

TIDE x AAF NSAC: Secondary Research Report, Literature Review

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Background Information

Tide is owned by the parent company Proctor & Gamble (P&G) and has been the leading laundry detergent company in the United States (U.S.) since 1949 (National Student Advertising Competition [NSAC], 2023). Not only did the success of the billion-dollar brand completely transform P&G as a company, but it also served as the parent company's most influential brand of the 20th century, and, arguably, for the first 175 years of its existence (NSAC, 2023). Tide's mission is to reinvent some aspects of its brand to satisfy Generation Z and Millennials' needs and wants. The target audiences are all experiencing major transitions in life; Generation Z is going into college and entering the workforce, and Millennials are starting families, therefore resulting in changing purchasing behavior. For the foreseeable future, Generation Z and Millennials will necessitate a new approach to marketing because its consumers are "the most environmentally conscious generation... and [have] a different attitude towards brands" (Vajkai & Zsóka, 2020, p. 43). In the context of Tide's marketing strategy, this means a new emphasis on sustainability. To meet this goal, Tide plans to improve its brand by utilizing sustainable manufacturing and packaging processes, emphasizing cold water washing, and strengthening community outreach.

According to the American Advertising Federation (AAF) National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) Tide case study, Tide's objective is to evolve for the 21st century needs of the U.S. The brand wants to create a multi-touchpoint campaign that cuts manufacturing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by half, reduces the use of virgin plastic in packaging, expands community programs by 10x, and most importantly increases the amount of cold water laundry washes nationally (NSAC, 2023). Tide's primary key performance indicator (KPI) is to increase cold water conversions, stating that by 2030, 75 percent of loads should be washed cold (NSAC,

2023). Tide's secondary KPI is to build brand passion by increasing aspects of brand consideration, preference, and sentiment (NSAC, 2023). Concerning this KPI, Tide's overarching message is to "inspire the hope and optimism that comes from the certainty of clean" (NSAC, 2023, p. 8). This multi-touchpoint campaign will target those 35 years of age and under which includes Generation Z and Millennials, and has a budget of \$50-75 million that will begin in October 2024 and go through September 2025 (NSAC, 2023).

Secondary research suggests that members of Generation Z and Millennials "are described as highly educated, technology savvy [and] naturally creative" (Vajkai & Zsóka, 2020, p. 42). They spend time watching sports, gaming, or being full-time students and/or employees (YPULSE, 2021). Generation Z and Millennials immerse themselves in their work life due to feelings of financial uncertainty since "they keep getting smacked with microeconomic factors outside their control, creating setbacks and mental health consequences" (Cagnassola & Glum, 2023, p. 9). They are also facing major life transitions shaped by smartphones and social media, as "phones serve as the central means of accessing information on the internet" (Zilka, 2023, p. 3). Their high usage of social media is most influential and used as a way of activism on social issues such as climate change, sustainability practices, and social justice. These generations do not only want to support brands that are trustworthy, transparent, and have appropriate values and ethics but also want brands to "create a real-world impact on society" (Shikha, 2022, p. 4). Thus, this campaign will heavily focus on Generation Z since they are the group of consumers aged 35 years and under who are beginning to establish their laundry habits, unlike Millennials who may already have concrete laundry practices. It is essential to draw a parallel that the lives of college students, those new to the workforce, and those starting families are changing drastically, including their laundry practices and the clothes they are washing.

Gen Zers and Millennials are willing to pay more for sustainable products because they “look at their purchasing decisions as an expression of their values and identity” (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023b, p. 3). Most importantly, Generation Z strongly believes that “products become services, and services connect consumers” (Francis & Hoefel, 2018, p. 13). The ideologies connected through products, services, and consumers create customer loyalty and brand awareness. Therefore, Tide needs to proceed with taking the appropriate steps to continue to engage Gen Zers and Millennials.

Brand/Organization Insights

Tide was the first heavy-duty synthetic household detergent and has been used in family homes for over 65 years. Tide has had a successful history being the first laundry detergent brand to pass remarkable benchmarks. In 1952, Tide was the first detergent to advertise on television; in 1953, it provided free samples inside new laundry machines; and in 1968, it was the first U.S. detergent to be formulated with enzymes to break through stains (NSAC, 2023). Additionally, in 1983, it was the first detergent without perfumes; in 1988, it was the first with color-safe bleach; in 1990, it was the first with compact powder; and in 1992, Tide was the first to create liquid detergent (NSAC, 2023). Tide is evolving its brand almost 75 years later as the lead detergent in the U.S.

Tide’s products are appropriately priced in comparison to its competitors, ranging from \$7.99 to upwards of \$29.99 depending on product, amount, and location of purchase (*Tide*, 2023). Tide products are sold in leading department stores, convenience and grocery stores, and online. Tide offers a wide range of products such as laundry pods, liquid detergent, powder, stain remover, laundry booster, fabric care, and fabric rinse (*Tide*, 2023). Tide has a social media presence on X—formerly known as Twitter—(179,600 followers), Instagram (59,700 followers),

and Facebook (3,500,000). In addition, they have an advertising presence on cable, YouTube, and various other streaming platforms. Tide's advertisements have gone viral after being premiered during the Super Bowl. Therefore, consumers are aware of Tide, their products, and what the brand has to offer.

Further awareness of Tide occurred in 2018 when the viral, yet life-threatening 'Tide Pod Challenge' circulated online. This challenge consisted of teenagers filming themselves ingesting Tide Pods and then posting it on social media (McCarthy, 2018). This challenge got millions of views and engagement but in turn, made consumers question Tide's overall brand. Ultimately, this led to the lowest perception level in nine months (Malito, 2018). Even though perception levels plummeted for Tide, strangely enough, sales increased due to this trend that teenagers participated in (Malito, 2018). Consumers have differing opinions about Tide, especially if they or somebody they know participated in the 'Tide Pod Challenge.' Since then Tide has been able to overcome this challenge, increasing authentic sales and strengthening its brand image (Malito, 2018). Due to these efforts, Tide products continue to be purchased on an as-needed basis. Consumers buy Tide products occasionally but consistently during the year since most products last a decent amount of time depending on family size. The larger-sized Tide detergent jugs are advertised to last upwards of 4 months, but that is subjective based on how much laundry a family is doing per week (Tide, 2023).

The Competition/Competing Interests

Tide has multiple competitors in the laundry industry, such as Arm & Hammer, Persil, Gain, Snuggle, and All. Compared to these competitors, Tide has the highest presence on social media. Therefore, Tide's owned content reaches more consumers than these leading competitors. Due to its higher social media presence, the level of consumer awareness is inevitably elevated.

Even though Tide excels in consumer awareness on social media, Arm & Hammer serves as a precedent as they have surpassed Tide in its internal sustainability efforts.

Arm & Hammer—a household cleaning and detergent company—has currently implemented practices that abide by Tide’s futuristic goals. Arm & Hammer focuses on their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint through the packaging and manufacturing of their products (Arm & Hammer, 2023). Arm & Hammer emphasizes the guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, “which [was] declared that to pursue sustainability means ‘to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony [to support] present and future generations’” (Arm & Hammer, 2023, p. 1). The company also uses concentrated liquid detergents that use less water overall and minimal packaging that ultimately reduces plastic, fuel, and water used per laundry load (Arm & Hammer, n.d.).

Arm & Hammer’s sustainable practices put even more pressure on Tide to make a change within its brand. Arm & Hammer emphasizes that being eco-friendly means doing the *least* possible damage, as it is inevitable that all products have some type of negative environmental impact, including detergents (Arm & Hammer, n.d.). Arm & Hammer is especially concerned with the way their brand internally packages and distributes its products, while Tide is more heavily focused on external consumer behavior change.

It is notable to mention that Persil also has a page on its website dedicated to sustainable practices stating that the brand values recycling and using sustainable raw materials to create its products (Persil Proclean, 2023). On Gain’s website, the brand particularly focuses on cold water washing and how the practice protects the environment and saves consumers money on their electricity bills (Gain, 2023). The other leading competitors, Snuggle and All, do not have information on their websites regarding environmentally friendly practices. All competitors have

a wide range of products, like Tide, that are designed for consumers in different target audiences such as those with sensitive skin, babies, allergies, and the like.

Industry/Category

When focusing on Generation Z, it is important to note that they are the most diverse and well-educated generation yet. They are moving through their adulthood with a “liberal set of attitudes and an openness to emerging social trends” (Parker et al., 2019, p. 1). Gen Zers are passionate about climate change and sustainability efforts, and they recognize that the Earth is progressively getting warmer due to human activity (Parker et al., 2019). Since this generation tends to be environmentally cautious, they only want to support brands that share similar ideologies. Concerning the laundry detergent packaging industry, “around one billion laundry jugs are discarded in the United States annually. Only 30 percent are recycled, others mostly end up in landfills, or they clog oceans and waterways” (Kupec, 2023, p. 4). From a packaging standpoint, this statistic emphasizes that laundry jugs serve no purpose other than to hold detergent for a small amount of time. While also validating that these laundry jugs are polluting the environment. Tide could reinvent its packaging to make it reusable and refillable. However, since the laundry jugs can not be reinvented without changing Tide's packaging and distribution practices, the idea of cold water washing is being utilized for now.

Negative effects emerge from the usage of washing clothing in hot or warm water. To put this issue into perspective, “a standard washing machine uses around 20 gallons of water for each load” (Energy Star, 2023 as cited in Chiu, 2022, p. 1). If that water is hot or warm, the negative impact on the environment drastically increases. Since the amount of energy used to operate a washing machine is so absurd, cold washing has been highly recommended to limit the amount of energy consumption going into heating each laundry load. Washing clothes with only cold

water would protect the atmosphere from 41 billion pounds of GHG emissions annually, which is equivalent to the emissions of about four million cars (Chiu, 2022). From a consumer perspective, washing in cold water could save households approximately \$150 per year on their energy bill (Proctor & Gamble [P&G], 2021). It is important to note that laundry detergent manufacturing companies have become aware of this costly issue. Companies have specially formulated newer products containing enzymes designed for lower wash temperatures that continue to help break down stains and odor without the need for heated water (Ashkin, n.d.).

One of the recent innovations in the laundry industry is laundry pods, which Tide brands as Tide Pods. While these laundry pods are intended for efficiency, they are doing more harm to the environment. Laundry pods are made from polyvinyl alcohol film (PVA) which is not biodegradable or sustainable (O'Connor, n.d.). Even though washing machine water goes through wastewater treatment plants, the microplastics from PVA film are not always caught and filtered (O'Connor, n.d.). To quantify this concept, “research suggests that around 77% of PVA is still intact after going through wastewater treatment facilit[ies]” (O'Connor, n.d., p. 1). In addition, silica—another common ingredient in laundry pods—also is not captured in wastewater treatment plants, and is toxic to marine life (O'Connor, n.d.).

Aside from Tide Pods, traditional laundry detergent is also harmful to the environment since the industry relies on synthetic ingredients and chemicals to formulate effective detergents (STPP Group, 2023). For example, “phosphates, a common ingredient in traditional detergents, can contribute to water pollution by promoting excessive growth of algae. This can lead to oxygen depletion in the water, making it difficult for marine life to survive” (STPP Group, 2023, p. 1). Therefore, it is evident that whether a consumer is using Tide Pods or liquid detergent, the environmental damage is similarly depleting. Gen Zers and Millennials are concerned with

negative environmental impacts and have reverted to using natural laundry detergents such as white vinegar or baking soda (STPP Group, 2023).

Currently, Tide works to ensure its manufacturing equipment is running in the most energy-efficient way possible. This has been confirmed in its plant in Lima, Ohio which has been certified as a Zero Manufacturing Waste to Landfill Site (Tide, 2023). Tide also partners with Electricite de France S.A. Renewable Energy to bring projects focused on renewable energy to life (Tide, 2023). Tide's initial efforts have been rewarding, but to continue moving forward with a sustainability campaign, Tide must do more.

P&G focuses on its efforts to help communities during natural disasters. P&G recognizes that clean clothes can mean so much to people especially when that's all they have left (Brennan, 2019). Tide can travel to the areas where natural disasters hit, help people in need, and bring back normalcy and dignity (Brennan, 2019). Tide's community efforts through the Loads of Hope campaign have provided upwards of 900,000 loads of clean laundry to people since 2005 (P&G, 2023). Since the launch of this community effort, 230,483 people have worked together to further Tide's humanitarian endeavors (P&G, 2023).

Cultural Insights

Gen Zers are majority liberal/left-leaning, meaning they are "racially and ethnically diverse, progressive, and pro-government" (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023a, p. 2). The generation is the most academically educated and also has an overwhelming amount of diversity as shown through their interconnectedness of different cultures and languages (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023a). Generation Z and Millennials are especially concerned with ethics and want brands to be trustworthy, transparent, and have appropriate values (Shikha, 2022). Therefore, they want to support brands that create real-world impacts on society. Tide's current

‘Loads of Hope’ campaign perfectly shows how the brand tailors itself toward the target audience's needs and wants.

Generation Z and Millennials are stressed about their finances due to microeconomic factors that are deemed out of their control (Cagnassola & Glum, 2023). These stresses create setbacks in reaching financial milestones in comparison to older generations. Just under half of Generation Z survey respondents stated that financial uncertainty made them feel symptoms of depression and “more than a third of Americans said that financial uncertainty keeps them awake at night at least once a month” (Cagnassola & Glum, 2023, p. 5). The financial crisis that these generations face needs to be acknowledged by Tide to keep product prices reasonable and affordable.

Current President of the U.S., Joe Biden rejoined the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2021 after former President Donald Trump withdrew from it in 2017 (Tyson et al., 2021 & Pompeo, 2019). Since then President Biden has outlined policy goals that aim to get the U.S. to ‘net zero’ by 2050 (Tyson et al., 2021). Net zero is defined as “an ideal state where the amount of GHGs released into the earth’s atmosphere [are] balanced by the amount of GHGs removed [therefore requiring] decarbonization efforts (McKinsey & Company, 2022, p. 1). Gen Zers are passionate about climate change and are often posting online content to advocate for this ongoing issue, as well as creating earned media from attending rallies and protests of non-profit organizations (Tyson et al., 2021). Over half of Generation Z survey respondents felt anxious about the future after seeing online content about climate change (Tyson et al., 2021). Accordingly, these generations feel confident in their ability to reduce the effects of climate change (Tyson et al., 2021). These efforts start with a larger brand like Tide which can influence change through its manufacturing, packaging, distribution, and community initiatives.

Generation Z and Millennials' technological advantages directly influence Tide's marketing strategy. These generations use phones as a primary means of communication and access to the internet (Zilka, 2023). With this, there is no doubt that Generation Z and Millennials are appropriately labeled "digital natives" because they "were born after the widespread adoption of digital technology in the Western World" (Zilka, 2023, p. 1). Since these generations are widely tech-savvy and mobile-first, they have high standards for how they spend their time online. Most notably, this includes advocating for social movements such as Black Lives Matter, transgender rights, and most importantly—in the case of Tide—climate change (Meola, 2023). The passion and expertise that Generation Z and Millennials have for online media are essential to understand in order to effectively reach Tide's target audience.

Target Audience Insights

Gen Zers take a strong stance on a magnitude of social issues present in society today. About 50 percent of Gen Zers feel like brands should take a position on social issues such as climate change (Media Tool, 2023). Online media and the increasing value of social issues make it even harder for marketers to target their audience. Therefore, to effectively connect with Generation Z and Millennials "marketers must prioritize authenticity, reliability, and social responsibility [which] can be achieved through smart creator partnerships and purpose-driven campaigns that showcase a brand's commitment to positively impacting the world" (Brito, 2023, p. 16). Companies that commit to values such as transparency and sustainability are more likely to resonate with Generation Z and Millennials, which will increase engagement, awareness, and conversions (Brito, 2023). Gen Zers are also willing to pay more for sustainable products because of their assumed responsibility to shape a "more equitable future for all" (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023b, p. 3). Generation Z wants products to be affordable but is also willing

to pay a premium, therefore displaying the dedication they have to combat the ongoing effects of global warming. Generation Z presents environmentally responsible behavior which crucially affects consumption behavior through sustainable brands (Tran et al., 2022). Research also suggests that if Gen Zers buy and like an eco-friendly product, there is a great likelihood that they will continue to rebuy the product and become loyal to the brand (Tran et al., 2022). In short, brands are perceived as strong by Generation Z if they have an Environmental, Social, and Governance Proposition and a strong surrounding community (Segel & Hatami, n.d.).

Generation Z and Millennials' high desire to multitask, short attention spans, and the want for instant satisfaction add to their stress levels (Weber & Keim, 2021). To alleviate stress, Generation Z and Millennials are motivated to clean and do laundry (Murphy, 2023). Interestingly enough, approximately half of Gen Zers use the same cleaning products as their parents (Murphy, 2023). However, they are beginning to care less about the product itself and more about whether it has eco-friendly packaging and natural ingredients (Murphy, 2023). According to a study, “69% are convinced they know how to do laundry correctly and one-fifth said they learned how to do laundry from online media such as YouTube and Instagram” (Talker Research, 2022, p. 3). An understanding of Generation Z's and Millennials' perception of laundry is essential to target a campaign toward their needs and wants.

As previously mentioned, social media is an important part of Gen Zers daily routine, especially TikTok, a video-creating software that has increased in popularity in recent years. Although this platform serves as a primary source of entertainment and community bonding, it also has the drawback that it distracts and keeps Generation Z awake for long hours during the night (Frost, 2023). About 92 percent of people in Generation Z say they lose sleep to social media (Frost, 2023). Since this group is mostly college-aged, this leads to a decrease in their

academic performance, time management, focus, and self-esteem (Frost, 2023). Instead of getting 7-8 hours of sleep nightly, Generation Z tends to only get 5-6 hours due to the continuous loop of scrolling on TikTok or any other applicable social media site (Frost, 2023). In addition, social media and blue light consumption—the light that emanates from phones—are directly connected to insomnia (Frost, 2023).

Generation Z also loses sleep due to the ‘Sunday Scaries’ which are “a tangle of fear, anxiety, and dread that usually hits most folks when the weekend starts to wind down” (Brandwein, 2023, p. 1). Approximately 32 percent of Gen Zers have a harder time falling asleep on a Sunday night in comparison to other weeknights (Brandwein, 2023). Generally, 73 percent of Americans lose sleep because they are worried about work (Brandwein, 2023). Gen Zers were born into a “hustle culture” and an “always-on” mindset which creates detrimental effects on their sleeping habits and therefore productivity (Brandwein, 2023, p. 2). This generation feels stressed, overwhelmed, and/or has high levels of burnout (Brower, 2023). This compounds the concern Generation Z has about the future regarding the increasing lack of jobs due to the volatile economic scene (Brower, 2023). Despite the numerous elements that induce Generation Z anxiety, their purchasing power and media influence ensure the persistent support of brands with appropriate practices.

Segmented Target Audiences

Full-Time College Students. During the transition into college, students must adapt to their cleaning and laundry habits (Laundry Butler For You, 2019). Even though laundry habits are “an everyday habit [consumers] grow accustomed to” the implementation of individualized laundry habits occurs in college, during the transition period (Laundry Butler For You, 2019, p. 1). The average college student washes their clothes once every other week which remains

dependent on the amount of clothes the student has (Laundry Butler For You, 2019). Students across the board struggle with time management due to factors such as studying, homework, and maintaining a social life (Richards, 2017). Therefore laundry is usually left until the last minute, inevitably creating large loads, overwhelm, and clutter (Richards, 2017). These antics are supplemented by the worry of shrinking clothes and the programming of laundry machines (Wash Co, 2023). When targeting full-time college students their stresses, behaviors, and inexperience related to laundry must be considered.

Young Professionals Entering the Workforce. The transition into a new career from a student lifestyle can be an extremely challenging time (Richards, 2017). The constant cycle of waking up early and going to bed late leaves little time for laundry practices (Richards, 2017). A laundry load usually takes about 90 minutes to run and 16 minutes to fold (Richards, 2017). Due to the lack of time, young professionals often wait until their laundry basket is overflowing prompting multiple loads of laundry getting done in a short time (Richards, 2017). Young professionals do not want their time to be wasted and are conscious of their priorities, and laundry falls low on the list (Richards, 2017). Priorities consist of going to bars, hanging with friends, relaxing at home, watching a sports game, and the like which makes laundry a low-setting priority for these young professionals (Richards, 2017). A single person does about one to three loads of laundry per week (Wash Co, 2023). In addition, young professionals who have separate work attire may have to do an extra load of laundry separate from their routine washing (Wash Co, 2023). Depending on a young professional's lifestyle they may wear an article of clothing more than once before washing (Wash Co, 2023). This practice increases environmental sustainability and decreases laundry costs (Wash Co, 2023). Due to limited time on this low-priority practice, young professionals “have to prioritise loads of washing, and

schedule when [they are doing] laundry. So, [they] may find [themselves] washing bigger loads of laundry once or twice a week, rather than doing three or four washes a week” (Wash Co, 2023, p. 18). When Tide targets young professionals, their busy lifestyles and quick transition into the workforce must be considered to its full extent.

Families With Children. An average family of four does about eight to ten loads of laundry per week (Wash Co, 2023). However, families with multiple children tend to have larger-capacity laundry machines which allows them to do bigger loads (Wash Co, 2023). To put this into perspective while following the same rationale, a family of four will do approximately 40 loads of laundry per month and 470 loads per year (Wash Co, 2023). This vast amount of laundry done by families is primarily due to children (Wash Co, 2023). For example, baby clothes tend to get dirtier quickly and necessitate more frequent washing (Wash Co, 2023). In addition, baby clothes should be washed separately on a delicate cycle to avoid tearing and ripping of tiny clothing (Wash Co, 2023). Older children often have a variety of different clothes that need to be washed more frequently over the week which can include sports or school uniforms, gym clothes, and general clothing (Wash Co, 2023). Pets that shed also can produce supplemental laundry for a family (Laundry Butler For You, 2019). Therefore, there is no doubt that families will do more laundry than other segmented target audiences. When targeting families with children, the transition of additional washes due to children must be evaluated.

Problem Statement

The goal of Tide’s campaign is to demonstrate sustainable efforts to Generation Z who are full-time college students and young professionals and Millennials with children. Tide aims to increase sustainable practices in the laundry room to increase environmental consciousness and decrease the ongoing effects of global warming.

In the AAFxNSAC case study, the target audience was clearly defined as primarily Generation Z and Millennials, those 35 years of age and under. For this campaign, Tide will focus predominantly on the similar ideologies and mindsets of Generation Z and Millennials by splitting up the target audience into segments: full-time college students, young professionals, and families with children. Tide wants to make its brand more sustainable in packaging, manufacturing, cold washing, and community outreach.

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