

"Don't Sell the Steak—Sell the Sizzle!"



Elmer Wheeler (1903-1968), a sales lecturer and consultant, wrote an influential book in 1937 entitled "Tested Sentences That Sell." The book first popularized an advertising aphorism, "Don't Sell the Steak—Sell the Sizzle!" This was because, as Wheeler put it, "the sizzle has sold more steaks than the cow ever did." The principle, however, is much older

than Wheeler. The idea is to suggest (but not directly assert) an association between the product and some drama, pleasure, fear, emotion, or desire. As a result, the advertisements of any period provide an indirect glimpse not only into the material culture of the period, but also into its psyche. Look at the pictures below. The text has been removed, but each of them was the major portion of a newspaper or magazine ad. Can you guess what product each one was pitching?

1. A 1919 advertisement from *The Los Angeles Times*:



- Liberty Bonds
- Hart Schaffner & Marx men's suits
- Support for the League of Nations
- Bell Telephone System

2. A 1920 advertisement from *The Los Angeles Times*:



- Palmolive soap
- Arthur Murray Dance Studio lessons
- Gardner automobiles
- Mazda electric light bulbs

3. A 1937 advertisement from *Life* magazine:



- Fisk tires
- Listerine antiseptic mouthwash
- Camel cigarettes
- John Hancock Life Insurance

4. Another 1937 advertisement from *Life* magazine:



- Jantzen swim suits
- United States Navy
- Simoniz car wax
- Colgate Dental Cream