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### Synthesis Essay Prompt

Food marketing surrounds our day-to-day lives. Maybe it's a billboard advertisement on the side of the highway, a restaurant commercial on the television, or how the package of your favorite snack is designed. Its constant presence allows food advertising to influence our health and dietary decisions, impacting what we eat and how food plays a role in our lives.

Think about the food marketing industry and its effects on consumers. Carefully read each of the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then, synthesize information from at least four of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that takes a stance on whether food marketing is dangerous or beneficial to society.

Ensure that your argument is the focus of your essay. Use the sources provided for evidence to support your claims. Avoid merely abridging the sources. Clearly specify which ones you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

## Source List

Source A - (Ayer)

Source B - (Harris and Graff)

Source C - (American Psychological Association)

Source D - (logo collage)

Source E - (Produce Marketing Association)

Source F - (Bellanger, Caroline)

Source A

Ayer, Paula. *Foodprints*. Ellicott Station: Annick Press, 2015. Print.

## Source B

Harris, Jennifer L and Samantha K Graff. *Protecting Children From Harmful Food Marketing: Options for Local Government to Make a Difference*. 8 September 2011. 13 January 2020. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181192/>>.

*The following is an excerpt from an online article that discusses the harmful effects of food marketing on the youth population.*

Food companies expend these prolific marketing efforts almost exclusively to promote foods that children should consume only occasionally and in limited quantities. On television, 98% of food advertisements watched by children promote products high in fat, sugar, or sodium (11). In all forms of marketing targeted to children, calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods predominate (3). Breakfast cereals are most frequently marketed directly to children, representing 25% of all child-targeted food marketing in 2006 (2). Moreover, cereal companies choose to market products to children that contain 85% more sugar, 60% more sodium, and 65% less fiber than the products they market to adults (6). Restaurants are the second most frequent food category marketed to children (2). In 2007, fast-food restaurants represented 22% of all television food advertisements viewed by children, an increase of 12% from 2003 (5). Child-targeted spending to market beverages — including carbonated beverages, fruit drinks, and juices — sweets and baked goods, and snack foods totaled \$376 million in 2006 (2). In contrast, only 4% of all child-targeted food marketing (\$38 million) promoted fruits, vegetables, and dairy products.

## **Harmful Effects of Food Marketing**

Food companies have traditionally argued that their advertising simply encourages children to prefer one brand over another and thus does not contribute to childhood obesity (3). Most research on the effects of television food advertising to children confirms that it increases children's preferences for advertised brands, choices of specific foods after advertisement exposure, and requests to parents for advertised foods (12). More recent research has demonstrated, however, that food marketing also has potentially profound effects on children's overall diet and health. For example, television food advertising increases consumption of any available snack foods during and immediately after exposure, and exposure to commercial television is associated with increased overall calorie consumption, higher body mass index, and reduced fruit and vegetable consumption 5 years later (10). Research has also demonstrated an association between exposure to soft drink advertising and consumption of all sugar-sweetened beverages (13). Marketing can even affect how much children like the taste of advertised foods: preschoolers indicated that snack foods presented in packages with licensed characters tasted better than the same foods in plain packages (14).

## **Children's Unique Vulnerability**

[...] Because of its ubiquity, food marketing likely affects children's normative beliefs about the types of foods that are acceptable to eat regularly without adverse consequences, may affect how much children like the taste of advertised foods, and may automatically prime other unrelated goals and behaviors, including children's motivation to engage in unhealthy behaviors. Child advocates also question the ethics of marketing practices targeted to children

who cannot yet defend against their influence (3). Research consistently demonstrates that until the age of 8 years, most children do not possess the necessary cognitive skills to understand that advertising is not just another source of information and presents a biased point of view (12). [...]

Finally, marketing practices that persuade indirectly (eg, through logo placements, associations with popular characters and movies, and Internet games) are designed to create lifelong customers by imprinting brand meaning into the minds of young children (10). Before children know better, they have learned to love the products they encounter most frequently and associate with positive experiences.

## Source C

*The impact of food advertising on childhood obesity.* n.d. 13 January 2020.

<https://www.apa.org/topics/kids-media/food>.

*Below is part of a larger article that addresses the obesity issue linked to food marketing and how food companies reach children through the Internet.*

Obesity in childhood places children and youth at risk for becoming obese as adults and associated poor health such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some forms of cancer.

Prevention efforts must focus on reducing excess weight gain as children grow up.

[...]

- In very young children, research has found that for every one-hour increase in TV viewing per day, there are higher intakes of sugar-sweetened beverages, fast food, red and processed meat, and overall calories (48.7 kcal/day). Excess weight can be gained by the addition of only 150 calories a day.
- Other research has found that children who watch more than three hours of television a day are 50 per cent more likely to be obese than children who watch fewer than two hours.

[...]

- The food and beverage industry has resolved to self-regulate their marketing to children, but this has not resulted in significant improvement in the marketing of healthier food (i.e., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products, lean

meats, poultry, fish and beans) to children. Almost three out of every four foods advertised to children falls into the unhealthy categories that contribute to the obesity epidemic.

- Food ads on television make up 50 percent of all the ad time on children's shows. These ads are almost completely dominated by unhealthy food products (34 percent for candy and snacks, 28 percent for cereal, 10 percent for fast food, 4 percent for dairy products, 1 percent for fruit juices, and 0 percent for fruits or vegetables). Children are rarely exposed to public service announcements or advertising for healthier foods.

[...]

- The majority of food brands advertised to children on TV is also promoted on the internet and often includes online games which are heavily branded, i.e. "advergames".
- Advergames can provide a more highly involving and entertaining brand experience than what is possible with conventional media.
- Websites also contain other brand-related content such as television commercials, media tie-ins, promotions, viral marketing and website membership opportunities.
- Viral marketing is used to encourage children to talk to one another about a brand's website by emailing friends in the form of an e-greeting or invitation and inviting them to visit the site.

[...]



- The continual branding through these sites reinforces and amplifies the product message to children, who have a remarkable ability to recall content from ads to which they are exposed.

Source D

Shell, Nick. *Food Fast Companies Use Red and Yellow In Their Logos*. 19 December 2009. 14

January 2020.

<https://familyfriendlydaddyblog.com/2009/12/19/red-and-yella-will-kill-a-fella-2/>.

*This image depicts just a few of many fast-food companies whose logos are similar in color (a common food marketing strategy).*



Source E

*Join the Movement eat brighter!* n.d. 14 January 2020.

<https://www.pma.com/events/eat-brighter>.

*The following is an excerpt from the Produce Marketing Association's website. Members of their program, "eat brighter!", can use Sesame Street characters to promote healthy eating and healthy food products among children.*

**Not onboard yet?**

In-store or on-label, eat brighter!<sup>TM</sup> brings affordable, proven *Sesame Street* character marketing to boost produce sales. **Join now** to take advantage of [...] the excitement that character marketing can bring to your product. Nominal one-time fee for retailers, suppliers and promotional organizations.

**Boost your marketing power with *Sesame Street*—an internationally recognized and trusted brand!**

PMA, Partnership for a Healthier America and Sesame Workshop have joined forces to create the eat brighter! movement, an opportunity to include *Sesame Street* character images in your marketing plan and help to increase sales! We have collaborated to make eat brighter! affordable for all companies in the produce industry, regardless of size. Our overall goal is to encourage children ages 2–5 to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. With added consumption comes added sales—a win for our industry, your business and communities.

## Source F

Bellanger, Caroline. *Influencer marketing and the rise of healthy eating habits*. 28 August 2018.

14 January 2020.

<<https://www.upfluence.com/influencer-marketing/influencer-marketing-healthy-food-industry>>.

*Below is a piece from an online article about how social media influencers have not only inspired people to eat healthier, but have positively impacted the food marketing business.*

Social media is arguably the source of this new healthy food trend, and thus is one of the most efficient ways to market health foods, particularly via influencer marketing. Let's take a look at how it works.

What are the current food industry trends?

The rise in popularity of healthy foods has been rapid, and we have changing consumer value drivers to thank for this fundamental shift. This year, the global market for healthy foods is expected to reach **\$1 trillion**, and its swift growth shows no signs of slowing down. Those in the food industry are trying to stay ahead of the curve, with **30%** of all food companies now invested in healthy foods.

While some food industry giants struggle to catch up, consumers are opting for healthier options where they can find them – and they're willing to pay a premium. In a 2015 online Global Health & Wellness Survey by **Nielsen**, 88% of respondents stated they were willing to

pay more for healthier foods, with Millennials most likely to be happy to fork out for a healthier meal.

Among the most recent trends has been the push for organic produce and organic ingredients in packaged foods. According to [Food Navigator](#), 81% of American families purchase organic foods at least some of the time, and it's estimated that the segment will have grown 14% between 2013 and 2018. So-called 'clean eating' and the 'Paleo' diet are two other popular health trends that have recently emerged and look set to expand. These diets vary, but rely heavily on 'free-from' products, whether that's dairy-free, sugar-free or gluten-free. In the USA the total sales of gluten-free products will reach [\\$2.34 billion](#) in 2019, that's up 140% from 2014.

How does social media fit in?

[...]

By connecting people across the world, social media has created support and advice networks around eating well, making it easier for people to follow a healthier or more natural diet. Bloggers and social media users who recount their experiences of eating healthily have gained huge followings, like UK clean-eating blogger [@deliciouslyella](#) who has 1.3m Instagram followers, or Paleo food blogger [@thedomesticman](#) with nearly 47 000 followers. Underneath their social posts followers often ask questions, give and receive advice and generally support and encourage one another to keep up their healthy eating habits. This level of engagement is the cornerstone of influencer marketing.

What can an influencer do?

When a community grows around a particular user they establish credibility and the trust of their audience. Marketers who are promoting healthy foods can utilize this platform by approaching influencers to post about or review their products. With a simple sponsored social media post from the right person, brands and retailers can expand their reach and tap into a primed market – a demographic which is already known to be interested in healthy foods. It's targeted, precise, and doesn't disrupt the viewing experience like a traditional advert. Moreover, through social media, healthy eating has become correlated with an overall healthy and aspirational lifestyle, thus making the product even more desirable.