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DIY in the DNA[1]: Macro Context and National Myth as Enduring Advertising Discourse

Abstract

This study shows how national contexts recurrently foreground specific myths in advertising to increase consumers' 'knowledge' of the positioning of brands and their 'liking' of these brands. From an extended sample of New Zealand television commercials, the research isolates the theme of 'Kiwi Ingenuity' as an important tool to advertise a wide variety of brands.

At a micro level the study illustrates how hyperbolic characterisation works to attach emotional meanings to brands and products, in particular how ingenious characters are used as hyperbolic cultural signs. The study situates these micro representation strategies in their macro cultural context, arguing that the mechanics of national myths in advertising needs to be understood within the geopolitical context.

Keywords

advertising, myth, nation, New Zealand

1. Introduction

1.1. Advertising and national culture are inextricably bound

The idea that advertising is "a cultural phenomenon, culturally inspired and created within the expectations of a culture" (Taylor et al. 1996: 2) is widely acknowledged by many advertising manuals (Lee/Johnson 2007; Moriarty et al. 2015), specialised books (De Mooij 1994, 2014; Kloss 2001; Mattelart 1989; Mueller 2004; Nixon 2003; Dru 1996), and by many other advertising studies from different fields (Andrews/Silk 2005; Lannon/Cooper 1983; Mick/Buhl 1992; Nevett 1992).

Shifting from the usual localisation versus standardisation debate started in the 6os, the marketing literature increasingly suggests that a mixing of local and global values that is increasingly difficult to disentangle is happening (Alozie 2011; Cheon et al. 2007; Khairullah/Khairulla 2003; Lepkowska-White 2004; Madalina 2013). Many studies however, suggest that advertising that portrays the values of the indigenous culture is more effective than advertising that ignores these values because of cultural differences at the level of psychological motivation and because people are more likely to respond to advertisements that are congruent with their culture (Cui/Yang 2009; Martenson 1987; Hong et al. 1987; Kalliny/Ghanem 2009; Tai/Chan 2001; Zhang/Gelb 1996; Zhang/Neelankavil 1997). Differences can be subtle but important, for instance Caillat/Mueller

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1   This references a 2009 TV advertising campaign from a leading DIY/home improvement/hardware chain store. One of the commercials from that campaign was voted the best ad of the year 2009 by the New Zealand public. http://tvnz. co.nz/fair-go/ad-award-winners-and-losers-3042175. This commercial is still being used in 2017 as part of an online campaign.

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(1996) showed that even the advertising of two nations that have strong historical and linguistic ties, such as the United States and Great Britain "differ enough that a standardized advertising approach may *not* be feasible" (p. 86). Many studies also note that the cultural values portrayed and the information content in advertising varies with product categories. This in itself is in line with McCracken (1986) who suggested that "much of the meaning of goods can be traced back to the categories into which a culture segments the world" (p. 73) and that goods are constructed by advertising as integral to culturally specific modes of social life.

This study illustrates how "place, community and the cultural economy" (Scott 1999: 810) intersect in the advertising discourse of a nation. It explores the importance of national myth in advertising discourse and argues that it can be a significant driver of advertising creativity. The notion of myth as a system of representation has been a cornerstone of media and cultural studies (Hall 1997; Barthes 1957) and has been advocated for and used in critical, positivist and even historical advertising studies (Cronin 2004b; Domzal/Kernan 1992; Johar et al. 2001; Lannon/ Cooper, 1983; McCracken 1987; Mick 1986; Parker 1998; Randazzo 1993; Sherry 1987; Solomon 1983; West 1996; Williamson 1978). Very few studies, however, have connected advertising, myth, and national culture (Perry 1994; Turner 1993; Rose 2003) and none have based their analysis on extended corpuses of advertising messages.

In this study, myth is used in the anthropological sense to refer to "any real or fictional story, recurring theme or character type that appeals to the consciousness of a group by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to deep, commonly felt emotions" (Chapman/Egger 1983: 167). Thus, a national myth is a mode of signification amplifying specific aspects of a culture, including character stereotypes, and establishing these as natural, desirable, and eternal. With a micro level analysis, this study explores how an enduring national myth that appeals to the consciousness of a national group – Kiwi ingenuity – is recurrently woven into advertising messages. We argue that such a phenomenon needs to be replaced in its historical and geographical macro context to be understood as an enduring cultural creative imperative that advertising professionals re-create as part of a cultural habitus (Bourdieu 2001). Bourdieu's notion of habitus refers to the habitual physical, social and linguistic behaviours that people have developed during their life through being exposed to specific influences. Having become second nature in people, habitus thus channels the perceptions, appreciations and actions of people "outside conscience and constraint" [*en dehors de la conscience et de la contrainte*] (Bourdieu 2001: 79). In relation to this study, the recurrence of the same mythical imagery, it is argued, points to the pervasive power that cultural discursive formations have on advertising professionals and therefore on advertising creativity.

1.2. National culture as a meeting place: Advertising professionals as cultural intermediaries

This study concurs with Cormansky (1994: 143) that the success of advertising communication depends on the acceptance of what Bach and Harnish (1979) called "mutual context beliefs", in other words that the communication between encoder (advertising professionals) and decoder (national consumer audience) of advertising messages has to be realised within a shared context that includes unique national idiosyncrasies. Therefore, to be efficient in a nation, advertising professionals need to conceptualise and use advertising communication as the space where people from the national culture meet and share common values and symbols. They need to engage in a mediated form of cultural communication accommodation (Giles et al. 1987) with their national audience. This involves advertising professionals imagining, setting up and constructing national spaces of reference such as places, characters, social practices, family or individual behaviours that are common to the people in a specific culture and that they can recognise (Soulages 1994). Advertising professionals can therefore be considered as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu 1979, Cronin 2004a, Hackley 2010, Negus 2002) between brands and consumers, whose main role is to "generate interpretations at the articulation of production and consumption" (Curtin/Gaither

2005: 107) and to "create and put in circulation identities designed to create a favourable environment for consumption of […] messages" (Curtin/Gaither 2005: 102) and products. Their strategy consists in using those identities that resonate the most with a national audience, the mythical identities that appeal "to the consciousness of a group by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to deep, commonly felt emotions" (Chapman/Egger 1983: 167). As discussed by Crawford (2010: 56), in Australia this 'cultural strategy' has been nostalgically embodied since the 1980s in the use of the ocker image (a boorish, uncouth, chauvinistic Australian) "to speak to Australians in their own voice". Our approach is similar to taking an anthropologically oriented view of national advertising systems and considering, following Williamson's (1978) adaptation of Levi Strauss's notion of cooking, that a particular country's advertising system can be likened to a particular cooking system that 'cooks' material objects, attaching them to nationally unique meaningful concepts that positively influence 'knowledge' and 'likeability', two crucial stages in the formation of buyer readiness (Kotler/Armstrong 2016).

2. Methodology

2.1. Positioning the study: Crossing Disciplines

This study crosses discipline boundaries that have mainly resulted in two distinct domains of knowledge. On the one hand, a large body of critical and non-empirical literature that discusses advertising's role in 'consumer culture' in a mostly 'de-nationalised' 'western' context (Baudrillard 1968, 1970; Cathelat/Cadet 1976; Featherstone 2007; Lash/Urry, 1994; Leiss et al. 2005; McCracken 1986, 2005; Sherry 1987; Shudson 1993; Wharton 2013; Wernick 1991; Williamson 1978). Most of these studies critically assess one of the main ideological functions of advertising supported by the work of advertising professionals: the creation of meaning for commodities in a capitalist economy. As these authors note, advertising, as a tool of the ideology of consumption, transforms the purely material function of commodities into a symbolic world of ideological and cultural meanings.

Unfortunately, the critical literature rarely crosses the path of the largely more positivist marketing literature which offers a large body of cross-cultural and single country empirical advertising research within nationally specific cultures. This second body of research recurrently relies on a range of more or less micro tools, used individually or together, such as value orientations or advertising appeals in advertising messages from one country or several countries (Albers-Miller/Gelb 2013; Mueller 1987; Tai/Chan 2001), information content (Al-Olayan/Karande 2000; Anderson et al. 2013; Martenson 1987; Tai/Chan 2001; Weinberger/Spotts 1989), advertising form (Caillat/Mueller 1996; Deighton et al. 1989; Kim et al. 2017; Wells 1989; Zandpour 1992), or creative strategy (Caillat/Mueller 1996; Frith/Wesson 1991; Wei/Jiang 2005; Zandpour et al. 1992).

Whereas critical studies are mostly de-nationalised, the nationally specific marketing studies' positivist approach is limited to being principally descriptive; quantifying surface level occurrences without exploring the deeper levels of the culture that might trigger these occurrences. They never venture beyond the surface level; never try to link the prominence of the particular values they isolated to more macro and deeper cultural complexities. For instance, while a study of advertising might reveal a strong masculinity orientation using Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, this in itself does not reveal much. What is also interesting to explore is how this masculinity is carried by wider cultural discourses or cultural myths that support and allow the expression of that masculinity. Therefore discipline boundaries that are still somewhat rigid need to be explored. This study does that by blending a simple quantitative analysis and an interpretive reflection conducted on a large sample of advertising texts from a specific cultural context: New Zealand.

2.2. Corpus: Isolation of Ingenuity from a large sample of commercials

This study explores New Zealand television advertising as a site of cultural reproduction in relation to the enduring unusual cultural notion of 'Kiwi ingenuity' (reviewed later). To achieve the aim of exploring long-term trends the study used a long-term sample of TV commercials over two distinct stages across a 9 year period. This extended data capture period enabled access to a more diverse sample of campaigns than a time-limited period would have allowed and thus allowed the identification of enduring myths in the advertising discourse. Only such long period and large sample could allow a relatively objective isolation of Kiwi ingenuity as a major theme, and its linking to a possible "habitus" (Bourdieu 2001) of advertising professionals. Following the models of random sample advocated by Samiee and Jeong (1994) and used by most of the empirical advertising studies cited above, TV commercials were recorded at random off the air during weekday and weekend extended prime time 5pm-10.30pm from four generalist New Zealand television channels between September 1998 and August 2001 and between October 2004 and February 2008. In total, 1675 commercials were recorded, thus on average of about 22 per month. This study's distinctiveness therefore lies in the corpus of television commercials accessed over a long period.

During the research period, one researcher recorded commercials at random in extended prime time and at least once every month. In line with other studies, all duplicate commercials were removed from the sample. A total of 398 commercials were identified as duplicate, leaving a total of 1277 commercials in the corpus. Of this random corpus, 119 (9.3%) used imagery related to do-it-yourself (DIY) activities[2] and 67 (5.2%) used the theme of 'kiwi ingenuity' – using New Zealand practicality and cleverness as a central theme in the commercials.

2.3. Research tools: Advertising formats and characters as tools to connect with the consumer audience

The marketing literature identifies various steps in developing effective advertising communication such as identifying the target audience, determining the response sought, and choosing message content, structure and format, a process that includes choosing between various appeals, for instance rational, emotional or moral (Kotler/Armstrong 2016). The marketing literature also identifies buyer readiness stages consumers normally pass through before making a purchase, such as awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase (Kotler/Armstrong 2016; Kotler et al. 2001, Kotler et al. 1994). In this study we argue, and illustrate with the example of New Zealand television advertising, how the 'knowledge' and 'liking' stages[3] in particular can be developed effectively in advertising messages in ways that are culturally specific and would appear unusual in a global context. Therefore in terms of response sought at these two buyer readiness stages, it is important to make consumers *know* and especially *feel* that the brand or product advertised belongs *with* them culturally, before they, as consumers, will make the effort to make it belong *to* them. In order to explore these mechanisms a micro approach to the commercials was taken which involved closely analysing commercials on several aspects such as their format and the use of characters and their identities. Secondly a macro approach was taken in order to explore and understand the significance of these recurrent representations.

2.4. Micro tool 1: Using Formats

In advertising, the connection with viewers can be made in several ways, for example by using different advertising formats that have the purpose to generate different emotional responses from consumers. The main formats used to classify commercials in this study are based on work

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2   As in commercials for hardware retail stores.

3   The knowledge stage is a cognitive stage appealing to consumer's logic, prompting consumers to 'understand' brands or products. The liking stage is an affective stage, appealing to consumers' emotions, prompting them to feel pride, joy, etc. and focussing on increasing notions such as likeability, trustworthiness etc.

from Wells (1989), Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (1998) and Stern (1994). The basic distinction is between lecture, drama, and lecture-drama commercials. "Lecture" commercials, as Wells et al. (1998) explained, are forms of direct address that deliver selling points. In lectures, a speaker usually uses rational argument and exhortation to persuade, and speaks directly to the audience: "display[ing] the product, talk[ing] about its features, and show[ing] what it can do" (Wells 1989: 13). Dramas, on the other hand, are defined by Wells et al. (1998: 403) as a form of indirect address, "a story or play built around characters in some situation" that "relies on the viewer to make inferences". Drama "draws the viewer into the action it portrays" (Deighton et al. 1989: 335). As Appelbaum/Halliburton (1993) pointed out, such an approach is more emotional, its purpose is to build a relationship between the consumer and the product. The third model uses both techniques of lecture and drama. As Wells (1989) noted, these lecture-drama commercials often ask viewers to alternate between two different states of mind. Viewers are drawn inside the commercial via a drama, they "become 'lost' in the story and experience the concerns and feelings of the characters" (Deighton et al. 1989: 335), then the commercial might for instance nail its point with an argument delivered in a lecture fashion.

2.5. Micro tool 2: Using semiotic analysis to analyse characters and identities

The role of feelings in consumers' responses to advertisements and towards the brand advertised has been researched extensively (Burke/Edell 1989; Escalas/Stern 2003). Dramas in particular have been found to involve viewers emotionally and trigger feelings, in particular sympathy and empathy towards advertising characters (Escalas/Stern 2003). Communication researchers have also argued that transportation into a narrative world triggers viewers' enjoyment (Green et al. 2004). This enjoyment is realised in part through connections with characters, especially when "sympathetic characters may come to seem like friends" or when these characters "help satisfy individuals' need for belonging" (Green et al. 2004: 318).

In the cultural studies and semiotics literature researchers have considered advertising characters as signs (Williamson 1978; Leiss et al. 2005) showing how they work as part of the process of meaning transfer between the character and the good or service advertised. Some of that research inspired consumer research scholars and resulted in, for instance, McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model for celebrity endorsement. However, although it has been acknowledged that advertising characters' meaning (including endorsers) derives from a system of signs that forms the contextual background for their decoding, hardly any research has studied advertising characters as socio-national signs whose aim is to connect with a national audience located in a national system of signs. No research has been conducted on how advertising characters act as recurring national identity signs whose aim is to appeal "to the consciousness of a group by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to deep, commonly felt emotions" (Chapman/Egger 1983: 167).

Thus, in addition to using the advertising formats noted above, this study's analysis of commercials, especially how characters work as signs, was conducted using a semiotic approach (Bignell 1997; Kress/van Leeuwen 1996; Williamson 1978). In particular, this study's analysis paid attention to how in advertising texts, linguistic and visual signs (such as characters for instance) are not used to simply denote something but also "to trigger a range of connotations attached to the sign" (Bignell 1997: 16) and that resonate in the culture within which they circulate.[4]

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4 The analysis thus proceeds through two levels of signification. Whereas, at a literal denotative level, a character (sign) in a commercial might be identified as a farmer, at a second symbolic level this character (thanks to a variety of signs attached to it, for example wearing a black singlet, wearing shorts and gumboots, or speaking in a typical New Zealand accent) would connote New Zealandness.

2.6. Macro tools: replacing advertising messages as part of a cultural discourse

Because the recurrence of commercials using Kiwi ingenuity was sustained over a long period of time and across texts created by different agencies that do not work or think together, this strongly suggested a cultural thematic pattern in New Zealand advertising professionals' thinking. One way to study patterns of thinking in the producers of media texts is to consider these as taking part in, or being influenced by, discourses (Fairclough 1995, Foucault 1969). Discourses are structured, carried and shaped by discursive formations, which as indicated by Foucault (1969: 53) correspond to the whole of texts that have, beyond the diversity of their objects and their authors, certain common points constituting a knowledge at a certain point in history. Repeated themes in advertising over an extended period of time can therefore reveal that advertising professionals are "dominated by the discursive formation within which [their] discourse is inscribed"[5] (Maingueneau 1976: 84; Cronin 2004a). In other words they are caught in discursive formations that guide their creative thinking and that tends to have as much if not more influence on the design of the final communication act than the elements given by the marketing strategy that supposedly guides the campaign.

Therefore, in departing from the mainly quantitative empirical studies of advertising that simply canvas surface levels, the present study used a more in-depth discourse analysis (Cook 1992; Hall 1997) that considers the presence and recurrence of manifest 'ingenuity imagery' on the surface of the corpus as discursive objects (Foucault 1969; Maingueneau 1976) that advertising professionals have found worth using recurrently in their specific advertising cultural context. These discursive objects are carried by discursive formations that provide a system of culturally but also socio-historically situated rules for advertising professionals to work in. This in turn is the foundation for the reproduction in advertising texts, by advertising professionals, of the same knowledge and truth about ingenuity and consumption.

There is thus no doubt that discursive formations are results of socio-historical conditions (Cook 1992; Fairclough 1992; Foucault 1969; Maingueneau 1976). As Foucault (1982: 418-419) argued, "we have to know the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualisation. We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance", and if we want to be able to learn about ourselves we have to understand "how we have been trapped in our own history". Likewise, in advertising it is crucial to understand advertising discourse in terms of tradition (Cook 1992). Therefore, at this point, a brief review of the Kiwi ingenuity concept is necessary if we want to be able to understand contemporary advertising practice in New Zealand.

3. Kiwi ingenuity: Origins and importance.

Kiwi ingenuity – a phrase that blends notions of national pride with inventiveness – is an important cultural myth that several authors have contributed to nourish through books such as *Blokes and Sheds* or *Kiwi Ingenuity* (Bridges/Downs 2014; Eisen 1995; Hopkins 1999; Hopkins/Riley 1998)[6]. Authors such as Wilkinson (1981: 87) genuinely revere "the good old N.Z. qualities of initiative and improvisation". The 'do-it-yourself attitude', especially, is almost considered as part of the New Zealand genetic makeup (Barnett/Wolfe 1989; Tarling 1995; Wilkinson 1981; Catley 1996). Authors such as Tarling (1995: 8) argued that, "fixing it up, getting it going again, keeping it on the road, are still talents widely admired" in New Zealand and that "there is nothing like the triumph of fixing, enlarging, remodelling, and building from scratch" (Catley 1996: 14). Although few authors such as Barnett and Wolfe (1989) included New Zealand women as feeling the "deep-rooted do-it-yourself urge" (Eisen 1995), Gelber (2000) explained that the phenomenon of do-it-yourself is mainly a male pursuit linked to notions of masculinity. Just as in America, or

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5 *Dominé par la formation discursive dans laquelle s'inscrit son discours.*

6 See also the following documentaries: http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/inventions-from-the-shed-2000 and http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/blokes-n-sheds-1999

in Australia, the physical and manual New Zealand male pioneer as described in Phillips (1996) or Mackay (1992) has been the basis of a mythical discursive formation on the ideal man as strong, practical, and versatile. As Phillips (1996: 282) noted "the colonial was perceived to be a man of common sense, a jack-of-all-trades, compared with the specialised training and book learning of the metropolitan man". Also as Phillips (1996: 282) and Sinclair (1986: 13) argued, New Zealand society has always encouraged the physical rather than the intellectual nature, and, for men, "to have sensitive feelings about things and to attempt to express this in poetry or painting was to risk exclusion as an effeminate 'wimp' " (Phillips 1996: 283). For this reason, according to Phillips (1996: 282), modern New Zealand men, "particularly those who worked in the city, sought to affirm their masculinity in their leisure hours by digging the garden, or tramping in the bush", therefore developing manual rather than intellectual skills in order to fit in culturally desirable masculinity. In contemporary New Zealand, books that exhibit Kiwi inventions and also emphasise the unique ingenious nature of New Zealanders are reinforced in their cultural ideal by other media, whether it is prime-time news or other programmes, which revel in the words of "Kiwi ingenuity" or other phrases such as "New Zealand punches above its weight" whenever a New Zealander comes up with a new invention or a quirky solution to a problem.

The 'socio-national' concepts of *Kiwi ingenuity* and *DIY work* often overlap and are for instance expressed in the phrase "No. 8 wire factor" (Wolfe/Barnett 2001: 36) which is often used to refer to the ability of New Zealanders to achieve great things with limited material means. Most of this discourse rests on geographical and historical justifications, which claim that pioneer past is the origin of Kiwi resourcefulness (Bridges/Downs 2014; Hopkins 1999; Wolfe/Barnett 2001; Tarling 1995). As Eisen (1995: 1) argues, "necessity was probably the mother of New Zealand invention, and it is true that our location at this furthest outpost of the world has contributed to the need to improvise". Wolfe/Barnett (2001: 37), although they conceded that inventiveness is by no means unique to New Zealand, nevertheless argued that Kiwi ingenuity is linked to "the colonial ancestry thing, the bloodline running back to the resourcefulness of the first settlers, the character still shaped by isolation, self-reliance, the epic effort of creating a new country from the bush".

Kiwi ingenuity is therefore constructed as an integral part of national attitude and identity. As revealed in the words of Jonathan Eisen (1995: 1), it is naturalised as a New Zealand way of behaving, it is also a powerful collective soul defining tool for New Zealanders, a proud source of identity and distinction in the global world:

> When people the world over think of New Zealand, they almost universally express positive associations. As Kiwis we are best known for the beauty of our land, sailing, rugby and racing prowess, our warmth and hospitality, and our "can do" creativity, also known as "Kiwi ingenuity".

> The legendary Kiwi can fashion literally almost anything from the proverbial "no. 8 wire", and stirring stories abound about the Kiwi's ability to save himself, or herself – and let us not forget the ingenuity of New Zealand women – from the depredations of circumstance – with "a little ingenuity".

Kiwi ingenuity therefore needs to be understood as a theme that is part of the periphery vs centre discourse. It is part of an historical collective ego-boosting discourse itself linked to New Zealand's quest for self-definition (Bell 1996; King 1991; Perry 1994; Phillips 1996; Williams 1997). This quest can be linked to the question of globalisation and to the notion of periphery versus centre. As Laponce (1980) noted, the notions of centre and periphery are important in the quest for self-definition because they are linked to the way we locate and imagine ourselves. Being at the centre creates a feeling of integration whereas being on the periphery creates a feeling of isolation. A longing for being "integrated" might therefore be the drive behind a persistent national imagery focussing on success and pride that has been observed in various areas of New Zealand culture. Bell (1996), for instance, noted that national mythology puts forward New Zealand's rural, natural, pure, and preserved character, especially through frequent media evocations of the magnificence of nature and rural life. Perry (1994: 95) described New Zealand's 'cripplingly sentimental cultural nationalism in everything from best-selling management textbooks to the design of export logos' and Desmarais (2004) showed how New Zealand advertising professionals have

a propensity for associating products and brands with national linguistic notions, and for strategically and patriotically positioning their audiences. Overall, recurrent imagery that supports New Zealand myths, 'national parks of the mind' as Murdock (1996: 4) called them, address anxieties about New Zealand's national identity and place in the world, revealing a fear that 'the centre is somewhere else' (Perry 1994: 77)

So far, we have situated the research methodologically and provided a background to the specific cultural context under study. In the remainder of the study we want to illustrate how New Zealand professionals use culturally evocative symbolic work; setting up the nationally meaningful ingenuity myth, as a way to appeal to the heart of the New Zealand consumer audience. We argue that this portraying of Kiwi ingenuity through characters and situations is not only designed to arouse a sentiment of common belonging, to prompt New Zealand viewers to think of themselves as part of an "imagined community" (that is, part of a mentally constructed affinity with other "Kiwis") (Anderson 1991), but also to provoke increased knowledge, respect, admiration, emotion, and liking for the myth that would translate into consumption of brands and products. In other words, advertising professionals praised Kiwi ingenuity by portraying advertising characters that embody flattering possibilities of national identity formation in order to make people who admired the national myth spend their money on brands that supported that myth.

4.   Discussion of Findings

The analysis results in identifying recurring characterisations of what it is to be 'kiwi'. Whilst these characterisations are easily recognised as hyperbolic and super-real, the effect is to make national trait associations with likeable characters resonate with the audience for the purpose of bringing brand consumers towards purchase readiness. We outline our analysis in this section.

4.1.   Developing 'liking' through character development: Embodiments of the myth in advertising representations

Classification of the kiwi ingenuity commercials according to their format revealed that all commercials in the New Zealand corpus fitted into the drama format (n=48, 71.6%) or lecture-drama format (n=19, 28.3%). The straight lecture format was simply never used. The central strategy linked to the discursive object of kiwi ingenuity was clearly "transportation into a narrative world" (Green et al. 2004) via emotion and connection with recognisable familiar situations and characters. In order to impute emotional meanings to brands or products the advertising messages that used kiwi ingenuity relied heavily on character development as a way of fostering consumers' emotional involvement with, and sympathy for, the characters and therefore increasing the 'liking' of the advertised brand. The characters embodying kiwi ingenuity were typically male, manual workers, farmers, labourers, or sportspeople, and humour and pride were the preferred appeal used. Taking a micro perspective we will now examine and illustrate, with the use of a few typical and interesting examples, how this emotional involvement and increased 'liking' was achieved via situations and characters that work as excessive signs "formed with a view to the optimum reading" (Barthes 1977: 33).

4.1.1.   Body language and linguistic register as signs of New Zealandness

In the process of representation, language and body language acted as important signs of New Zealandness for the consumer audience to connect with. For example, a commercial for lottery tickets called "Kiwi attitude" featured rubbish collectors who, with the help of a farmer, collected organic rubbish from city streets and immediately transformed it into bales of compost with the help of a tractor and a combine harvester. They subsequently sold these bales for $10 to the people who had just given their rubbish away. Several signs were used in order to make the characters likeable and popular. The rubbish collectors' clever recycling was notably supported by their jovial behaviour but also by the use of recognisable cultural signs to reinforce characters' cultural resonance for the consumer audience, such as the "New Zealand English formula Gidday with

a wink and characteristic quick southeast to northwest movement of the head" which according to Kuiper (1991: 200) is "characteristically working class, and/or rural". In this case, the cultural connection and sympathy created between viewers and characters (via the wink[7]) was a central element in making the former spend money on lotto tickets that are supposed to benefit the very community of happy New Zealanders represented by the ingenious characters.

As well as body language, the use of local linguistic register was also an important signification technique used in order to connect with the New Zealand consumer audience. Kiwi vernacular and accent were particularly instrumental in this process. This was for instance the case in a commercial for a building products store featuring Gary McCormick, a roguish satiric poet, comedic speaker, and television presenter known for his enthusiasm for New Zealand culture, that blended a historically significant ingenious moment from Greek culture, with local New Zealand contemporary culture. In it, McCormick incarnated a Greek soldier who had ingeniously designed a Trojan kiwi[8] bird to invade Troy in 1250 BC. McCormick's character was constructed as a blend of Greek-ness and Kiwi-ness. Although his appearance was that of a Greek soldier, his attitude was more clearly that of an ingenious Kiwi bloke as revealed by the casual linguistic register and strong local accent he used: "Hey guys, I've got an idea!". The commercial therefore accentuated popular attitudinal models of a certain blokish New Zealandness via the populist linguistic register used so that the national consumer audience would recognise the ingenious bloke as a national likeable sign, connect with it, like it, and then proceed to the act of consumption. As a background chorus hummed "Good on ya! Good on ya!", a simple blokish dialogue reinforced the stereotypical laid back attitude of the modest Kiwi bloke who designs marvels without "making a fuss" or knowing really how or why he did it:

> **Centurion:** Great Gary, what is it?
> **Gary McCormick:** Damn if I know!

4.1.2. Characters as signs of 'unpretentiousness'

As this example already suggests, in New Zealand television advertising, in accordance with the guidelines given by the popular myth, the ingenious Kiwis that consumers were given to like and sympathise with were most of the time unpretentious "blokes" who could think outside the square. The notion that great inventors are "characters", unpretentious and unknown men, has been articulated and repeatedly conveyed by various New Zealand authors (Catley 1996; Hopkins 1999; Wolfe/Barnett 2001), and New Zealand advertising used this aspect of the myth, recurrently recreating these humble but ingenious people as likable characters. The rubbish collectors in the previously mentioned commercial embodied this archetype, so did the Greek soldier. In order to show that small businesses benefit from advertising in the Yellow Pages, a commercial also used this type of character as a cultural sign to transfer its emotional meanings to a consumer audience that would culturally connect with it. It portrayed how a simple Kiwi artisan, designer of coffee tables, could turn into a clever secretary when a client unexpectedly telephoned and surprised him with a massive order of 300 coffee tables. In line with the traditional myth, the Kiwi craftsman was constructed for the consumer audience as a solitary, ingenious but humble bloke who worked at his pace in a messy garage. He was set up as a lone artisan, a bloke who "does stuff" in his shed-like working space, rather than as an efficient professional in a corporate situation. Above all, however, he could also, in a typical Kiwi ingenuity fashion, wittily come through the unexpected massive order, using random pages in the Yellow Pages to find the right words in order to describe the physical features of his tables to his potential client while also humming machine sounds though the telephone to pretend his workshop was busy.

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7   The facial expression made by briefly closing one eye to informally signal shared hidden knowledge or intent.
8   The kiwi bird is iconic in New Zealand and is widely adopted as a national emblem.

Via advertising texts the New Zealand consumer audience was given clear indications of who ingenious Kiwis were, and what they looked like, but they were also given models of who was not ingenuous and resourceful. The stereotypical characters therefore fulfilled the function outlined by social identity theory of group differentiation, by highlighting positive elements of in-group stereotypes and negative elements of out-group stereotypes (Tajfel 1978, 1981). In a similar way to what Perry (1994) noted about New Zealand advertising romanticising images of rural, pioneer bushman icons rather than city men, ingenuity commercials emphasised specific models of kiwiness and rejected others. This opposition between the ingenious and the non-ingenious kiwi, between the boring and the exciting was, for instance, present in the commercial noted above where the fit young rubbish collectors in their twenties and the stereotypical farmer driving the combine harvester were set up as a clear opposition to a city man in his fifties facing them in his black suit, ready to go to his daily office job. Through the commercial, which worked as a contrast between the ingenious Kiwi and the dull and uninspiring Kiwi, the consumer viewers were prompted to identify with the popular myth and to distance themselves from more conformist, conservative and predictable models of behaviour. The message made it clear in its narrative that the clever farmer and the young and happy rubbish collectors were more genuinely Kiwi than the man facing them, and that ingenuity comes from blokes of modest or rural origin rather than from the one-dimensional "city slicker". In fact, the commercial gave the consumer audience a choice between two social attitudes, one of desirable "kiwiness" by presenting characters who have found a fun indigenous identity and the other which epitomised a culturally empty life. There was no ambiguity which model was desirable[9] and which identity created the emotional value that would lead to positive attitude towards consumption.

4.1.3. Hyperbolic signs: Ingenious kiwis as creatures of excess

The ingenious characters that populated New Zealand commercials often belonged to the realm of the fabulous. Commercials that used Kiwi ingenuity defied realism and created idealised supernatural imagery of ingenuity through hyperboles. Advertising professionals participated in the semiotic excess dished out by television (Fiske 1987) by charging images of the in-group with hyperbolic national meanings, therefore encouraging the consumer audience to read actions excessively to increase emotional involvement. For instance, a commercial for 'Kiwi attitude' lotto tickets portrayed a young man – wearing the farmer/handyman chequered shirt – bungy jumping from a bridge and catching a trout in front of more 'traditional' fishermen fishing in the river. In another commercial, a typical New Zealand farming bloke, distinguishable by a nationally charged sign – a black singlet – who was not strong enough to carry his girlfriend on the back of his bicycle ingeniously solved the situation by attaching a chainsaw to the derailleur gears. In this case, ingenuity provided the Kiwi male with a clever substitute for physical strength, an answer to his physical deficiency, and an access to freedom through breaking conventional thinking rules.

Excessive Kiwi ingenuity and excessively ingenious characters were used in a commercial for New Zealand beef and lamb that featured a group of road workers on their lunch break. Young and cheerful workers were portrayed looking for ingredients and using their tools to prepare their lunch. They were portrayed roasting capsicum with a blow torch between clamps, peeling potatoes with an electric sander, making mashed potatoes with a pneumatic drill, making wine from grapes stolen from nearby vineyards, eating their meals in their truck's hubcaps, doing dishes in their concrete mixer, and so on. A famous song from the album "Do it yourself" by Ian Dury and the Blockheads accompanied these pictures:

> Noel Coward was a charmer,
> As a writer he was brahma,
> Velvet, jackets and pyjamas,

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9 Even the city man's wife was portrayed admiring the farmer and the rubbish collectors for their cleverness and making fun of her husband.

The gay divorcee and other dramas.
There ain't 'alf been some clever bastards, lucky bleeders, lucky bleeders. There ain't 'alf been some clever bastards, lucky bleeders, lucky bleeders.

The myth of ingenuity was again clearly used as a source of popular appeal. In order to appeal to consumers, the blokish Kiwi ingenuity imagery and linguistic register was pushed to the limit through the protagonists' extravagant actions and the coarse language utilised in the song. The tradition of the No. 8 wire ingenuity was again recycled in a modern context for the purpose of promoting consumption, in this case, New Zealand meat. By including the product in the hands of ingenious Kiwi blokes who hyperbolically embodied the popular ingenious tradition, advertising professionals constructed and elevated the action of eating New Zealand beef and lamb as both a traditional and an unusual, creative, and unique Kiwi experience. The hyperbolic humour also had the obvious advantage of increasing liking even more.

4.1.4. Re-centering the consumer audience: Kiwi ingenuity, global success, and consumption

The commercials discussed constructed the notion of Kiwi ingenuity as a common social attitude in the New Zealand context. They portrayed New Zealand characters sharing the myth among themselves. Authors such as Billig (1995) have noted, however, that the way a nation is imagined as possessing a unique identity relies heavily on the way it imagines itself as different from other nations and their identities. A sense of identity is not only established by looking inwards but by looking out beyond the national boundaries, making the comparisons and emphasising what the nation is not. Often, this imagining of the nation as special and different from others is done through sport events and their representations (Hill 1999, Maguire/Poulton 1999; Silk 2001). In commercials of various dramatic complexity and that dealt with a wide range of product categories, the Kiwi ingenuity myth was explicitly re-framed within an international context, taking on a global significance, as when the notion of nation was clearly attached to it through the presence of national heroes or national events. For instance, a short commercial portrayed New Zealand sailor Chris Dickson using an anchor to stop an old truck whose brakes had failed on a steep mountainous road, therefore clearly hinting at a certain propensity of New Zealand national sporting figures towards quick but calm thinking and cleverness. This spontaneous, unflustered problem solving and a "she'll be right" attitude are widely regarded as homely Kiwi characteristics. The metaphorical wittiness and practical ingenuity of famous New Zealanders was also used, for instance, in commercials for a silicone sealant. One of these short commercials showed the All Blacks scoring a try against France and an ex-All Black, Wayne Shelford, filling gaps in a fish tank in the same way as he used to 'fill gaps' in the All Blacks defence. One other commercial used images of the Australian boat sinking during the America's Cup and of New Zealand sailor Russell Coutts sealing gaps on a fish tank. In both commercials, a male voice-over emphasised the wittiness and cleverness of New Zealanders, claiming that "Kiwis in the know use Ados". In both these commercials, the national heroes' wittiness was measured in international terms as Coutts was presented as much smarter than the Australians and Shelford as cleverer than the French. This kind of communicated assertion reiterated to the consumer audience the notion that New Zealand was smarter than the rest of the world; it boosted the viewers' national psyche in the hope of leading them to consumption of these products.

This study found that commercials that blended Kiwi ingenuity, global success, and consumption were also well developed dramas that allowed the consumer audience to develop sympathy for the story's characters. This concurs with what Escalas/Stern (2003: 568) noted that "well-developed stories are better able to hook ad viewers into the commercial . . . as well as elicit higher levels of positive emotions, compared to poorly developed stories". For instance the commercials for the TAB (New Zealand betting agency) that used a mix of national pride and Kiwi ingenuity in order to appeal to "national consumers" featured the rustic character of Snowy Lupton, a horse

trainer, and his horse "Kiwi". The commercial was based on the notions of surprise ending, performance and formidable feat, and presented these as features of Kiwi character. King (1991: 18) noted that New Zealanders have a "compassion for the underdog" because they have been made to feel, by the rest of the world, that they are away from the centre and that "what was happening on the periphery,…, was of little importance". In the commercial, Kiwi was indeed portrayed as the humble underdog, the New Zealand farming horse that no one thought could win the prestigious Melbourne Cup. Throughout the commercial, Lupton's inarticulate comments were carefully designed to build up suspense and empathy. The commercial firstly focused on the horse's appalling start, then on the horse winning the Melbourne cup. Against all odds, the small New Zealand farm horse defied international horses and won its place in international history.

This commercial participated in an acknowledgement by New Zealand advertising professionals of a certain New Zealand way of doing things, of "Kiwi ingenuity", which in this case was equated to achieving formidable feats with limited means. The different way of training the horse, which outraged other trainers as Lupton noted in the commercial, was finally presented as a clever way of winning that no one except New Zealanders could imagine:

> He did a lot of hmm farm work, made him strong, made him pretty nippy . . . They thought that a horse had to be trained on a race course, well, that's not right, like, a chap said, I can't see how you can train a horse on a farm and he couldn't believe that yeah he chased cattle on them!

Lupton, was another potent example of the mythical Kiwi bloke. He was chosen for the commercial to represent the stereotypical rustic Kiwi farmer who, according to the myth, is the total antithesis of the sophisticated trainer, but will nevertheless manage to challenge the international elite with his modest farm horse. Kiwi resourcefulness turned an underdog farm horse into a national and international hero which was presented by advertising professionals as a source of inspiration and a reference point for New Zealanders, and ultimately, of course, as an inspiration to gamble with the TAB.

Therefore, the portrayal of Kiwi ingenuity, in New Zealand television advertising discourse, was a national selling technique at the same time as being a tool for distinguishing the nation from the outside world, a way of defining it and even re-defining it. This was the case, for example, in another commercial that recreated a real cricket incident between New Zealand and Australia[10] and in which Kiwi ingenuity and sport were blended to redefine the nation. In the commercial, Kiwi ingenuity was presented as a way for the nation to regain national pride against arch-rivals Australians. The commercial used the sporting commentary genre and the voice of an actual cricket commentator to deliver its message:

> **Cricket commentator:** . . . the Aussies are getting their heads together and surely not it's gonna be an underarm again is that what they're saying, I think it is. There's a little nod there, the umpires are getting together, McKechnie is looking around the ground, well this is very disappointing, here it goes again, all over again, down the wicket she goes, McKechnie's looking at it, but hang on this is different, he's putting something down on the pitch, it looks like his box[11], yes it is, the ball's hit the box in the air and he's heaving it down over the fence, it's gotta go all the way to the fence, this is unbelievable, it's gone all the way, that's a huge hit from McKechnie, and to be perfectly honest it serves the Aussies right.

> **Male voice-over:** To succeed in sport you need the right attitude. If you've got it you could win 25,000 dollars with Kiwi sports.[12]

Of course, Kiwi ingenuity, materialised by McKechnie putting the box on the pitch, was presented as fiction and in a humorous way, and there is no doubt that this message was created to appeal

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10 In this incident that happened during the final of the 1981 World Cricket Cup, an Australian player delivered the last ball along the ground. This underarm bowling made it impossible for New Zealand to score any run and therefore have the chance of tying the game.

11 A piece of batsman's protective gear.

12 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKadFe0E8tU

to New Zealanders' sense of humour, but it is also clear that behind the humorous appeal lies a strong appeal to New Zealanders' pride in their country as an important step towards consumption. The commercial used framing techniques such as close ups that helped generate empathy with McKechnie as well as other national signs such as the New Zealand public booing Australians and then cheering the New Zealand team while waving New Zealand flags. As a sign of emphatic New Zealand victory the cricket ball was also shown flying over the roof of the stadium where several New Zealand flags were positioned.

The commercial also raised several of the points noted earlier. Again, just as in other commercials that used Kiwi ingenuity, this commercial constructed popular creatures of excess. McKechnie, in particular, was reconstructed as the extraordinarily clever Kiwi character able to defy the usually more powerful Australians. The commercial totally defied reality and provided the consumer audience with a glamorised view of Kiwi identity. The commercial also mingled past with present as in the Troy story. In this case though, the myth of Kiwi ingenuity allowed advertising discourse to strip Australians of the reality of their win and reconstruct them as losers; in other words Kiwi ingenuity and advertising could rewrite history to New Zealand's advantage at the same time as connecting with a national audience and promoting a commercial service.

4.1.5. Defying reality and geography

As noted, through the Kiwi ingenuity myth incorporated in advertising, history was appropriated or reversed, lost games became victories, dull reality became fabulous successful moments, and controversial techniques became a winning formula. The glory given by Kiwi ingenuity avenged the country on a symbolic level and consoled it for certain cruel aspects of history. In commercials, Kiwi ingenuity was not only a technique for selling goods and services and increasing liking of brands by drawing on national imagery and hoping that people would adhere to it, it was also part of a discourse of denial; embodied in refusing reality and defying it.

Head (1991: 24) noted that "freedom was first expressed in New Zealand in *attitude*, otherwise known as the 'republican temper', observed in all colonies. The republican temper was a refusal to accept that your station in life was set when you were born … [and] said to have been the result of striving against nature and winning…". New Zealand advertising professionals, in using the Kiwi ingenuity myth to turn everything into positive, or in changing the past to make their country glorious, fostered a national feeling – or "attitude" – that by using their clever hands and their extra brain power New Zealanders would not be overcome by the global world. In many ways, Kiwi ingenuity, even in commercials, can be thought of as being a national soul-searching tool and clearly part of the periphery vs. centre discourse so important in this part of the world. The New Zealand discourse of television advertising, is seemingly embedded in a system of thought that constantly creates and asserts the identity of a new nation. Kiwi ingenuity is therefore a tool for promoting brands but also to clarify and foster national identity.

As a major storyteller that contributes to displaying desirable forms of national culture for consumers, advertising can be credited, as Anderson (1991) put it, with "imagining" a version of the nation for the consumer audience (Billig 1995; Miller 1995; Smith 1993; Spencer/Wollman 2002) that included ingenuity as one of its main pillars. Anderson (1991) argued that nations are imagined communities "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991: 6). Because many in the nation see the same advertising images/representations at the same time, advertising helps that communion in creating a national link between consumers; constituting an invisible and impalpable community space. Even though it is not its goal, through presenting constructed narratives, advertising tends to assist individuals to coagulate; it helps them think of themselves as belonging to a real national group through presenting them with images of the national way of life which join them (Bhabha 1990; McCrone 1998) and that are attached to the name of brands for a consumption way of life.

5.   Conclusions: Advertising creativity and the ascendency of national culture

The New Zealand advertising case reveals the intertwining of advertising language and imagery within a national culture, and a particular local theme or myth that supports creative connections of brands and culture. We now discuss these important findings.

This study reinforces what Scott (1999) argued, that creativity is always shaped by the context in which it occurs and is "imbricated in spatial and temporal fields of social action" (p. 814). In particular, we argue that the geographical and geopolitical place of a nation in the global world has a substantial influence on how idiosyncratic differences affect advertising discourse. Indeed, we argue that advertising creation needs to be studied and understood as part of a macro cultural/national context that incorporates discourses driven by elements thought to be far removed from advertising, for example the geopolitical context of the country in which advertising exists. In a country situated at the periphery such as New Zealand, discourses that work to boost the national collective ego particularly resonate, even in commercial communication. In fact, besides their actual commercial role, they can also be seen – because of their recurrence over the years – as soul searching tools that allow New Zealand advertising professionals and other consumers to visualise a particular successful and likeable national identity.

This study's movement from micro to macro perspective illustrated how Kiwi ingenuity, as one of those themes that allows the expression of this re-centering discourse, is a crucial element in advertising for creating a positive and desirable context for brands. We argue that this theme is particularly instrumental in boosting the crucial buyer readiness stages of 'knowledge' and 'liking', via representations that culturally/nationally and emotionally resonate with citizens as consumers, reinforcing their understandings of, and pride in, that concept and the brands attached to it. The knowledge created about the brand in such messages and gained by consumers is not knowledge of product features but knowledge about 'belonging'. In viewing such messages, consumers acquire the knowledge that the brand attached to the notion of kiwi ingenuity does care about, or fits into, what is considered one of the central aspects of New Zealand identity and cultural uniqueness. Once this knowledge about the brand's attachment to a national value is acquired by consumers it is hoped that liking of the brand will also ensue, leading then to brand preference, conviction and, ultimately, purchase, use, and advocacy.

We also argue that the recurrence of a national theme over a period of time reveals that the choice of advertising elements is made according to rules of cultural communication based on traditional discursive formations internalised by individuals evolving within a particular institutional and cultural structure. Advertising professionals' voice should be evaluated as drawing on and recreating discursive formations which, as Pêcheux (1990: 102) put it, determine "what can and should be said" and therefore determine what particular themes can be usefully used in a particular national context. Therefore, in order to be heard at a national level advertising professionals place themselves within popular discursive formations that, they possibly feel, their national public can relate to. Also, because advertising messages need to be consumed very rapidly and without doubt by the cultural consumer audience, advertising professionals are pushed to engage in discursive practices that reiterate easily-recognisable discursive formations that are likable and easily digestible by their audience.

Advertising conception does not happen in the space of one brain but is culturally negotiated between various advertising professionals in the same agency and also between advertising professionals and their clients (Cronin 2004a; Hackley 2010) [13], and this negotiation often results in the 're-creativity' of common cultural denominators. These 'cultural understandings', we suggest, show that these various parties, including advertising professionals are subjects of their culture and tend to communicate through the cultural/national discourses that predominate and that are 'agreed upon' by different members of the same culture. As Hall (1997: 55) writes, "it is dis-

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13 Not to mention the influence of the advertising standards authority that imposes its own cultural interpretation of international advertising standards.

course, not the subjects who speak it, which produce knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the *episteme*, the *discursive formation,* the *régime of truth*, of a particular period and culture". Thus, we argue that the power that advertising professionals may have over what they present to consumers in advertising messages is exercised in relation to their relationship with other parties and powerful cultural discursive formations grounded in their country's culture and that ritualise their work.

Discursive work is indeed a practice regulated by rituals, as authors such as Foucault (1971) and Bourdieu (1996; 2001) have shown. We suggest that advertising professionals can be seen to develop a certain habitus related to their working environment, in particular linked to the use of flattering national themes. Therefore, their work as cultural intermediaries relies, to a certain extent, on "habitual, unreflexive, and uncritical adherence to well established production routines and occupational formulae" (Negus 2002: 510) that make their working life easier and more 'successful'. Inevitably, as a result, advertising professionals draw again and again from solidly-anchored historical discursive formations that are part of widely accepted cultural régimes of truth in a culture/nation.

In more specific relation to the cultural theme of kiwi ingenuity isolated in this study, we have shown that what is asked from the consumer audience in commercials using the theme is, above all, a cultural decoding of the message. Kiwi ingenuity was used more or less explicitly as a unifying totem, as a tool to awaken feelings of national identity and pride, and presented as an attitude to be admired and emulated as a first step towards consumption of goods or services. New Zealand consumers were asked to position themselves within a dominant discursive formation on the importance of kiwi ingenuity and were encouraged to be inspired to consume and to think how well the brand advertised fits in their socio-national universe. The 'knowledge' stage of the buyer readiness stage therefore depends on New Zealanders decoding and appreciating the importance of ingenuity imagery, and accepting its association to brands as an incentive to consume.

On the other hand, an important part of the 'liking' process consisted in advertising professionals personalising – giving New Zealand consumers glamorised models of ingenious Kiwis flattering identities to like and admire before they should engage in the act of commerce. Commercials constructed situations and characters that acted as national signs and reflected stereotypical New Zealandness in terms of ingenuity. They were constructed around hyperbolic imagery that contributed to the consolidation of a particular attitudinal myth. In particular, ingenious Kiwis were often constructed as creatures of excess so that viewers would not miss the display of their brilliance or the necessity of brand consumption.

This study also advocates a breaking of the boundaries between disciplines such as marketing and more sociologically oriented disciplines such as cultural and media studies. Advertising needs to not only be thought of in terms of marketing micro measurements but it also needs to be replaced in, and understood as, part of a much higher level of culture and wider influent historical and geopolitical framework. This kind of 'higher level' influence cannot be revealed by approaches that simply canvas surface levels using the usual quantitative tools reviewed earlier. Although there is definitely a place for timely studies that use these tools, there is also a need for studies that canvass advertising over a reasonably long period and identify meaningful patterns of discourse that influence advertising content and consumers' involvement.

For professionals, understanding better the deeply rooted discourses that affect advertising in a country is important because these powerful historically anchored discourses and the themes that they carry are unlikely to disappear and therefore are likely to be useful for potential campaigns. National culture is how a people understands itself as special and these cultural idiosyncrasies that may appear quite unusual and insignificant for cultural outsiders, can have a huge impact on how a people communicates 'with itself', including in the realm of advertising and consumption. Advertising messages are certainly not encoded and decoded in a cultural vacuum as this study has shown; the cultural context provides the fundamental tool for understanding specific alliances

between consumer and national discourses and also for creating meaningful and successful advertising messages.

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