



Steve Elers

Ngāti Kauwhata, Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa and Ngāi Tahu
Doctor of Philosophy candidate

From ‘Ghost Chips’ to ‘It’s Not Ok’, New Zealand’s public information advertisements frequently focus on Māori, but how do Māori feel about portrayals in the advertisements? This is a question that AUT doctoral candidate Steve Elers is trying to answer through his research.

Exploring Māori identities

“My research is an examination of Māori perspectives of how Māori are portrayed in social marketing or behavioural-change advertisements that are primarily government funded,” says Steve who is the recipient of an AUT Vice-Chancellor’s Doctoral Scholarship.

“There are a number of ads that appear to reinforce negative stereotypes of Māori, and I believe more consultation is needed. My hope is that this research will be used to help design future advertising, marketing and public relations campaigns targeted at Māori.”

A former West Australian police officer, Steve first became interested in this topic when he saw the ‘One More Bro for the Road’ TV commercial.

Opportunities to network and learn

There are plenty of opportunities for students to get involved during their studies, Steve says.

“There is constantly something happening – such as professors discussing their latest publications, presentations from visiting overseas academics, and doctoral students presenting ideas for their research. These events are a great chance to network and learn, even if it isn’t directly related to your own research.”

Steve has also had the opportunity to present his own research at events such as the 2014 Conference of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies at the University of Rhode Island.

A need for more Māori scholars

Expecting to finish his doctorate early next year, Steve is planning to continue in academia and encourage other Māori to enter communication studies.

“There is a shortage of Māori scholars in communication studies, and we need more people to help spread Māori views by working in the media, public relations or government agencies.

“I have already recommended the programme to several friends. Staff are extremely knowledgeable and supportive.”