



1.1 Tide Advert: Context

Production context:

- Proctor and Gamble launched Tide in 1946 & it quickly became the brand leader.
- Campaign refers explicitly to P&G as consumers had high levels of confidence in the company.
- The 'housewife' character was used in multiple campaigns for Tide.

Social and Cultural Context

- Intertextual reference to 'Rosie the Riveter' and the 'Women's Land Army' posters from WWII.
- When men returned from war they needed jobs back and women were encouraged back into the home through the idea of 'Occupation: Housewife'.
- Stereotypical reps of domestic perfection, caring for the family and serving the man of the house all fed into this plan.
- 1950s saw a post-war consumer boom with a competitive edge - people were trying to be better than their neighbours!



1.2 Media Language

How the advert communicates with the audience

Layout and Design

- **Z - line** and **rule of thirds** used to direct audience to the most important parts of the advert., i.e. product is centralised.
- Bright, primary colours connote the positive associations being constructed for the product.
- Headings, sub-headings and slogans are used with a sans-serif font, connoting an informal and personal approach.

Images - Visual Codes

- Use of the 'housewife' character was unconventional at the time, but gave audiences a 'hook' into the ads.
- Product is presented as desirable rather than necessary through the use of symbolic codes, i.e. hearts and accent lines, connoting adoration.
- Cartoon strip builds on the informal tone and brings an enhanced sense of narrative, suggesting a recognisable scenario for the audience to relate to.
- Dress codes are stereotypical of the time, with hair curls and rolls made fashionable by film stars like Veronica Lake and Rita Hayworth.
- The head scarf, apron and short hair were indicative of the practicality needed for women during the war.
- 'wasp waists' and make-up suggest they also needed to look beautiful for their husbands.



Language - Verbal codes

- Suggestion of the product being better than its competitors was **NOT** conventional but has become a staple of domestic products in today's advertising. Suggests that Tide was leading the way. **What examples are there?**
- Hyperbole used through bold fonts, red accents and exclamation marks as well as tripling, superlatives and imperatives. **Such as?**
- Direct address towards women make it clear who the product is targeting.

1.3 Representations

- Loving gaze of the housewife suggests a 'desire' for the product and her role in using it - reinforces the patriarchal society of 1950s America as it suggests she genuinely enjoys her domestic bliss!
- The ladies in the cartoon chatting over the fence reinforces stereotypes of 'gossiping' among women.
- Housewife is seen holding the slogan blurb in front of a washing machine oozing suds. **Does she seem in control? Or is she unaware of how to fix the machine causing chaos without a man to help?**
- The small head and shoulders of the housewife at the bottom reminds the audience with a 'Remember!' prompt - almost like a mother reminding her children. A further stereotype of a woman as adopting purely domestic roles.



1.4 Theoretical Approaches

Barthes - Enigma Codes

- 'What women want!' - **What do they want?**

Barthes - Semantic Codes

- Hearts above the product - connotes love.

Levi-Strauss - Binary Oppositions

- Tide Vs competitors - "Tide gets clothes cleaner than any other washday product you can buy!" and "There's nothing like Proctor and Gamble's Tide".
- **Are there any other suggestions that Tide is a superior product?**

Hall - Representation/Stereotypes

- Images of domesticity form part of a shared understanding around the scenario of a woman doing the washing - it is familiar as a representation of their own lives.

Gauntlett - Identity

- Women are represented as role models of domestic perfection that the audience may want to construct themselves against.

bell hooks - Feminist theory

- advert is dominated by lighter skinned females as they were considered more desirable and fitting with the western ideals of beauty.

1.5 Key Terminology

Intertextuality
The referencing of one media product in another.

Sans-serif fonts
Letters do not have extending features called "serifs" at the end of strokes.

Z-Line
A layout that traces the route a human eye makes when it reads, i.e. left to right, top to bottom. Ads place elements along the lines in order of importance.

Rule of Thirds
A balanced composition that places important objects at the line intersections.

Connotations
The meanings or associations attributed to an image or symbol.

Superlatives
An adjective or adverb that expresses that the thing or person being described has more of the quality being described than anything or anyone of the same type.

Imperatives
An imperative verb is one that tells someone to do something, so that the sentence it is in becomes an order or command.

Tripling
A writing principle that suggests that a trio of events or characters is more humorous, satisfying, or effective than other numbers.

Patriarchal Society
A male dominated society where men are in control and women are seen to be less important.

Mode of address
Tone of voice adopted by a product, i.e. direct/indirect, formal/informal.

No wonder you women buy more **TIDE** than any other washday product!



1.6 Audience - Social Context

- Despite women having seen their roles in society change during the war, domestic products of the 1950s continued to be aimed at female audiences.
- The likely target audience of **affluent** lower-middle class women were appealed to because of their supposed 'need' for **innovative** domestic technologies and products - seen as a status symbol related to the **American Dream**
- Increasing popularity of supermarkets having a much wider range of products led to a focus on brands having a **unique selling point (USP)**
- The print advert was accompanied by a radio and TV ad to build audience familiarity - using the same housewife character.



1.7 Audience - Targeting

Who?

- Young women, likely to be newly married and with young families.
How is this suggested in the advert?
- The likely audience demographic is constructed through the advert's use of women with whom they might personally identify.
In what ways have they done this?
- The product would be looking to target **mainstreamers** and **aspirers** with the focus on the quality of the product as a tried and trusted brand.

How?

- Endorsed by *Good Housekeeping Magazine* reinforces the repeated assertion that *Tide* is the market leading product - making them an **opinion leader** for the target audience.

- Use of reassuring **lexical fields** ('trust', 'truly safe', 'miracle', 'nothing like') suggests that *Tide* provides solutions to the audience's needs despite being a "new" product.

What other linguistic devices help to sell the product?

- Use of strong primary colours and large fonts to make the product seem new and exciting.
- Women at the washing line use informal language to help build a relationship with audience but there is factual info included in numbered points identifying them as important.

What does this combination of language use achieve?

- Brand identity is created through the use of the packaging - the images reinforce the **copy**, explaining how the product and technology work.

Why was more copy of this nature needed at this time?

1.8 Theoretical Perspectives

Stuart Hall - Reception Theory

- **Hegemonic/Dominant/Preferred reading**
 - » Indirect mode of address made by the women in the main image connotes that her relationship with the product is of prime importance - *Tide* has what she wants!
 - » The direct mode of address in the additional images link to the **imperative** 'Remember!' and 'your wash', 'you can buy'.
 - » The advert's primary message should be received by 'you women'.
- **Oppositional Reading**
 - » A modern audience are likely to find the representations and approach of the advert outdated and potentially sexist.

Who might have a negotiated reading of this advert?

George Gerbner - Cultivation Theory

- The *Tide* advertising campaign uses repeated messages about the product and its usage to cultivate these ideas within the audience:
 - » *Tide* is the market leader
 - » nothing else washes to the same standard as *Tide*.
 - » it's a desirable product for women
 - » it uses innovative technology, i.e. 'miracle suds'.
- These cultivated ideas encourage audience to align their own **ideologies** with the product's and help to make *Tide* a brand that 'goes into more American homes than any other washday product'.

Why is Tide so popular?

Tide had 31% market share in 1952 and today it has 40% - meaning 40% of American's buy *Tide*! It has dominated for decades. But Why?

- People are lazy and don't like change.
- Heritage - "My mother used *Tide*".
- P&G spend a fortune to keep them at the top.
- Relentless product development 50 different versions.



1.9 Key Terminology

Affluent
A group of people or an inhabited area having a great deal of money; wealthy.

American Dream
The idea that every American can have equal chances to achieve their aspirations.

Unique Selling Point (USP)
A factor differentiating a product from its competitors, i.e. lowest cost, highest quality or first-ever product of its kind. It could be thought of as "what you have that competitors don't."

Mainstreamers
Making up 40% of the population. These people prefer security, tried and trusted brands and like to belong to a group of like-minded people.

Aspirers
People wanting status who prefer brands that show their place within society.

Opinion Leader
Those in positions of power who aim to persuade an audience of their point of view.

Lexical Fields (Lexis)
A specific type of language or vocabulary associated with a genre or purpose.

Copy
The writing on a media product.

Hegemony
leadership or dominance, especially by one state or social group over others.

Dominant/Preferred Reading
When audiences respond to the product the way media producers want/ expect them to.

Ideology
a system of ideas and beliefs, especially one which forms the basis of economic, social or political policy.