

Comfort Food: What Could Be Better

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It can only lead to increased sales: becoming a comfort food in a given market. Comfort food can be defined, based on the definition of comfort, as an item of food that is sought out by members of a given society who have learned that, when consumed, brings “consolation in time of trouble or worry,” “a feeling of relief or encouragement,” “a satisfying or enjoyable experience,” or “a feeling of contented well-being” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). In Canada, hot chocolate on a cold winter’s day; an ice cream cone given to a crying child; mom’s apple pie, chicken noodle soup when one is ill, receiving a [Lifesavers®](#) candy or visiting a donut shop (e.g., [Tim Horton’s®](#)) after a hard fought game that your team lost have all entered the realm of comfort food in the Canadian market. When a comfort food is brand specific, it can be incorporated as part of a brand ritual (see Brand Ritual marketing problem).

While a comfort food represents a market offering that evokes, as a learned behaviour, a feeling of “comfort” or a psychological state of feeling “good” or of “well-being” to members of a specific society, it is also known that chocolate contains the drug, [anandamide](#), which provides a mild feeling of euphoria, which may be why people consume chocolate when feeling depressed. Regardless of the reason, it is clear that comfort food represents something that can soothe the soul, a feeling that occurs at the time of consumption.

Questions:

1. Identify all of the marketing theories and concepts that are relevant to the situations described and explain how the theories and concepts apply, including reference to generic and selective demand.
2. In your country, what products are considered comfort foods? What are the associations that have developed between these market offerings and aspects of the social environment and an individual’s psychological entity?
3. Why are ice cream and candy often considered comfort foods? How and why did the associations develop?
4. Using the theories of classical conditioning and instrumental learning (operant conditioning), explain how the associations between a comfort food and the social environment and an individual’s psychological entity develop. Link to [learning theories](#).
5. What products in your country are considered just the opposite of a comfort food (i.e., something that does not bring forth the feeling of well-being or comfort but, rather, creates a negative feeling)?
6. If you were given the task of creating an advertisement for a comfort food (select one), how would you go about accomplishing your task?
7. If you were given the task of creating an advertisement for a product that is considered just the opposite of a comfort food (select one), how would you go about accomplishing your task?