Advertising’s 15 Basic Appeals

(adapted from Mass Advertising as Social Forecast by Jib Fowles)

1. **Need for sex** - Fowles’ research suggests that only a small percentage of ads directly use this appeal; most ads which appear sexual in nature often use another appeal to avoid the overt implications (and potential turn-off) of sexually oriented strategies. Classed as a biological need.

2. **Need for affiliation** - This appeals to the our need to belong to groups and not feel left out (rejection). The implication is that if you buy this product, you will be part of a community. Also appeals to the audience through the use of couples, families, and other people who are together in some way.

3. **Need to nurture** - Appeals to our emotions using children and pets (or any other suggestion of someone who needs to be taken care of).

4. **Need for guidance** - The need to be nurtured ourselves. Uses parent-like figures and mentors who will show us the right choices to make.

5. **Need to aggress** - Not often used (because it can easily equate negativity with the product), but appeals to our desire to get the last word in, to get even, to take out our negative emotions on others.

6. **Need to achieve** - Appeals to our desire to accomplish or win at something difficult. Often uses successful role models (e.g., sports figures) to demonstrate that this success can be within our grasp. The use of superlatives (“best,” “finest”) can be used for this appeal.

7. **Need to dominate** - The desire to have power over our own environments. Equates powerful images with “potent” products.

8. **Need for prominence** - The desire to be looked up to by either being of (or at least emulating) a higher social class. Images and words evoking admiration, respect, and prestige are used.

9. **Need for attention** - This is the desire to be looked AT. Cosmetics and all beauty products generally attempt to appeal to this need. By using this product, you can be the center of attention.

10. **Need for autonomy** - Independence and a strong sense of self-identity (uniqueness) form the basis of this need. Being able to stand out from a crowd simply because using this product makes you different. Can be used in a negative way similar to the need for affiliation - the idea of being left out of this exclusive identity.

11. **Need to escape** - Adventure and freedom. We all want to leave our everyday lives from time to time, and ads promise us that, through the use of this product, we can be transported away from ordinary reality into our own fantasy worlds.

12. **Need to feel safe** - Showing how a product will keep threats away or offer security in times of trouble. Durability and reliability can be key components of this appeal.

13. **Need for aesthetic sensations** - The visual elements of an ad are carefully chosen and can be used to promote ideas of beauty. Sometimes the aesthetic image is used instead of the product itself.

14. **Need to satisfy curiosity** - Information about the product itself is a tactic. It helps provide a logical justification for purchasing, rather than just an emotional one. Statistics, graphs, numbers - all of these things are used to satisfy curiosity.

15. **Psychological needs** - Appeals that connect with our need to eat, sleep, and drink. The art of photographing food for ads, for instance, is incredibly technical and designed to have the maximum impact on us when we see
the image (though when we buy the actual product, it never seems to look like it did in the ad, does it?)