

Tide print advert

(1950s)

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

TIDE'S GOT WHAT WOMEN WANT!

NO SOAP-NO OTHER "SUDS"-NO OTHER WASHING PRODUCT KNOWN-WILL GET YOUR WASH AS **CLEAN AS TIDE!**



ONLY TIDE DOES ALL THREE:

- 1. World's CLEANEST wash!**
Yes, Tide will get your wash cleaner than any other washing product! (Tide, unlike soap, removes both dirt and soap film.) No wonder more Tide goes into American homes than any other washday product!
- 2. World's WHITEST wash!**
It's a miracle! In hardest water, Tide will get your shirts, sheets, towels whiter—yes, whiter—than any soap or any other washing product known!
- 3. Actually BRIGHTENS colors!**
Trust all your washable colors to Tide. With all its terrific cleaning power, Tide is truly safe . . . and actually brightens soap-dulled colors.

REMEMBER!
TIDE GETS CLOTHES CLEANER THAN ANY OTHER WASHDAY PRODUCT YOU CAN BUY!

TIDE'S A SUDSING WHIZZ EVEN IN HARDEST WATER

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE PROCTER & GAMBLE'S TIDE



Image Courtesy of The Advertising Archives

Tide print advert

(1950s)

**AS Component 1:
Investigating the Media**
**A level Component 1: Media
Products, Industries and Audiences**

**Focus areas:
Media language
Representation
Audiences
Media contexts**

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- Designed specifically for heavy-duty, machine cleaning, Procter & Gamble launched *Tide* in 1946 and it quickly became the brand leader in America, a position it maintains today.
- *The D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles* (DMB&B) advertising agency handled P&G's accounts throughout the 1950s. Its campaigns for *Tide* referred explicitly to P&G because their market research showed that consumers had high levels of confidence in the company.
- Uniquely, DMB&B used print and radio advertising campaigns concurrently in order to quickly build audience familiarity with the brand. Both media forms used the “housewife” character and the ideology that its customers “loved” and “adored” *Tide*.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Historical context:

The post-WWII consumer boom of the 1950s included the rapid development of new technologies for the home, designed to make domestic chores easier. Vacuum cleaners, fridge-freezers, microwave ovens and washing machines all become desirable products for the 1950s consumer. Products linked to these new technologies also developed during this time, for example, washing powder.

Cultural context:

Print adverts from the 1950s conventionally used more **copy** than we're used to seeing today. Consumer culture was in its early stages of

development and, with so many ‘new’ **brands** and products entering markets, potential customers typically needed more information about them than a modern **audience**, more used to **advertising, marketing** and **branding**, might need. **Conventions** of print-based advertising are still recognisable in this text however, as detailed below.

Consider codes and conventions, and how media language influences meaning:

- **Z-line** and a rough **rule of thirds** can be applied to its **composition**.
- Bright, **primary colours** connote the positive associations the producers want the audience to make with the product.
- **Headings, subheadings** and **slogans** are written in **sans-serif font**, **connoting** an informal **mode of address**.
- This is reinforced with the comic strip style image in the bottom right-hand corner with two women ‘talking’ about the product using informal **lexis** (“sudsing whizz”).
- The more ‘technical’ details of the product are written in a **serif font**, **connoting** the more ‘serious’ or ‘factual’ information that the ‘1, 2, 3’ bullet point list includes.

Consider theoretical perspectives:

Semiotics – Roland Barthes

- Suspense is created through the **enigma** of “what women want” (**Barthes’ Hermeneutic Code**) and emphasised by the tension-building use of multiple exclamation marks (**Barthes’ Proairetic Code**).
- **Barthes’ Semantic Code** could be applied to the use of hearts above the main image. The hearts and the woman’s **gesture codes** have **connotations** of love and relationships. It’s **connoted** that this is “what women want” (in addition to clean laundry!).
- **Hyperbole** and **superlatives** (“Miracle”, “World’s cleanest wash!”, “World’s whitest wash!”) as well as **tripling** (“No other...”) are used to oppose the **connoted** superior cleaning power of *Tide* to its competitors.

This **Symbolic Code (Barthes)** was clearly successful as Procter and Gamble's competitor products were rapidly overtaken, making *Tide* the brand leader by the mid-1950s.

A level only:

Structuralism – Claude Lévi-Strauss

- The latter point above links to **Lévi-Strauss' theory**, whereby texts are constructed through the use of **binary oppositions**, and meaning is made by audiences understanding these conflicts.
- In this text, "*Tide* gets clothes cleaner than any other washday product you can buy!" and "There's nothing like Procter and Gamble's *Tide*", reinforces the **conceptual binary opposition** between *Tide* and its commercial rivals.
- It's also "unlike soap," gets laundry "whiter... than any soap or washing product known" and is "truly safe" – all of which **connotes** that other, inferior products do not offer what *Tide* does.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Social and political contexts:

Interesting **intertexts** to consider would be WWII adverts for the 'Women's Land Army' and J. Howard Miller's 'Rosie The Riveter – We Can Do It!' advert for the War Production Co-Ordinating Committee.



<http://www.womenslandarmy.co.uk/ww2-womens-land-army-newspaper-recruitment-campaign/>

http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_538122

The **representations** in these adverts challenge **stereotypical** views of women being confined to the domestic sphere, something society needed at the time as traditional 'male roles' were vacated as men left to fight.

In the 1950s, while men were being targeted for the post-war boom in America's car industry, women were the primary market for the technologies and products being developed for the home. In **advertising** for these types of texts, **stereotypical representations** of domestic perfection, caring for the family and servitude to the 'man of the house' became linked to a more modern need for speed, convenience and a better standard of living than the women experienced in the pre-war era.

Consider how representations are constructed through processes of selection and combination:

- The **dress code** of the advert's main female character include a **stereotypical** 1950s hairstyle incorporating waves, curls and rolls made fashionable by contemporary film stars such as Veronica Lake, Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth. The fashion for women having shorter hair had a practical catalyst as long hair was hazardous for women working with machinery on farms or in factories during the war.
- The headband or scarf worn by the woman also links to the practicalities of **dress code** for

women developed during this time. For this advert, having her hair held back **connotes** she's focused on her work, though this is perhaps **binary opposed** to the full make-up that she's wearing.

Consider theoretical perspectives:

- **Stuart Hall’s theory of representation** – the images of domesticity (including the two women hanging out the laundry) form part of the “shared conceptual road map” that give meaning to the “world” of the advert. Despite its comic strip visual construction, the scenario **represented** is familiar to the **audience** as a representation of their own lives.
- **David Gauntlett’s theory of identity** – women represented in the advert act as **role models** of domestic perfection that the audience may want to construct their own sense of identity against.

A level only:

- **Liesbet Van Zoonen’s feminist theory** – while their role socially and politically may have changed in the proceeding war years, the advert perhaps contradicts **Van Zoonen’s** theory that the media contribute to social change by representing women in non-traditional roles and using non-sexist language.
- **bell hooks’ feminist theory** argues that lighter skinned women are considered more desirable and fit better into the western ideology of beauty, and the advert could be seen to reinforce this by only representing “modern”, white women. This could also be linked to **Gilroy’s ethnicity and post-colonial theories** that media texts reinforce colonial power. Contextually, this power has perhaps been challenged at this moment in American history by the events of WWII.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS – Audiences

Social context:

Despite women having seen their roles in society change during the War (where they were needed in medical, military support and other roles outside of the home) domestic products of the 1950s continued to be aimed at female audiences.

The likely **target audience** of increasingly affluent lower-middle class women were, at this point in the 1950s, being appealed to because of their supposed need for innovative domestic technologies and products. The increasing popularity during the 1950s of supermarkets stocking a wider range of products led to an increased focus by corporations on brands and their **unique selling points**.

Consider how industries target audiences, and how audiences interpret and use the media:

- The likely **audience demographic** is constructed through the advert’s use of women with whom they might **personally identify (Uses and Gratifications Theory)**. These young women are likely to be newly married and with young families (clothing belonging to men and children on the washing line creates these **connotations**).
- The endorsement from *Good Housekeeping Magazine* makes them an **Opinion Leader** for the **target audience**, reinforcing the repeated assertion that *Tide* is the market-leading product.
- The **preferred reading (Stuart Hall)** of the advert’s reassuring **lexical fields** (“trust”, “truly safe”, “miracle”, “nothing like”) is that, despite being a “new” product, *Tide* provides solutions to the audience’s domestic chores needs.

Consider theoretical perspectives:

Reception theory – Stuart Hall

- The **indirect mode of address** made by the woman in the main image **connotes** that her relationship with the product is of prime importance (*Tide* has what she wants). This, according to **Hall**, is the dominant or **hegemonic encoding** of the advert’s primary message that should be received by “you women.”
- The **direct mode of address** of the images in the top right and bottom left-hand corner link to the **imperative** “Remember!” and the use of **personal pronouns** (“your wash”, “you can buy”).

Cultivation theory – George Gerbner

- Advertising developed significantly during the 1950s and this theory, developed by **Gerbner** in the early 1970s, explains some of the ways in which audiences may be influenced by media texts such as adverts.
- The *Tide* advert aims to **cultivate** the ideas that: this is the brand leader; nothing else washes to the same standard as *Tide*; it’s a desirable product for its female audience; and its “miracle suds” are an innovation for the domestic washing market. **Gerbner’s** theory would argue that the repetition of these key messages causes **audiences** to increasingly align their own **ideologies** with them (in this case positively, creating a product that “goes into more American homes than any other washday product”).