

When you hear the term “Kiwi Bloke”, what comes into your mind? Rugby, beer, farming, gumboots, ‘real’ men and ‘manly’ activities? Just your average Kiwi Bloke?

Media representations are the ways in which the media portrays particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective. They shape our perceptions of experience and can influence our beliefs. Media representations of the Kiwi Bloke shape a perception and give New Zealand men an idealist perception of who they should be. These representations also convey to the rest of the world who they supposedly are.

The television advertisements for the Mammoth Supply Co. (supported by the product packaging), the ‘Mantrol’ advertisement, the satire of Fred Dagg and the film ‘Footrot Flats’, all portray varying representations of the “typical” Kiwi Bloke.

Representations of the Kiwi Bloke are used to influence Kiwi men by persuading them that it is necessary to be like this to be a ‘real’ man. This can have negative effects on kiwi men and young boys, who feel as though they may not be living up to particular expectations.

1

The Media shows a particular ‘breed’ of males - the ‘Kiwi Bloke’. Many of the kiwi blokes that are part of the ‘kiwi bloke’ representation come from rural areas and are farmers. This idea of being part of the land is an important feature of NZ as our history is tied to the land.... [extract removed] ... As shown in the film Footrot Flats, Kiwi men appear to be the rough and buff type, wearing a singlet, stubbies and jandals or gumboots. They’re generally not groomed or very hygienic, and are typical of your hard working beer drinker. Wallace (Wal) Footrot, the main character, is the prime example of the ‘Kiwi Bloke’ that the media frequently portrays. Working on a farm with his dogs, Wallace is the “typical’ bloke in the way he looks and acts. He is a do-it yourself kind of man, he works hard on his farm, he’s unhygienic, (which is shown by the way he wears dirty socks from a previous day), he has ‘manly pride’ and he’s even a rugby-fanatic. Another character that displays this characteristic is Fred Dagg ... [extract removed]

2

The portrayal of Wal and Fred Dagg’s lack of emotional side assumes how kiwi men are meant to be - the “strong, silent type”. When his dog goes missing, he is not openly willing to share his feelings with the other farmer as this is a trait associated with woman, and is therefore considered too “feminine’ for Wallace. Also indicating his ‘manly pride’ is when Wal describes the dog to have “muscles like steel cables, fangs like a row of broken bottles”, while ‘Dog’ is in fact a harmless puppy. This over exaggerating can also indicate that Kiwi Bloses are proud, tough and perhaps rough around the edges. It suggests that they try to impress one another by appearing as ‘manly’ as possible and attempting to better themselves because of their large ego.

The representation of the Kiwi Bloke makes us think the majority of kiwi men are like Wal and Fred, and this contributes to the ‘manly’ stereotype for kiwi blokes. This stereotyping is not the representation itself, but in fact the result of the representation - it is something men can relate to and also has set a standard of behaviour and lifestyle for a Kiwi Bloke to follow. We can see the influence of these texts in adverts such as Mammoth which gives instructions to

- 4 men for how to behave that don't deviate much from the 'strong silent, emotionless type' or the 'Mantrol' advertisement which indirectly indicates the things "men" should be doing. What this does is give a clear view about what a mens world should be.

Within a world based around what men have 'control' over, "Mandom" represents Kiwi Blokes in such a way that they appear as extremely masculine and doing 'manly' or 'sporty' things, such as fishing, skateboarding inside, playing cricket, playing basketball, barbequing, wrestling, carpentry - the 'manly' activities or activities usually associated with males.

Though the advertisement is to promote good driving and is targeted at young males as they are a high risk group, it gives the representation that Kiwi Blokes don't only prioritise their 'manhood' but also control, implying they are egotistical, overly masculine and controlling, all of which are generally unpleasant characteristics. The representation is created in this advertisement through the visual use of different 'manly' activities, indicating that Kiwi Blokes participate in activities as such. However, the aim of the advertisement is to make a positive change, therefore indicating that this representation of Kiwi Blokes is used to get the attention of Kiwi males, to encourage them to step up and take responsibility; and they could do this by using a representation that they could identify with – the Kiwi Bloke.

- 3 Although the majority of kiwi men are not like Wal and Fred in terms of the way he presents himself or act the way in which Mammoth ads instruct, New Zealand society; even the men, identify with this representation of the Kiwi Bloke due to it being a developed attitude or stereotype of society based on the media portrayal of the Kiwi Bloke. This stereotype is therefore an effect of the representation of Kiwi Blokes.

With the stereotype being the assumption that Kiwi Blokes are the "strong, silent type" – the hearty, unhygienic 'manly man', texts like Footrot Flats enable Kiwis and other people to identify with Wallace and relate him to New Zealand, and even themselves, as they identify with that stereotype. The New Zealand public are able to easily associate Wal and Fred with New Zealand and the "typical" image of the Kiwi Bloke. It is a familiar concept that they can easily grasp and identify with therefore, film maker uses the representation to connect with the audience. These representations are effectively constructed, making it relatable,

- 1 compelling and an easily understood. These representations are created by companies and organisations in an attempt to catch the attention of viewers/readers by using an identifiable concept – the Kiwi Bloke.