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A Foundational Investigation of the Theory of Brand Comfort

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ABSTRACT

Two nationwide Internet studies investigated the novel concepts of comfort foods and comfort brands. After examining qualitative and quantitative measures, results showed that consumers were desirous of an important and expansive notion of brand comfort, defined here as: (1) the alleviation of physical and emotional stresses through brand consumption; combined with (2) the emergence of positive emotions of warmth, happiness, and love derived from brand associations often initiated by nostalgic memories of a romanticized past. Brand comfort stems from issues of physical comfort (i.e., how a certain brand fits, feels, smells, and tastes), combined with both cognitive components (driven by rational trust judgments of quality and reliability) and emotional components (driven by perceptions of affective trust, authenticity, nostalgia, and brand love). Recognizing that brand comfort is a concept that extends far beyond food choices, this research may lead to a wealth of new investigations in consumer psychology and marketing.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

K. Damon Aiken (Ph.D. University of Oregon), Professor of Marketing at California State University, Chico. His research interests include Old School fan values, compulsive consumption, and geographic branding. His most recent research has been published in the *Journal of Business Research*, the *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, and *Sport Marketing Quarterly*.

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