

SUMMARY: Auto-biographies. Heritage management in automotive companies using the example of BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen

The subject of the work is the analysis of the heritage management process in selected automotive enterprises and its role as a unique resource used to shape the identity of the organization and to build brand image. The work focuses on the autobiographies of selected companies – their subjective narratives based on heritage and communicated with the use of specific tools – therefore the title of the dissertation. The research deals with three selected automotive brands (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen), belonging to German corporations at the forefront of car manufacturers (BMW AG, Daimler AG, Volkswagen AG).

The main research goal of the dissertation is to recognize and critically analyze how the companies manage their heritage: what are their goals in this process and what tools they use to build a narrative about their past. The tests carried out are used to verify the following questions:

1. What is corporate heritage? What is it used for?
2. What means can be used to communicate corporate heritage?
3. What elements of heritage are selected by the analyzed automotive companies and what story about particular brands is communicated?
4. How do the selected corporations approach the elements of the so-called difficult heritage of their brands?
5. What are the characteristics of the narratives presented in the selected heritage management tools of the analyzed corporations?
6. What role did the respective automotive companies and their brands play in the past in their local communities?

The work is located in the interpretive paradigm. The methodology used in the work is characteristic for humanities, subordinated to the principle of data triangulation (content analysis, space reading, participant observation). The collected material was presented as case studies.

Weronika Pokojaska