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Bernard: Hello everyone, welcome to the third episode of Words and Actions, a podcast that focuses on the use and the importance of language in business and politics. And with this podcast we want to raise your awareness about, and fuel your interest in, different aspects of language and how they are used to shape our perceptions of reality.

We do so by sharing a number of insights from academic research, combined with our own perceptions of what we see around us, and an interview with an expert on the topic at hand. We also provide extra information on the Words and Actions blog, and you can find us on Twitter and share your comments on the website.

Erika: If I can add at this moment, that we would like to thank very much for our listeners who already got in touch and reviewed and commented on our podcast. If you have comments or thoughts, please keep them coming, we love reading you.

Veronika: And also, perhaps give us a review or a rating if you want to.

Bernard: We heard Erika Darics, Veronika Koller, and I am Bernard De Clerck. So, here we are again, and today's topic for the podcast is branding. Now, we're all surrounded by brands and if I were to ask you, the audience, to list a number of brands, I think you can easily come up with a fair number of them. But the question is how are brands created and how is language used to shape the characteristics and the mental image that we have of these brands?

So, that's what we'll do in today's podcast, we'll answer some of the questions by looking at different aspects of language in branding, going from the lowest level of sounds and sound symbolism, to words and metaphors. And we'll also talk about the brand tone of voice and multilingual advertising. So, as I said, we have three hosts: Veronika Koller, Erika Darics and me.

But we also have a central guest, Professor Helen Kelly-Holmes from the University of Limerick. And we'll interview her later on. Veronika and Erika, so what brands come to mind?

Veronika: Samsung, because I'm looking at my computer and it's Samsung (laughs). And my phone as well, and that's Samsung, too.

Erika: The one that comes to my mind is not one that I'm looking at right now, but one that has been in the news recently about the big rebranding effort, Staples. And I just thought it was a really, really good example to show just how much brands matter, because clearly Staples invested a lot of money and effort into that rebranding campaign and rebranding the logo. Whether it was successful, I don't know, I leave it to you and the audience to check out the new logo and see what they think.

Veronika: Yeah, we'll put both on the website, the old logo and the new logo. So, Staples is a brand that does stationery, office supplies, that sort of thing. And both the old and the new brand play on that, but perhaps you like one or the other better, let us know.

Bernard: When we talk about brands, of course we're not thinking of the product itself only. We also associate that with values and emotions. And sometimes people can be brands as well, which leads me to a kind of tricky question perhaps. Veronika and Erika, again, and also the audience, you can think about this, who is Sweden's biggest Hollywood star?

Veronika: Ingrid Bergman.

Bernard: The answer is no. (Laughter)

Veronika: Shame, she was a very good actress.

Erika: Okay, who is it?

Bernard: The answer is well, I was referring to people, but in this particular case it's not a person, it's a car, and it's a Volvo. And why is that? Well, when you start paying attention to Volvo cars in American films, mainly

Hollywood films, they are used to underscore the characteristics. And this is not me saying this, this is film freaks reporting on this online.

So, they underscore the characteristics of the drivers, and in many cases what you could see are very reliable men and women, who want to protect their families from invading let's say aliens or whatever. Or inquisitive journalists looking for justice or a university professor as the unconventional hero who couldn't care less about cars, probably.

But basically, this is what you can see, so the values, the attitudes, the emotions the brand triggers, they are projected onto the main characters and perhaps even vice versa. This is what Volvo does as a brand. Surely, it's not safer than any of the other brands because we have these standard tests that cars have to comply with. But of course, it's their USP or they use it as their USP, so reliability, safety, hence also the slogan "Volvo for life".

Veronika: So, what you're saying basically, is that film directors use car brands strategically in order to characterise the characters in the film, through the cars. Is that what you're saying?

Bernard: Exactly.

Veronika: Right. Okay, I get it.

Bernard: Very clever product placement if you like, which underscores the features of the hero.

Veronika: Yeah, it's product placement, but it's also a form of characterisation in film. That's interesting, really. And it just shows how many sometimes unconscious associations we have with brands, really. Because brands are obviously not just products we can see like my phone or my computer, what have you. But on a different level, it's a bundle of associations really, isn't it?

It's what values we associate, like reliability or safety or what metaphorical personality or what expectations we have. And of course, that's not only because we interact with the brand, it's also because we're all exposed to branding, how people use language and visuals to create these associations we have with the brands, then.

- Bernard: Absolutely. And it works in very subtle ways, and yeah, we might not be aware of them. And perhaps it's not a bad idea to start small and have a look at the impact of sounds for instance, and the notion of sound symbolism. So, for instance, if I were to change the O sound in Volvo into I, like Vilvi.
- Veronika: That sounds like a washing powder or a detergent or something like that. Yeah, it sounds like a completely different product even.
- Bernard: Doesn't it? If it were a car, I wouldn't find it as sturdy or as safe anymore.
- Veronika: I think it would be a very small car, a Vilvi is a small car, don't you think? (Laughter)
- Bernard: Absolutely. Not a family car.
- Erika: The qualities of various sounds really can evoke things like size for example. There are lots of studies that study exactly this. In language-related studies, this is called sound symbolism. In marketing, you would find this under cross-modal correspondence.
- Veronika: Yeah, there's this really old example, isn't there? Where you have something like bouba and kiki or what is the other one called?
- Erika: Maluma.
- Veronika: Maluma and takete, that's it. Yes.
- Erika: Yes, well the maluma takete experiment or they call it the maluma takete effect goes back all the way to the 1930s. And really, it was a way of looking at how sounds and words can evoke sensations. And if I asked you and the audience to try and match two shapes to the words maluma and takete, one shape being a curvy soft shape, and the other one is a spiky angular shape. It's quite likely that everybody would go for the spiky being called takete and the curvy being maluma.
- Veronika: I definitely would yeah.

Erika: This matching of the perceptions of sensations and perceptions with sounds is really well utilised in marketing and branding. They did an experiment where they asked people to match maluma and takete with chocolate with different cocoa content. And people went for takete if the chocolate was bitter and had a higher cocoa content.

Veronika: Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah, it's something synaesthetic almost, isn't it? Where you sort of fuse senses together, like the taste with the sound, that's really interesting.

Erika: It is interesting, and it is worth a lot of money, too.

Veronika: Quite, yes.

Erika: So, for example, in another study people looked at correlation between perception of luxury and brand names, and they found really interesting patterns regarding the sounds themselves. So, I am going to test you now, I'm going to use some of the made-up names that they used in the experiment. And maybe you can tell me, Veronika and Bernard, which one you think would describe a luxurious brand rather than an everyday brand? Clent or Cruiser.

Bernard: I'm going for Cruiser, it sounds a bit more sophisticated, don't ask me why, but that's my guess.

Veronika: Yeah, I would say, so. Yeah, I would agree with that.

Erika: Okay, here is one for you, Veronika, Vesinia or Vipti.

Veronika: Vesinia, because I know it's not a real name, but it sounds kind of Italian, really. So, it sounds a bit more, I don't know, yeah, again, sophisticated, perhaps something you would pay more for.

Bernard: I'm guessing if it were a brand, designer furniture things like that. Is that a Vesinia you're sitting in? Something like that.

Veronika: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, designer furniture.

Erika: Okay, how about the last one? Venbi or Uvone?

Bernard: I would go for Uvone again, because to me, it sounds Italian once more.

- Veronika: Uvone could be food, couldn't it? It could be a wine brand, maybe.
- Bernard: Very, very expensive ice cream.
- Veronika: Or very expensive ice cream, yes, indeed.
- Bernard: You can have an Uvone, but one scoop only, something like that.
- Erika: Yes. Very well done, you picked all the three names that were categorised as luxurious in the study. And it's because it partly has to do with the sounds which are in these words. So, in their study they found that luxury brand names show how your tendency to have back and low vowels like U, O, A or more syllables or the stress is on different syllables than you would expect in English. So, the final conclusion in the study was that names which evoke foreignness imbue a brand with an air of exclusivity.
- Veronika: Yeah, but it's certain kinds of foreignness, like we had Vesinia, was it? So that sounds Italian or when you talk about stress and you have things like I don't know Chanel. So, that is French. So, I think different kinds of foreignness perhaps have different associations. But that is something that we'll definitely come back with when we do the interview.
- Bernard: So, now we've been talking about sounds so far. But if we take it one step further, we can also start thinking about the impact of words. And there are a couple of very obvious examples of companies coming up with a word for a product, which actually has a different meaning in another language.
- And just briefly referring to the Ford Pinto, which wasn't a great success in Brazil, because in Brazilian Portuguese slang it's associated with a word that threatens the masculinity of the male driver. So, they didn't sell it very well there. That's one aspect we have to be careful with on a word level.
- But another one I'd like to share with you is the rebranding efforts or attempts by Carlsberg. Now, what happened is that they have this very famous slogan, right? "Probably the best beer in the world". Now, what they were trying to do, they were targeting Russia and Asian

markets as well. And their perception was that this probably would be associated with weakness. So, over there the perception is either you have the best beer in the world, or you don't.

So, they started rebranding Carlsberg and they had this new slogan, which was if I'm not mistaken, "This calls for a Carlsberg". So, you have this alliteration there, which is nice. But it backfired, because people thought what has happened to the tongue-in-cheek slogan that you had? That was really nice, a brand not taking itself too seriously, and now you've changed everything. And it didn't work, and we're back to "Probably the best beer in the world".

Veronika: Which is really famous, obviously. So, not all rebranding actually works. In a way, they were victims of their own success, because they had come up with this really good slogan, which involved this probably and the self-irony. And then, they tried to backtrack from that. But talking of beers, it's not only individual words, it's also the language the words are in.

So, we already talked about accents or something sounds foreign, but what if actual foreign languages are used? So, for instance, another beer brand, Stella Artois.

Bernard: Sounds familiar.

Veronika: Yeah, it would for you, you're Belgian. It would, yeah. (Laughter) So, you can tell us actually where it comes from, what part of Belgium, because that matters obviously in your country.

Bernard: Yeah, the HQs are in Leuven, so that's the Flemish part of Belgium.

Veronika: Right, and that's where their marketing campaign or branding campaign didn't work because for the UK market, they introduced French. So, they said *cidre*, this is cider and they had this French spelling of *cidre*. And they wanted to create an aura of French-ness with Stella Artois. And that of course completely backfired, because it is not from the French part, it's from the Flemish part.

But then, British people don't really have a national stereotype of the Dutch language, I suppose. So, that was an attempt of capitalising on foreignness that didn't quite work.

Bernard: No, locally it didn't work at all.

Veronika: No, it wouldn't work for you, I'm sure it wouldn't. (Laughs) But that is a study that was actually conducted by our interview guest.

(Music)

Veronika: So, our guest today is the author of that study on Stella Artois, Professor Helen Kelly-Holmes from Limerick University in Ireland. And she is very well known for her work on language use in advertising, multilingual advertising, also global branding. She's worked on linguistic landscapes, how is language used in public space. I won't bore our listeners with the list of her publications, really. Just to say, welcome Helen, we're very delighted to have you here today. Thanks for joining us.

Helen: Thank you, I'm delighted to be here as well.

Veronika: And I thought we'd start with a really general question, which is how did you actually become interested in multilingual advertising?

Helen: Okay, so my own background actually is in language and in advertising, so I actually studied languages and marketing. And I became more interested in the area really, when I did my PhD research, which was about advertising as a new discourse in the former GDR [German Democratic Republic]. So, I did actually work experience, a six-month placement on the east-west German border.

And it was just around the time that the Berlin Wall came down, what was very interesting was that West German brands just simply started advertising in the East. And the interesting thing was that they met with a lot of problems. So, people didn't understand the advertising, there were references to things people didn't know about, earlier texts. So, it was very clearly a case of intercultural advertising, although people didn't realise that at the time.

And it made me very interested to see how much of culture goes into advertising and then how much is taken for granted in the advertising that we see every day. So, from that I became interested.

Veronika: I remember that time very well, I grew up in a border city in West Germany. And I remember that 1989 very well, and the intercultural misunderstandings at the time, although we all allegedly spoke German.

Helen: Spoke the one language, yes.

Veronika: Yeah, I can relate to that, really.

Helen: Yeah, and then I guess I became interested in at that time, the early 90s, what I noticed, I was living in the UK, in England at that point in time. That there was a lot of German being used in English language advertising, and then I noticed also a lot of French being used. And so, you had examples like this Audi slogan *Vorsprung durch Technik* [advantage through technology], which to me is a very good example of what I would call linguistic fetish. And that was very fashionable at the time, to throw in a bit of German into the advertising. So, I was fascinated by this.

Bernard: Could you explain this notion of linguistic fetish a bit more? It sure has a nice ring to it, but could you exemplify that a bit as well?

Helen: Yeah, so this is linked to Marx's idea of commodity fetish. So, where its actual meaning becomes something symbolic and it moves away from something which is concrete, and which is instrumental to something which is contrived or symbolic. So, my understanding of linguistic fetish and it comes from the idea that it's not really about trying to say something, to communicate something directly, it's about communicating something symbolically.

So, it's more important that the language is German and that it's understandable as German, than what something like *Vorsprung durch Technik* actually means. So, from that point of view, it's more like an image or actually a piece of soundtrack, a piece of music that

would enhance the advertising message or the brand. Rather than a crucial piece of information that the consumer needs to have.

Veronika: So, it communicates a brand value, really?

Helen: Absolutely, yeah. Definitely.

Bernard: And in case of German, what would that be, then? Even if people don't really understand what is being said, what are the symbolic values behind German, then?

Helen: Studies have shown this, in country-of-origin studies in marketing which show that people want German cars. So, the German language has the identity, the personality of engineering, reliable engineering, good technology. This is a very interesting case, I don't think they use it anymore, but Seat, which is a car brand, they used to use the slogan "Spanish design, German engineering".

And that kind of sums it up, so you don't want German design, you want Spanish design because we think of Spain as very stylish. And Spanish language has a personality of flair, passion, but maybe we don't want in that in our engine. So, the Germans can do the engine for us.

Veronika: They can't do the design, but the engine. (Laughter)

Helen: It's very interesting. If you take a brand, I always think is interesting, Nivea, nobody realises that Nivea is a German brand.

Veronika: The cream, you mean?

Helen: Yeah, the cream, the cosmetics. They're a huge cosmetics conglomerate. They never use German in their brands, because it doesn't have that personality. French has that personality, say for instance for cosmetics.

Veronika: Yeah, you get a lot in perfume and cosmetics and what have you. That's right. And yeah, Volkswagen did something similar, didn't they? They have this slogan *Das Auto*.

Helen: *Das Auto*, yeah.

- Veronika: Basically, it just means “the car”.
- Helen: “The car”, yeah. But if you say it in German, it sounds good. So, that's what I mean about a fetish. It's not actually about the meaning of the words, it's about what the German language in that context can afford to the product.
- Veronika: If we look at it the other way around, when you have English in foreign language advertising, what kind of brand value would get communicated there?
- Helen: Yes, English is a special case, because it's a mixture between symbolic and instrumental meaning. So, because English is so widely understood, particularly across Europe, its usage can have a double function in that it can be giving practical information or information about the brand. But why do you do it in English?
- You do it in English to send a particular message and people can read Elizabeth Martin, she's done some interesting work around this. And she would say English communicates the idea that a company is global, a company is modern, a company is perhaps cosmopolitan. Very interesting in complex linguistic situations, so say somewhere like India or a lot of African countries, where you have multiple languages and multilingual countries.
- English tends to win out as an advertising language because it's seen to be inclusive, it kind of belongs to everyone, there's this idea about English that you're not picking a particular brand. I'm very interested in multilingual provision by advertisers, and in a lot of cases you can try to provide everybody's language, or you might just go for English and say, "I'm not picking anybody, because English is an international language." But of course, it's not really the case.
- Veronika: Yeah, that's a moot point. But in a postcolonial context, it very often functions as a lingua franca, for instance. As a language that everybody can communicate in.
- Helen: Yeah, and it has this neutrality fetish, I would say. So, it has this association of neutrality. Of course, it's not at all neutral, but in these

situations, it can be seen to be neutral. And actually, there's been very interesting studies of how websites have changed and how governments maybe 10 years ago were trying to provide lots and lots of languages on their websites for all their new migrant groups.

And a lot of them now have just switched to English, so in places like Estonia and Norway, they were trying to be very inclusive, and then they've just got say Norwegian and English now. They've given up on trying to provide. It's a very interesting study of that by Maimu Berezkina, so they've gone for the idea that English is neutral.

Bernard: I'm not sure, do you know the Dacia Duster ad, where they actually use a cultural reference that is known to many people? And they've taken a Queen song Another One Bites the Dust, and they can turn that into Another Drives the Duster.

Helen: Right, okay (laughs).

Bernard: That's English, but that's also knowledge shared by many, many people, which makes it in a way I think neutral and at the same time, there's this interesting wordplay going on. That I thought was a nice example as well of English being used.

Helen: Yeah. And some of these things are very semiotically packed, so they have a lot of meaning in them. They have a lot of layers of meaning. They rely on consumers to do a lot of work to dissect things and to understand all of this. So, they're relying on a kind of an acculturated audience, I think Nick Coupland would say. So, an acculturated audience, the knowing audience, and understand them.

Veronika: Which sort of brings me to another area, so not the use of foreign languages, per se. But using foreign looking letters, different alphabets, so I'm thinking here of Ikea and I'm thinking of there's lots of memes on the internet that parody Ikea adverts. And using Scandinavian looking letters with umlauts, or a circle above vowels or what have you. What would you call this kind of thing that people do there? And why would marketers use it?

Helen: Again, it's this idea of the language as visual, really. So, it's the visuality of it, rather than any particular word that it's saying or meaning that the word has. It's not an instrumental meaning, it's about the fact that it looks... So, again, it's really the primary function that is the visual function. Ikea has done this very, very successfully, and it looks like Scandinavian language.

And of course, that personality is one of great design, particularly for furniture. So, it's the perfect association for them, but the interesting thing now is of course that when I started to research advertising, ads were extremely precious things. And I used to have to write to companies to get copies of ads. I used to have to cut them out of the paper, cut them out of magazines, keep them safely, and they were very precious things.

Now, when the ad appears, it's really only the start of their lifecycle. And like that, they get subverted, they get changed, they get shared, they get commented on. And some of that can enhance the value of the brand, but some of it can also take away from it as well.

Veronika: And there is no control over it anymore. Once it's out there these days, it's out there.

Helen: People are incredibly creative as well, and can do very, very witty things with it. Companies would say that helps their brand, there's no such thing as bad publicity.

Veronika: Yeah, we'll have some of these memes as examples on our blogpost that goes with this.

Helen: Great, yeah.

Bernard: You were referring to a brand value, and that brings me to brand personality. And you have this very famous Jennifer Aaker article in 1997, where she distinguishes five dimensions on the basis of which companies can actually create their own identity or personality. And these dimensions just in a nutshell include sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness.

Now, my question basically was could you give a number of examples of companies that use these dimensions in which you have this typical personality? And how this is reflected perhaps in the language that they use?

Helen: I think sincerity, a very interesting example I would probably choose Guinness, the Irish beer brand. It's not something that's fleeting, it's something that has a long history, it's probably seen as quite a conservative brand, quite a stable brand. And it's not going to let you down, it's something that's very reliable. But of course, then it becomes hard for a brand like Guinness to reinvent itself and reach new audiences and things like that.

So, you have to do something different then, you have to change your product. So, it's probably not enough for a brand to have one of those values, I would say, in order to survive today. They need to diversify a little bit perhaps.

Veronika: I saw an example with Guinness just the other day, really, where they tried to be a bit more playful. Because the Rugby World Cup is on at the moment, and Ireland got beaten by New Zealand, got kicked out. New Zealanders are called The All Blacks obviously they wear black, there was a Twitter advertisement by Guinness that said, "You know what? Have a Carlsberg. We're done with black." (Laughter)

Bernard: Really?

Helen: Yeah.

Veronika: So, that's a different brand personality, that's more fun really and playful. So, they're trying to diversify a bit in terms of brand personality.

Helen: And I think it's interesting, I think there is a risk with creating just a one-dimensional brand personality for today's consumers. Because people see themselves in many different ways, and also because there is all of this call-out culture and there's all of this rethinking of things and because the ads are out there, and people can think about them for a bit longer.

It would be, I think to frame yourself as rugged, which maybe perhaps somebody like Nike might have done before, they've really deconstructed that completely, and they can be all things to all people. So, in a sense, you have brands having multiple identities and multiple layers to their personality rather than necessarily picking one, I think.

So, you have cosmetics brands, which are feminine and that, but also rugged at the same time and strong. So, I think that's quite an interesting thing, rather than sticking with one particular personality trait.

Veronika: You make a good point there, really, that ruggedness is gendered and sophistication to some extent as well. And that's of course something that Aaker's brand personalities don't really cover. Do you see other aspects which are not really covered by this classical model by Jennifer Aaker?

Helen: Yeah, I think also there are national identities around brands. I suppose that's something I'm particularly interested in around languages and what they can convey. So, I think the nationality of the brand is quite interesting. And consumers are quite attached to the nationalities of brands and they're a big part of their personality.

So, to come back to drink again (laughs), you have very big drink conglomerates, like AB InBev, who own practically every brand of beer that you see when you walk into a pub. But they all have very different personalities and a lot of the personality is based around nationality. So, Foster's is Australian, Corona is Mexican, all sorts of things like that. And it's kind of a lazy way of creating a personality for a brand, you're relying on a stereotype of a country.

Veronika: But it works.

Helen: It works, yeah. And also, a big thing which is happening now are much more micro-type of brands, which are very focused on ethical trading, on sustainability, ethical consumption, organic produce, and what you see I'm amazed by these people. So, designers, people like that, very small-scale companies who have incredibly slick branding and very coherent messaging.

So, it's not necessarily something that has to be done by an advertising agency in London or Paris anymore. People are really, really good at this. The level of visual literacy and the ability to create these designs and reinvent these designs all the time by people is amazing, I think.

Veronika: Craft beer is a case in point, since we're on the drinks. Well, Helen, time is short, as ever. It's fascinating and we could go on, we always say that, Bernard, don't we, with every single interview.

Bernard: We do. And I think it's time we stop talking about cars and beers and whatever, because this episode has been full of it.

Veronika: We talked a bit about cosmetics, so we're okay.

Bernard: True (laughter).

Veronika: Okay, well, Helen, thank you so much. It's been fascinating and lovely to have you on this episode. Thanks ever so much.

Helen: Thank you.

Bernard: Thank you very much.

(Music)

Veronika: We did the interview with Helen Kelly-Holmes, and we talked a lot at the end about brand personalities and how they can also have national identity. But also, how they can have age and gender, and we're very happy that we will look now at an example of branding where the brand is actually given an age and a gender. Erika, do you want to introduce what we're looking at?

Erika: Yes, so we're going to be looking at a video. It's an advert of some sort. And it's not a proper advert, it's an advert of a product that is being withdrawn and that's the Volkswagen Kombi. So, it's more like a PR video, rather than advertisement. And we would love to share the actual sounds of the recording with you. But we are having trouble with copyright permissions in every episode of ours, so we've just given up on trying.

So, instead, dear listeners, you will have to do with us reciting some of the text, but we will add the link to the YouTube video on our website, so you're welcome to go click on it and listen to it.

Veronika: It's really worth watching. You'll find the link on the blog post that goes with this episode.

Erika: The recording starts with shots of the air and fields, and it starts with an elderly female voice with a sentimental air. And it says, "How am I feeling? Well, surprisingly good. It's stranger now. You never think this day will come. I'm going now. But if you think about it, that's just what I've been doing my whole life. I've always been on the go." And then, we see the Kombi drive by.

Veronika: Right, and that's it, it's about the discontinuation of this iconic product, the Volkswagen Kombi. And what we have here is a really nice example of how a brand is personified because you actually have this voice of the elderly woman and it talks about I. And it's about basically the product saying goodbye to its customers, an old lady reminiscing about her life.

So, she goes on to say, "I was born in the late 1940s, please don't be so rude as to calculate my age." So, here she directly addresses the audience, tying them in, really. And then, she says, "Well, I went out and conquered the world." And then we get lots of historical footage and various stages of that personified brand's life, etc. And she also introduces characters who are linked with Volkswagen Kombi, human characters in a particular way.

Bernard: Yeah, and of course we also see her, let's say, in a Woodstock setting. And what I also noticed, and I'm not sure whether you noticed, but they seem to be playing with this personification as well a bit in the text itself. Because she says at some point, "If you are a human being, and lived on planet Earth, we certainly crossed paths." She basically is a personified version of a van, but she addresses the audience and says, "If you are a human being." And this is a nice play on what is going on, I would say.

Veronika: Yeah, so this quasi human brand, and then she introduces quite a few human characters. So, she says, "If I hadn't gone round the world, I wouldn't have made so many friends, like Frank and Iris, they went around the world with me. Or Miriam Meyer, this girl was born inside me, and I feel kind of responsible for her." As if she was a person she links up with human friends.

Erika: And then, linking up with human friends, but she also talks to the audience, so she uses general ways of interacting with the audience, things like, "But if you think about that." So, as in general *you*, but she also says very direct things like, "Please don't calculate my age." Or, "Nice curves, eh?"

Veronika: That's quite nice, you see the developer of the Volkswagen Kombi, how he does a really rough sketch of the model. And she says, "Hm, nice curves, eh?" So, it's almost flirtatious. Well, it is flirtatious, really. So, that's quite nice.

Bernard: And she's also inviting the people who were at Woodstock to think about those good times, because she says at some point, "Those were good times, and I was there as well." So, it's all this one big community and she was just part of that, being a van, but also being this old lady talking about those times.

Veronika: But then, we have also a break in the story. This whole thing is of course also a great example of storytelling, telling the so-called life story of this brand. And storytelling is something we'll be looking at in an upcoming episode. But you have a break in this story, and she, the Volkswagen Kombi, says, "But then, one day the announcement came."

And what we see is a newspaper page with an advertisement, which is really interesting, because the advertisement that is shown in the video says, "Un-introducing the Volkswagen bus. Soon at no dealership near you." So, that played with the typical conventions of product advertising, by turning it into the negative. So, that's quite nicely done as well, I think.

Bernard: Yes, it was great.

Erika: Yes, and then following from this, they show a lot of clips from news from all over the world. And that reflects nicely what Helen said earlier about multilingualism in advertising, that in these clips the language is really not important. We can guess what they talk about, but they are there to symbolise just how global the Kombi is and how global the effect of this withdrawal will be.

Veronika: Yeah, so it's the global brand. So, on the one hand, it's this person who relates to us and who we can relate to. But also, it's a global brand that speaks or is at least spoken about in many different languages.

Bernard: And the news itself has a global impact and at the very end of the ad, what we also see is that she goes back to the beginning, "How am I feeling?" So, she started off with that question, and the circle is round now with the final question. And she says, "Surprisingly good." And I think that is the kind of feeling that people also have after watching this clip.

Erika: Very much so, if you read the comments under the YouTube video, you will find that many, many people react to that emotional message, people say, "I cried", "I am sad". And as the comments keep coming, the heat is turned up, they go, "Oh God, I cried so hard, so, so hard." So, it is evident that people respond to that emotional message.

Veronika: And they wouldn't be able to do that if the brand was not shown as a person, because who can really relate to a piece of engineering, which is what a Volkswagen Kombi ultimately is. You don't cry over a piece of engineering, I suppose. But you can actually emotionally relate to a personified brand. So, that's quite interesting and that's also praise for the makers of this video.

And that's actually also something that we'll be looking at in another episode, how marketers and consumers actually engage in a dialogue and one talks to the consumers. But then, the consumer also talks back, so that's something to look forward to in one of our forthcoming episodes.

Erika: So, we thank you for your attention this time, and we hope that you liked the episode. And we can't wait to read your reviews, comments, emails, and posts about Words & Actions.

Bernard: Yes, and do check our website again, we do have the link to the YouTube clip. But we'll also be including some of these memes that we were talking about earlier on as well. So, have a look at them, too. Thank you very much, I think that's all for now.

Erika: Yes, bye.

(Music)

END OF AUDIO