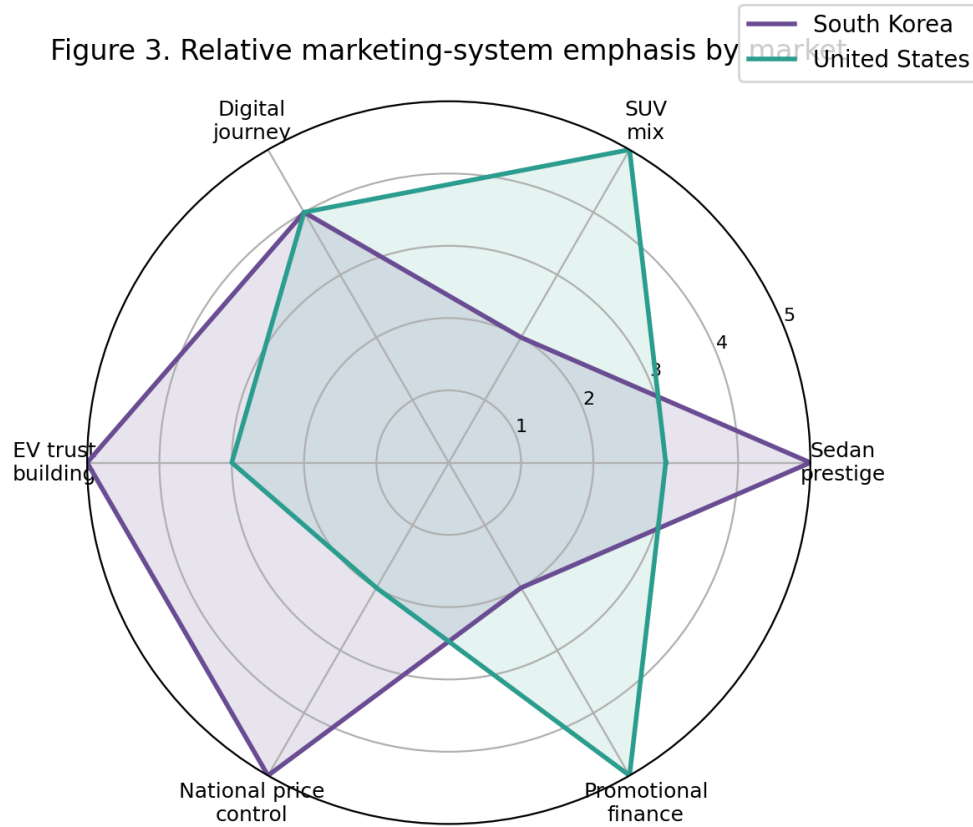


Figure 4. Relative marketing-system emphasis by market. Source: author scoring derived from Mercedes-Benz Korea (2026a; 2026b; 2026c), Mercedes-Benz USA (2026a; 2026b; 2026c; 2026d) and Business Wire (2026).

**Table 3.** Comparative 7Ps summary

| 7P      | South Korea                                                                             | United States                                                                                 |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Product | Sedan prestige, premium EV reassurance, charging ecosystem and curated digital service. | Broader SUV-led portfolio, stronger model breadth and convenience-oriented premium usability. |
| Price   | Greater movement toward controlled national pricing and luxury consistency.             | More retail-responsive price communication with offers, quotes and financing visibility.      |
| Place   | Dense market allows highly orchestrated online-offline premium journey.                 | Large geography requires inventory visibility, dealer                                         |

|                   |                                                                                             |                                                                                         |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                   |                                                                                             | reach and omnichannel coordination.                                                     |
| Promotion         | Status-rich but increasingly trust-sensitive, especially in EV communication.               | More model-led, offer-led and launch-led luxury communication alongside heritage cues.  |
| People            | High-touch consultants and service staff increasingly integrated with digital consultation. | Dealer and service personnel remain central to a broad, decentralised customer journey. |
| Process           | Moving toward cleaner manufacturer control and tighter premium choreography.                | Designed for scale, convenience and route flexibility rather than full central control. |
| Physical evidence | Showrooms, digital interfaces and charging spaces reinforce imported prestige.              | Physical evidence supports confidence, comfort, breadth and everyday premium ownership. |

*Source: author synthesis from Kotler and Keller (2016), Scholdra, Wichmann and Reinartz (2023), Mercedes-Benz Korea (2026a; 2026b; 2026c), Mercedes-Benz USA (2026a; 2026b; 2026c) and Lee (2025).*

#### **4. Directional development strategy in South Korea**

The directional development is the most strategically interesting one in South Korea. The market is appealing by the virtue that it is still ranked as one of the highest imported-premium arenas in the world but it has also been made riskier with the fact that trust, EV credibility and competition intensity have all increased. The answer to this question by Mercedes-Benz Korea is not a drastic brand re-invention. It is redefinition of the route to market. The new trend is the direct price control with intensive digital mediation, premium charging support, and closer control of the customer touchpoints.

This is a consistent direction due to three reasons. To start with, luxury equity is secure with price harmonisation. Prestige in markets where the existence of discount opaque is evident may be diminished by the sense that price is bargained, as opposed to price that is earned. Second, more closely digitalized control enhances the uniformity of customer information acquisition, application onboarding and after sales follow-up, which have greater significance in linked and electrified ownership. Third, a more integrated model will provide Mercedes-Benz with more control over post-EV battery controversy compliance and disclosure. The strategy is, hence, appealing not that direct control is always better but because the premium market in South Korea has been severely punitive to inconsistency compared to many of the large markets.

However, there is also risk involved in the strategy. Direct-sales shift can help achieve greater consistency and less opportunism on the part of the dealer but can also cause the brand to seem less negotiable and less receptive to local relationship norms. It may hence reinforce trust on one aspect and undermine it on another. Whether or not Mercedes-Benz is able to transform control into customer reassurance as opposed to bureaucratic distance is a strategic test. Practically, that needs reasonable pricing rationality, open service guarantees and observable human services, rather than merely a more centralised channel structure.

The logic of Ansoff assists in categorizing this as market penetration and market development within an already existing platform at a national level rather than the diversification (Ansoff, 1957). The brand is not abandoning its fundamental category. It is further concretizing dominance of the process of luxury acquisition, justification and maintenance. The best reading is thus in the fact that Mercedes-Benz is attempting to rebrand South Korea as a triumphant import market into a regulated high-end ecosystem. Well done, that can become a template of other thick, digitally advanced high-end markets.

Proactive trust recovery by market specific assurance architecture should also be another area of development priority in South Korea. Instead of acting reactively once the controversy has surfaced, Mercedes-Benz ought to implement the practices of evident demonstration and make these practices institutional. This may involve standardised disclosure panels on model pages, more obvious in-showroom comparison material, post purchase online briefings, a premium aftersales response policy regarding EV issues. This would assist in ensuring that centralised control is translated

to protection by the customer. Neither would they blindly imitate competitors who continue to base their brand on broad innovation rhetoric without any apparent evidential discipline. This is important strategically, since the Korean premium customers are not only buying the car but they are also buying a promise that they have confidence that the car will be up to scrutiny by the masses. Such a type of trust architecture would consequently enhance market penetration besides enhancing the legitimacy of future EV launches.

## **5. Ethical issues in the marketing mix**

The first ethical concern is the nearest one about truthfulness in the marketing mix. The case of the South Korean battery-supplier is important since it transforms a technical failure of disclosure into a marketing ethics issue. When a luxury brand is selling a product that is electrically superior and forgetting to mention any pertinent differences in battery sourcing, the question is not necessarily compliance with the law. It is also a personal violation of the informational confidence on which high positioning would be based (Reuters, 2026). Consumers in luxury markets are in many ways paying in some part to be assured. False deception is particularly harmful.

Another ethical concern is related to interlinked data and the proliferation of software-mediated proprietary. In the United States, Mercedes-Benz advertises the use of an app as a remote access tool, digital upgrades and connected services, and in South Korea, the electric car advertiser similarly promotes the use of apps as a tool of charging and digital services (Mercedes-Benz USA, 2026b; Mercedes-Benz Korea, 2026c). Such functions are a clear improvement in customer experience, but it also expands the limits of personal, locational and behavioural data that is gathered around the vehicle. Luxury convenience itself may be ethical as a point of controversy in case the consent is opaque, defaults are pushing users towards sell more data than what they know, or premium features become unavailable without surveillance-like data capturing.

The third problem is credibility of sustainability. Environs The annual report and sustainability materials of Mercedes-Benz focus on electrification, circularity and responsible transformation, yet the high-material interiors and performance-based segments do not fit into the environmental discourses easily (Mercedes-Benz Group, 2026a; 2026b). The ethical test is not did Mercedes-Benz discuss sustainability but the marketing statements should be in proportion to the actual lifecycle

improvement and should be transparent of the trade-offs. This is why the sustainability messages must be particular, precise and humble instead of halo messages.

The moral conclusion is that Mercedes-Benz can no longer afford to use trust as a side effect of prestige. In integrated and connected luxury markets, trust should be a product of communication, data practices and sustainability assertions. This is diametrically revealed in South Korea, but the lesson is international.

## 6. Recommendations

**Table 4.** Prioritised recommendations

| Priority | Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Strategic rationale                                            | Expected effect                                              |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | First, Mercedes-Benz should treat South Korea as a trust-reconstruction market rather than only a sales market. Battery-sourcing disclosure, charging clarity, warranty communication and service responsiveness should be more visible in product pages, showroom language and aftersales messaging. A premium EV proposition needs evidential credibility, | Reframes premium EV marketing around evidence and reassurance. | Higher EV trust and reduced reputational fragility in Korea. |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                               |                                                                |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
|   | not only design and performance rhetoric.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                               |                                                                |
| 2 | Second, the company should proceed with price-control reforms in South Korea, but accompany them with an explicit fairness narrative. Uniform pricing alone may look rigid. Uniform pricing plus transparent service bundles, charging support and upgrade benefits looks more premium and more defensible. | Prevents national price control from appearing punitive.      | Stronger perceived fairness and preserved luxury equity.       |
| 3 | Third, Mercedes-Benz USA should preserve dealer convenience while tightening omnichannel continuity. Inventory search, build tools, finance applications and app onboarding should feel like one journey rather than separate tasks. The American market does                                               | Improves customer journey continuity in the larger US market. | Higher conversion and better ownership experience consistency. |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                       |                                                                      |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   | not require Korean-style full centralisation, but it does require fewer hand-offs and greater consistency between digital promise and physical delivery.                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                       |                                                                      |
| 4 | <p>Fourth, both countries need stricter discipline in connected-data communication.</p> <p>Privacy notices should be shorter, more legible and more decision-oriented, with clear explanation of what data are needed for safety, what data are optional for convenience, and what value the customer receives in return.</p> | Makes data use more understandable and defensible.                    | Lower privacy friction and greater confidence in connected services. |
| 5 | <p>Fifth, sustainability communication should shift from broad aspiration to model-level accountability. Customers should be</p>                                                                                                                                                                                              | Reduces the credibility gap between luxury and sustainability claims. | More robust sustainability positioning and lower greenwashing risk.  |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                 |  |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|
|  | able to see concrete information on battery sourcing standards, material choices, charging ecosystem logic and the lifecycle rationale behind new technologies. |  |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|

*Source: author recommendations.*

## 7. Conclusion

The secret of the international success of Mercedes-Benz lies in the fact that it does not export a single set of rules that are applicable in all places and under all circumstances, but rather in the fact that it manages to maintain the brand meaning and change the market logic according to which this very meaning will be persuasive. This is evident in South Korea and the United States. Both markets purchase luxury but purchase versions of justification that are different. South Korea compensates obedient highbrow, thick computerization and confidence of regard in an import-intensive field. The US is compensated by breadth, convenience, financing flexibility and premium mobility over an even more diversified landscape of significantly greater size. The future strength of the brand is that luxury is no longer a message that is conveyed through design and engineering. It is now translated by the wholeness of the entire market system.

## **Section 2. Reflective account using Gibbs' reflective cycle**

### **Description**

I applied the reflective cycle developed by Gibbs to consider the process of conducting a research and creating this report. The first part of the task seemed common since it was specifically stated in the brief that it was PESTEL, STP, 7ps, directional development, ethics and recommendations. The challenge however came when the company and market pair was required to justify and not describe comparison that was critical. I chose to work with Mercedes-Benz in South Korea and in the United States, as both of them are developed markets, but the strategic dilemma cannot be simplified to a developed vs. emerging binomial. That move influenced the entire process. I needed to find less explicit macroeconomic contrasts and find more subtle differences in status signalling, route-to-market design, digital service expectations as well as EV trust.

### **Feelings**

My initial confidence with the brand was fading away at the beginning but the confidence in not writing a generic premium-automotive report was growing. I feared that such a luxury car comparison may end up being very one-dimensional: strong brand, high prices, innovation, SUV and electrification. In order to get beyond that, I made the report look like a question on how luxury is given believability in various situations. Such reframing enhanced motivation and analytical depth since it compelled me to benchmark the structure of proof of luxury as opposed to just the product portfolio.

### **Evaluation**

My best aspect of the process was source selection, but it was valuable in that it was made to confront each other instead of merely making the report more adorned. I specifically pitted the traditional international marketing theory against organisational evidence, news reporting as well as market indicators to ensure that the same matter was perceived in a multidimensional manner. This enhanced the report since it was now feasible to test the apparent strategic fit: whether it was strong or just veneered. Its principal weakness was that I still was more inclined to resort to company and market sources rather than to consumer-level evidence. The reason why that is noteworthy is that

the premium-brand strategy may appear reasonable to the firm but less persuasive as seen by the buyer.

## **Analysis**

In the analysis, I discovered that the best method was switching between the framework completion and framework judgement. PESTEL, STP and 7Ps can be a good place to begin but they can very easily tempt the descriptive writer when each heading becomes a box to be filled. This report did get better when I started questioning what each framework was hiding and what it was showing me. As an illustration, PESTEL has identified structural factors, but the more resolving factor was the reputational weakness in South Korea following the battery disclosure scandal. Similarly, the 7ps were more analytically effectively since they were considered as a system of trust production instead of a list of tactics. This reconfigured my mind since it demonstrated that well-postgraduate work does not rely more on naming frameworks, compared to using them to rank the most strategically important variables.

## **Conclusion**

My mind was also made to think differently in the ethical section. At first I thought that I would converse about the environmental issues in a general manner. However, the case of the South Korean battery-supplier proved that ethics in the marketing mix can appear as a result of quite narrow actions of omission in the product communication. This compelled me to associate ethics more with marketing practice particularly; veracity, high standards and information quality. Consequently, the end report attained greater coherency since the ethical consideration strengthened and did not discontinue the argument on trust and premium credibility.

## **Action plan**

Provided I were to continue this work, I would make it better in three respects. To begin with, I would include additional consumer level evidence including survey or interview content on premium EV trust, retail experience and price fairness to ensure that strategic recommendations are pegged more directly on customer interpretation. Second, I would compare the recommendations with a broader group of competitors particularly BMW, Tesla and Genesis to sharpen the uniqueness of the Mercedes-Benz position in each of the markets. Third, I would make the ethics section more formal

governance structure connecting disclosure, digital data practices and sustainability proof to particular marketing decisions. These measures would enhance the scholarly acumen as well as the managerial value of the report.

Another lesson that comes out of the process is that the analysis of premium markets is healthy when there is comparison of what the managers are supposed to do and what the customers are likely to infer. Strategy may seem to make sense internally yet sound externally discursive when both of these readings are different. I would in the future cross all key suggestions with both managerial viability and probable customer deciphering prior to considering it as strategically correct.

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