

MODERN LIFESTYLE AND DYNAMICS OF READY-TO-EAT FOOD CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of modern lifestyles on changes in ready-to-eat food consumption patterns and to identify factors affecting consumer decisions to choose these products. The research employs a qualitative literature study with a content analysis approach, drawing upon various relevant scholarly sources. The findings indicate that urbanization, shifts in family structure, time constraints, and advancements in food technology have driven a transformation in consumption patterns toward more convenient ready-to-eat products. Convenience emerges as the primary value sought by consumers, particularly among urban workers and younger generations. However, consumer decision-making is multidimensional, influenced by factors including price, taste, health awareness, social influence, marketing, availability, packaging, brand trust, emotional attachment, product innovation, and seasonal considerations. Consumers continuously negotiate between frequently conflicting factors, such as the desire for convenience versus healthiness, or affordability versus palatability. The implications of this study encourage manufacturers to innovate toward healthier products, marketers to develop more nuanced consumer segmentation strategies, and policymakers to formulate regulations supporting healthy consumption choices. Enhancing consumer awareness and nutritional literacy is also essential to enable more balanced decision-making.

Key Words : *Modern lifestyle, consumption patterns, ready-to-eat products, consumer behavior, purchase decisions, processed food, public health.*

INTRODUCTION

The lives of people in major urban centers have undergone extremely rapid changes in recent decades. Dense activities, limited time, and high work and social demands shape daily routines different from those of previous generations. People wake up early, immediately prepare to go to work or school, and return in the afternoon or evening in a state of fatigue. Amidst this busyness, time becomes an exceedingly valuable commodity. Every minute is accounted for, and efficiency becomes the keyword for navigating daily life. The impact of these lifestyle changes extends to various aspects of life, including the most fundamental, namely eating habits. Lifestyle reflects a person's values and identity in choosing products (Putri & Darmawan, 2025). Eating, which was once a moment for family gathering and lengthy cooking processes, must now be conducted quickly and practically.

The need to fulfill daily nutritional intake confronts the reality that available time is extremely limited (Troesch *et al.*, 2017).

It is in this context that ready-to-eat products find their momentum. Foods and beverages that can be consumed directly or require only brief heating become solutions to time constraints. The food industry responds to this need with great speed. Various product innovations are launched, from frozen foods merely requiring frying, instant noodles with diverse flavors, to packaged rice simply needing microwave heating. Innovation becomes an important factor in enhancing competitiveness (Mardikaningsih & Werdoyo, 2024). Packaging is designed to be practical, easily portable, and consumable anywhere. Advertisements for ready-to-eat products portray dynamic, active, hassle-free modern lifestyles. Consumers are presented with images that by

consuming these products, they can live more efficiently and remain productive. This message resonates strongly with the psychological condition of urban dwellers who continuously feel time scarcity. Consumer behavior plays an important role in determining industry development directions (Gani *et al.*, 2021). Ready-to-eat products are no longer merely food but symbols of the modern lifestyle itself (Jackson *et al.*, 2018).

This consumption pattern change does not occur evenly across all societal layers, yet its influence is strongly felt particularly among younger generations and urban workers (Sabrina, 2025). They represent the groups most intensely exposed to fast-paced lifestyles and most needing practical solutions for daily needs. Morning breakfast, once consisting of rice and side dishes, is now replaced by cereal or instant bread. Lunch, formerly prepared from home, is now substituted by ready-to-eat food purchased at canteens or delivered through food ordering services. Warm family dinners are sometimes replaced by pizza orders or instant noodles because all family members are too tired to cook. This shift occurs so gradually that it often goes unnoticed, until one day people realize that almost all food consumed during a week originates from ready-to-eat products.

The impacts of this consumption pattern change are extensive and complex. Change dynamics determine industry conditions (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). On one hand, the ready-to-eat food industry grows rapidly, creating employment and driving product innovation. Food delivery services become major businesses transforming retail and logistics landscapes (Contini *et al.*, 2016). Service quality plays a major role in shaping user loyalty (Rahayu & Darmawan, 2025). Consumers benefit from convenience and increasingly diverse choices. However on the other hand, concerns arise regarding health aspects. Ready-to-eat products often contain high levels of salt, sugar, and fat

as natural preservatives and flavor enhancers. Excessive long-term consumption can contribute to rising prevalence of obesity, diabetes, and other degenerative diseases. Awareness of this issue begins to grow, particularly among middle classes with better information access. Clear information can help reduce concerns (Cahyani & Darmawan, 2025). They begin to be more selective in choosing ready-to-eat products, seeking healthier options despite maintaining practicality (Sabrina, 2025).

This phenomenon creates interesting dynamics among modern lifestyle, consumption patterns, and health awareness. At one pole, lifestyle pressures continuously drive the need for practicality. At the other pole, health awareness drives the desire to consume healthier food. Ready-to-eat food producers respond by launching healthier variants, such as whole wheat instant noodles, low-sodium frozen foods, or packaging with more transparent nutritional information. Consumers themselves occupy positions continuously negotiating between these two interests. They desire practicality but also health. They desire efficiency but also quality food. This struggle shapes consumption patterns that are no longer linear but complex and sometimes full of contradictions. Understanding these dynamics becomes important for various parties, from academics seeking to understand consumer behavior, marketing practitioners aiming to design appropriate strategies, to policymakers wishing to protect public health.

Behind the rapid growth of the ready-to-eat food industry lies a fundamental problem regarding long-term impacts on public health (Permana *et al.*, 2023). Epidemiological data show increasing prevalence of various non-communicable diseases correlated with modern consumption patterns. Diabetes, hypertension, and obesity, once considered diseases of the elderly or wealthy, are now increasingly found in productive ages and even adolescents

(Ramadhani & Djamaluddin, 2024). Health experts point to dietary changes as one primary factor. Modern societies consume more processed foods, less fiber, and more sugar and saturated fats compared to previous generations (Megha & Almeida, 2025). Ready-to-eat products, with all their convenience, become significant contributors to this trend. However this causal relationship is not simple. Many other factors also play roles, such as reduced physical activity, chronic stress, and genetic factors. What is clear is that consumption patterns increasingly dependent on ready-to-eat products carry health consequences requiring vigilance (Imelia *et al.*, 2024). The second problem lies in the shift of social and cultural values accompanying this consumption pattern change. Family meals together, once moments for gathering and interaction, now occur increasingly rarely. Family members eat separately with their respective ready-to-eat meals, sometimes in front of televisions or while holding devices. Traditions of cooking together and passing down family recipes begin to fade. Many younger generations no longer possess basic cooking skills due to being accustomed to ready-to-eat foods. Knowledge about fresh ingredients, harvest seasons, and traditional preparation methods begins to disappear. The ready-to-eat food industry with its marketing power also shapes taste preferences tending toward uniformity, eroding local culinary diversity (Dhir & Singla, 2020). Individual preferences can differ depending on available choices (Margareta & Darmawan, 2025). At a broader level, dependence on imported foods or ingredients sourced from afar also raises food security issues and vulnerability to global price fluctuations. This shift occurs slowly, but its impacts on social and cultural structures are profound and difficult to reverse. Public awareness about the relationship between food and health is at its highest point in history. Information about nutrition, healthy diets, and dangers of processed foods spreads widely through

various media. Health and fitness influencers emerge with millions of followers. Labels such as organic, sugar-free, or low-carb become powerful marketing appeals. Yet simultaneously, consumption of ready-to-eat products continues to increase. Sales data for the processed food and beverage industry show steady growth annually. This paradox demonstrates that the relationship between awareness and behavior is not linear. People know fresh food is healthier, yet they still purchase ready-to-eat products for practical reasons. People understand that cooking at home ensures better hygiene, yet they still order food because they are tired after work. Understanding the dynamics among knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to ready-to-eat food consumption becomes critically important for designing effective interventions, both at individual and public policy levels.

Furthermore, the ready-to-eat food industry itself is undergoing major transformation. Food technology enables production of foods with taste, texture, and appearance increasingly approaching fresh food (Wiles, 2022). Packaging innovations extend shelf life without excessive preservatives. Delivery services make access to various ready-to-eat foods easier, even in previously hard-to-reach areas. On the other hand, the slow food movement emerges, actually encouraging people to return to fresh ingredients and traditional cooking processes. The collision between these two major currents creates a highly dynamic consumption landscape full of contradictions. Ready-to-eat food producers must continuously adapt to increasingly critical consumer demands, while consumers themselves must continuously navigate choices amidst abundant information and temptations (Amorim *et al.*, 2022). Examination of changes in ready-to-eat product consumption patterns in relation to modern lifestyles becomes increasingly relevant for understanding future societal

development directions and formulating appropriate policy responses.

This study aims to analyze in depth how modern lifestyles have transformed ready-to-eat product consumption patterns among urban populations, and to identify factors influencing consumer decisions to choose such products. Through comprehensive literature review, this writing is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of consumer behavior scholarship and sociology of consumption, particularly in understanding dynamics among lifestyle demands, food preferences, and health awareness. Practically, the findings of this study can serve as foundations for food producers to design products more aligned with modern consumer needs and values, and for policymakers to formulate more effective nutrition education programs. Understanding of factors driving ready-to-eat product consumption, and how consumers negotiate between practicality and health, will assist various parties in making better decisions to respond to changing societal consumption patterns.

RESEARCH METHOD

This writing employs a qualitative literature study approach as the primary method for addressing the established research questions. This method was selected because it enables the author to conduct systematic theoretical exploration of the concepts of modern lifestyle, consumption patterns, and ready-to-eat products that have developed in sociology, consumer behavior, and food studies literature over several decades. As articulated by Creswell (2009), qualitative research constitutes an investigative process that understands social problems based on constructing comprehensive pictures formed through words. Literature study serves as a means to understand relationships between lifestyle changes and consumption pattern shifts through exploration of knowledge documented across various scientific publications.

This process does not involve primary data collection in the field but rather relies on literature richness to construct arguments and synthesize knowledge. Beins (2017) adds that in qualitative research, the researcher functions as a key instrument reconstructing reality through interpretation of various sources, thereby generating rich and contextual understanding.

The implementation of this literature study follows systematic steps as recommended in library research methodology. The process commences with topic identification and sharp research problem formulation, followed by literature searching from trusted academic databases using relevant keywords such as modern lifestyle, consumption patterns, ready-to-eat products, processed foods, food consumer behavior, and social change. After literature collection, critical evaluation of each source relevance and credibility is conducted. The subsequent stage involves analysis and synthesis. In analyzing library data, the author employs a qualitative content analysis approach as elaborated by Scheurich (2014), wherein texts from various sources are treated as data containing meanings that must be systematically revealed through replicable procedures. The author reads, records, categorizes, and interprets key arguments from each literature source to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among concepts. The synthesis process is conducted by combining findings from various sources to construct a more comprehensive new understanding regarding how modern lifestyles shape changes in ready-to-eat product consumption patterns and factors influencing consumer decisions to choose such products. Through this approach, the writing not merely summarizes expert opinions but constructs a conceptual framework capable of explaining the complex dynamics central to this investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Modern Lifestyle and Shifts in Ready-to-Eat Product Consumption Patterns.

Lifestyle refers to individual behavior patterns reflecting how people conduct their daily lives, including activities, interests, values, opinions, and preferences that influence their decisions and social interactions. Lifestyle is not merely observable activities but also encompasses mindsets, values, and priorities that shape consumer behavior and life choices. This concept is important in understanding consumer behavior, because lifestyle determines how individuals select products, services, and experiences aligned with their identity and needs.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), lifestyle is an individual’s way of living reflected through activities, interests, and opinions that influence consumer behavior. Lifestyle reflects the combination of personal values, consumption patterns, and activity choices distinguishing one individual or group from another. A foundational theory elucidating the measurement indicators of lifestyle originates from the AIO (Activities, Interests, Opinions) approach in consumer behavior developed by Wells, Burnett, and Loud (2000). According to AIO theory, lifestyle constitutes an individual’s life pattern reflected through activities performed, interests held, and opinions or views regarding various life aspects. Lifestyle not only describes daily consumer behavior but also the values, preferences, and priorities influencing purchase decisions.

Measurement indicators of lifestyle based on AIO theory can be observed through several aspects. The first is Activities, encompassing various individual activities in daily life, such as hobbies, work, social activities, and leisure time utilization. The second is Interests, encompassing consumer interests and attractions toward particular matters, for instance sports, arts, technology, or health. The third is

Opinions, encompassing individual views, beliefs, and attitudes toward social issues, politics, products, or services. By measuring these three indicators, researchers and marketing practitioners can understand consumer lifestyle patterns and their relationship with purchasing behavior and preferences.

Table 1. Indicators Of Lifestyle Based On Aio Theory

| No | Lifestyle Indicator | Description |
|----|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Activities | Daily activities of individuals, including hobbies, work, social interactions, and leisure pursuits that reflect behavioral patterns. |
| 2 | Interests | Areas of personal interest or preferences such as sports, arts, technology, or health that influence choices and priorities. |
| 3 | Opinions | Individual beliefs, views, and attitudes toward social, political, or product-related issues that shape perceptions and decisions. |

Modern lifestyles oriented toward time efficiency have fundamentally transformed how society perceives food. Food is no longer merely a source of nutrition or a means for family gathering but also a commodity that must satisfy demands for speed and convenience (Contini *et al.*, 2016). Urban populations live in continuously accelerating rhythms. Leisure time grows increasingly scarce, while work demands and social activities multiply. In this situation, cooking activities requiring hours become a luxury that not everyone can afford. Ready-to-eat products offer solutions by drastically reducing preparation and processing time. A package of instant noodles is ready in three minutes. A portion of frozen fried rice merely requires microwave heating. A piece of fried chicken is simply taken from the display case. This speed becomes the primary selling point

difficult for fresh food requiring cleaning, cutting, and cooking from scratch to match (Jackson *et al.*, 2018). Urbanization and changes in family structure also contribute to this consumption pattern shift (Schubert *et al.*, 2010). Major cities are filled with migrants living alone or in small families far from parents and relatives. They no longer have easy access to home-cooked meals prepared by parents. They also lack adequate cooking knowledge or skills due to being accustomed to being served. In this situation, ready-to-eat products become saviors. Singles living in small apartments with minimal kitchens depend heavily on frozen foods merely requiring heating. Young families with both parents working rely on ready-to-eat foods for dinner after returning home exhausted. Shrinking living spaces also limit room for storing fresh ingredients in large quantities, while freezers for storing frozen foods actually grow larger and become standard in many urban households.

Developments in preservation and packaging technology have eliminated many barriers to ready-to-eat product consumption (Contini *et al.*, 2016). Previously, ready-to-eat foods were associated with taste inferior to fresh food and altered textures after preservation processes. Currently, rapid freezing technology, vacuum packaging, and more sophisticated food additive applications are capable of preserving taste and texture far better. Modern ready-to-eat products are difficult to distinguish from fresh cooking in terms of flavor. Packaging is also designed to be increasingly practical, with easy-open features, microwave-safe materials, and even functionality as serving dishes. These innovations eliminate reasons for consumers to choose cooking from scratch. When ready-to-eat foods taste almost as good as home cooking, and are far more practical, choices become increasingly straightforward. Technology has successfully bridged the quality gap that was once the main weakness of ready-to-eat products.

Knowledge management implementation enhances professional commitment, which impacts product and organizational quality (Eddine *et al.*, 2023).

The role of media and advertising in shaping perceptions about ready-to-eat foods cannot be ignored (Rosli & Sahak, 2024). Advertisements for ready-to-eat products over many years have built associations between their products and ideal modern lifestyles. Happy families enjoying pizza together, young professionals consuming instant noodles amidst busy schedules, modern mothers proudly serving nuggets to their children. These images are continuously broadcast, forming new social norms about what is reasonable and normal in food consumption. Ready-to-eat foods are no longer positioned as emergency options but as lifestyle choices equivalent to home cooking. Television cooking shows also contribute to shaping preferences by featuring quick recipes using various instant products as base ingredients. The message is clear: cooking is easy and fast, as long as you use our products. Normalization of ready-to-eat food consumption through media is highly effective in transforming public perceptions.

This consumption pattern change is also reflected in the proliferation of ready-to-eat food outlets in various urban corners (Mathew & Sharma, 2023). Not only foreign fast-food restaurants but also local outlets offering various ready-to-eat foods. Coffee shops also selling cakes and sandwiches, food stalls providing packaged rice, street vendors with mobile carts. All offer the same convenience: food ready within minutes without the hassle of cooking. Food delivery applications further expand this access. Someone can order food from dozens of different restaurants without leaving home or office. This extraordinary convenience shapes new habits. People increasingly rarely plan menus and shop for ingredients, because whenever hungry they simply open applications and food will arrive. Consumption

patterns become more impulsive and less planned, with implications for household budgets and nutritional quality (Bidar & Farkhari, 2022).

The impact of this shift on traditional retail sectors is also significant (Bidar & Farkhari, 2022). Traditional markets selling fresh ingredients experience declining visitor numbers, particularly among younger generations. They prefer shopping at supermarkets or minimarkets offering more ready-to-eat products and practical packaging. Vegetable, fish, and meat vendors in traditional markets mostly serve older generation consumers. Younger generations visiting traditional markets can be counted on fingers. This shift affects overall food supply chains. Farmers and fishermen must adapt to changing demand, while food processing industries grow rapidly. Food economies shift from fresh-ingredient-dominated models to processed-product-dominated models. These structural changes have long-term consequences not yet fully understood.

The influence of modern lifestyles on consumption patterns is also evident in changing meal times (Ganesha & Nagaraju, 2025). Traditional societies have relatively fixed meal times: morning, afternoon, and evening. Modern societies tend to eat whenever opportunities and needs arise. Ready-to-eat products respond by providing foods consumable anytime, anywhere. Instant noodles become midnight snacks for overtime workers. Cereal becomes quick breakfast before leaving for work. Sandwiches become lunch at work desks without needing to go to canteens. Snacking patterns also increase because packaged snacks are available everywhere. This fragmentation of meal times has implications for nutritional intake and body metabolism that are not always positive (Febriana *et al.*, 2024). Bodies that should have rest periods for digestion instead continuously receive intake throughout the day.

Globalization and cultural exchange also influence the diversity of available ready-to-eat products. Societies are no longer

limited to local foods but can enjoy foods from various parts of the world in ready-to-eat forms. Pizza, sushi, tacos, packaged rendang, all can be found in supermarkets. This diversity enriches consumer choices but also brings consequences for tastes and preferences. Younger generations grow up with more cosmopolitan tastes, accustomed to various flavors from different cultures. On one hand this is positive for broadening horizons, on the other hand it may shift appreciation for simpler local cuisine. Global ready-to-eat food industries with their capital and marketing power are capable of shaping mass taste preferences, creating taste standardization transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

Economic factors also play important roles in this consumption pattern shift. In many cases, ready-to-eat products can be cheaper than buying fresh ingredients and cooking from scratch, especially when accounting for time and effort (Dhir & Singla, 2020). A pack of instant noodles costing several thousand rupiah can already satisfy hunger, far cheaper than a portion of rice with side dishes. For population groups with limited budgets, this economic consideration is decisive. Ready-to-eat products become rational choices for meeting caloric needs with minimal cost. Ironically, these cheapest products are often also the lowest in nutritional value. Urban poor populations become trapped in consumption patterns that are practical and cheap but unhealthy. Meanwhile, upper-middle groups have access to premium healthier ready-to-eat products that are far more expensive. This gap creates consumption polarization reflecting broader social inequalities.

Changes in gender roles within households also contribute to increased ready-to-eat product consumption (Pandey, 2023). Traditionally, cooking responsibilities belonged to women. However with increasing numbers of women working outside the home, time and energy for cooking become extremely limited. Husbands also

generally lack adequate cooking skills to take over this task. The solution is reliance on ready-to-eat foods. Dual-worker families tend to have higher ready-to-eat food consumption compared to single-earner families. This shift is actually positive in terms of gender equality, but its consequences for family eating patterns need management. Instead of burdening women with double workloads, modern families choose practical solutions by purchasing prepared food. This demonstrates that consumption pattern changes cannot be separated from broader social structural changes (Varma, 2020).

Children and adolescents become the groups most vulnerable to this consumption pattern change (Kahma *et al.*, 2016). Accustomed to ready-to-eat foods since childhood, they develop taste preferences tending toward foods high in sugar, salt, and fat. Simpler-tasting home-cooked meals may seem bland to them. Busy parents often feel guilty and compensate by buying children's favorite foods, which are typically ready-to-eat products. Schools also contribute with canteens selling various packaged foods and beverages. Consumption patterns formed from early ages are difficult to change later. Generations growing up in the heyday of ready-to-eat foods will carry these habits into adulthood, strengthening market demand for such products. This cycle continues turning, increasingly solidifying the position of ready-to-eat foods as inseparable parts of modern lifestyles.

The shift in ready-to-eat product consumption patterns reflects societal adaptation to contemporary demands (Nakano & Washizu, 2020). Modern lifestyles with all their complexities have created needs that previously did not exist. Ready-to-eat products fulfill these needs highly effectively. Yet like all adaptations, there are always consequences requiring management. Convenience and speed are obtained at certain costs, whether in terms of individual health, social structural changes, or culinary cultural diversity.

Societies continuously grapple with questions about balance. How to enjoy convenience without sacrificing health? How to maintain culinary traditions amidst globalization of food? How to ensure children grow up with healthy eating patterns despite busy working parents? These questions have no easy answers, but awareness of their complexity is the first step toward better solutions.

Determinant Factors in Consumer Decisions to Choose Ready-to-Eat Products

Consumer decisions to choose ready-to-eat products are never based on single considerations alone. They result from complex interactions among various mutually influencing factors (Contini *et al.*, 2016). The first and most dominant factor is practicality. Modern consumers live under increasingly intense time pressures (Varma, 2020). They must divide attention among work, family, social obligations, and personal needs. In this situation, every minute is extremely valuable. Ready-to-eat products offer solutions by eliminating time-consuming stages in food provision. No need to shop for ingredients, no need to clean, cut, cook, and clean equipment afterward. All these stages have been performed by producers, consumers simply enjoy the final results. For a working mother returning home at seven in the evening with already hungry children, the value of this practicality is immeasurable. She is willing to pay more as long as she can serve food within minutes.

Price remains an important consideration, particularly for consumers with limited budgets (Rathidevi, 2023). Ready-to-eat products exist at various price levels, from extremely cheap to premium. Instant noodles become the primary choice for students, laborers, and low-income groups due to their highly affordable prices. On the other hand, organic or healthy premium ready-to-eat foods are purchased by upper-middle consumers able to pay more for quality. What is interesting is the trade-off between price and time. Consumers with

abundant time but limited money tend to choose cooking from scratch. Conversely, consumers with sufficient money but limited time prefer ready-to-eat products even if more expensive. In economics, this is termed the opportunity cost of time. The higher someone's time value, the greater their willingness to pay for practicality. This phenomenon explains why young professionals with high incomes become the primary market for various premium ready-to-eat products (Barad, 2024).

Taste becomes a key factor determining whether consumers will repurchase a product (Rosli & Sahak, 2024). Regardless of how practical the packaging may be, if the taste is unsatisfactory, consumers will not return. Ready-to-eat food producers conduct extensive research to create flavors preferred by the market. They test various seasoning combinations, levels of sweetness, saltiness, and spiciness to find the most acceptable formulas. Taste must also remain consistent over time. Consumers purchasing the same product at different times must experience identical taste experiences. Customer satisfaction is influenced by product usage experiences (Safira *et al.*, 2025). This consistency poses distinct challenges because natural raw materials can vary. The use of flavorings and food stabilizers becomes a solution for ensuring taste consistency. In the digital era, taste reviews on social media significantly influence new consumer decisions. Products that go viral due to unique or delicious flavors can suddenly become bestsellers even without massive advertising. Review transparency helps consumers make more rational choices (Riski & Darmawan, 2025).

Health awareness has become an increasingly important factor in recent years (Bidar & Farkhari, 2022). Consumers no longer consider only taste and price but also nutritional value and long-term health impacts. They read packaging labels, examining sugar, salt, fat content, and other additives. Products with healthy claims such as low sugar,

preservative-free, or organic are increasingly in demand. Individual interest can be influenced by received information (Nahar *et al.*, 2025). However this awareness often conflicts with taste preferences and practicality. Healthy foods tend to be more expensive, spoil more quickly, and sometimes taste less satisfying compared to conventional products. Consumers continuously negotiate between the desire to be healthy and the temptation for practicality and deliciousness. This pattern creates clear market segmentation. There are consumers consistently choosing healthy options despite greater sacrifices. There are those sometimes choosing healthy, sometimes cheating. There are also those completely unconcerned as long as taste is good and price is low (Kaakandikar *et al.*, 2024).

Social factors and environmental influences also play significant roles (Satnam *et al.*, 2023). Humans are social creatures tending to imitate behaviors of those around them. If everyone in an office eats instant noodles for breakfast, a new employee will find it normal to do the same. If friends frequently hang out at particular ready-to-eat food outlets, someone will join to maintain social relationships. Families also shape consumption habits from early ages. Children raised being frequently given ready-to-eat foods will consider this normal and continue the habit into adulthood. Conversely, families accustomed to cooking at home and rarely buying prepared food will pass down similar habits. This social influence operates subtly yet extremely powerfully in shaping long-term preferences. It creates consumption norms transmitted from one generation to the next.

Advertising and marketing aggressively shape consumer perceptions and desires toward ready-to-eat products (Darpito & Muttaqin, 2025). The food industry spends billions of rupiah annually marketing their products. Television advertisements, social media, roadside banners, free samples in supermarkets. Social media utilization can enhance

brand awareness among potential customers (Infante & Mardikaningsih, 2022). All are designed to create awareness, build positive associations, and ultimately drive purchases. Modern marketing strategies employ highly personalized approaches. Consumer data is collected and analyzed to display relevant advertisements at appropriate times. Someone searching for recipes on the internet might see instant seasoning advertisements. Young mothers following parenting accounts are presented with ready-to-eat baby food advertisements. Marketing is no longer merely conveying messages but creating ecosystems where products feel like natural solutions to perceived consumer needs. The effectiveness of this marketing in shaping consumer decisions cannot be underestimated.

Product availability and accessibility also determine consumer choices (Septiana *et al.*, 2024). Companies need to ensure the availability of quality products as a form of attention to consumer interests (Ali *et al.*, 2024). Marketing activities encompass efforts to guarantee that the value offered to customers delivers clear benefits (Alamin *et al.*, 2021). Ready-to-eat products are available everywhere: supermarkets, minimarkets, small shops, even at stations and bus stops. No need to go far to obtain them. Delivery services further expand this access. With a few clicks on mobile phones, food can be delivered to homes or offices within minutes. 24-hour availability also adds value. When hungry in the middle of the night and all restaurants are closed, minimarkets selling instant noodles and frozen foods become saviors. This ease of access creates impulsive habits. People buy ready-to-eat foods not because they have planned but because products are right before their eyes when needed. Producers understand this and strive to place their products at as many consumer touchpoints as possible.

Attractive and informative packaging also influences purchase decisions, particularly for new products (Permana *et al.*, 2023). On supermarket shelves

filled with hundreds of choices, packaging determines whether consumers will stop and notice a product. Bright colors, appetizing food images, and prominent health claim information are used to attract attention. Packaging must also be functional, easy to open, and enable practical product consumption. Innovations such as microwave-safe packaging or packaging with zippers for storing remaining product add value for consumers. In an era where consumers also consider environmental impacts, environmentally friendly packaging is beginning to become a differentiating factor. Products with biodegradable or recyclable packaging attract environmentally conscious consumer segments. Packaging is no longer merely a container but part of the product evaluated by consumers.

Brand trust becomes an important factor, especially for new products (Tobing *et al.*, 2024). Consumers tend to choose familiar, trusted brands rather than trying unknown new brands. This trust is built through past experiences, market reputation, and consistent quality assurance. Major brands with long histories have advantages in this regard. They can launch new products and immediately gain consumer attention due to their established names. Conversely, new brands must work extra hard to build trust, for instance through free samples, money-back guarantees, or endorsements from trusted figures. In the social media era, reviews from other consumers also become sources of trust. Products with thousands of positive reviews are more easily trusted than products without reviews, even if the brand is not famous. This online reputation becomes a valuable asset significantly influencing consumer decisions.

Emotional factors also cannot be ignored in ready-to-eat product selection decisions (Ganai *et al.*, 2019). Because emotional factors can influence consumer decisions (Auliyah & Darmawan, 2025). Food is often associated with memories, comfort, and particular feelings. Certain instant

noodles might remind one of struggling college days. Certain chocolates might be associated with gifts from loved ones. Certain breads might become faithful companions during all-night study sessions. Smart producers build emotional narratives around their products. Advertisements feature not only products but heart-touching stories about family, friendship, or struggles. Consumers purchase more than just food; they purchase feelings and memories associated with it. Personal conditions depend on psychological and emotional factors (Irfan & Darmawan, 2021). This emotional bond creates strong loyalty difficult for competitors to break. Product efficiency and competitiveness are achieved through comprehensive competency-based organizational systems (Darmawan, 2024). Consumers will remain loyal to certain brands even when cheaper or more practical alternatives exist, because the brand has become part of their identity and life history.

Product innovation continuously drives changes in consumer preferences (Noor & Fuzi, 2024). Producers never stop creating new variants, new flavors, new packaging to attract consumer interest. Unique flavors such as soto-flavored instant noodles, rendang, or even fusion flavors emerge successively. Limited editions or collaborations with other brands create sensations and encourage consumers to try before supplies run out. Innovation also touches health aspects, such as shirataki instant noodles, high-fiber cereals, or baked rather than fried snacks. Consumers bored with the same old products continuously seek novelty. Producers ceasing innovation will be abandoned by consumers hungry for new experiences. Innovation becomes the growth engine for the ready-to-eat food industry while also being a factor continuously transforming the landscape of choices available to consumers.

Seasonal factors and special moments also influence consumer decisions (Yoga & Khoirunnisa, 2025). Individual decisions are often influenced by

previous experiences (Fahriza & Darmawan, 2025). Approaching Eid al-Fitr, demand for cookies and packaged syrups drastically increases. During rainy seasons, instant noodles and warm ready-to-eat foods sell well. Approaching New Year, party snacks experience sales spikes. Producers capitalize on these moments with special campaigns, special packaging, or limited edition products. Consumers respond by purchasing more than usual. This pattern indicates that ready-to-eat product consumption decisions are not entirely rational and stable but are influenced by temporal contexts. Marketers understanding these cycles can manage inventory and promotions more effectively. Consumers themselves may not realize how greatly seasons and moments influence their shopping patterns.

Education and nutritional knowledge become increasingly important factors as health awareness rises (Ghianti & Sukmono, 2023). Consumers with higher education and better information access tend to be more critical in choosing ready-to-eat products. They are not easily influenced by advertisements but read research, follow health accounts, and discuss with experts before deciding. They might avoid products with certain additives, choose organic options, or limit ready-to-eat food consumption frequency. Conversely, consumers with limited education and information access are more easily influenced by marketing claims and less able to distinguish truly healthy products from mere image-building. Clear information can reduce risk perception (Hidayat & Darmawan, 2025). This gap creates widening health inequalities. Highly educated groups can maintain health through better consumption choices, while less educated groups become primary targets for cheap yet low-nutrition products.

Consumer decisions to choose ready-to-eat products result from complex negotiations among various sometimes conflicting factors (Darpito & Muttaqin, 2025). Consumers desire practicality *yet also* health. Desire low prices *yet also*

good taste. Desire to follow trends *yet also* remain loyal to favorite brands. Desire to satisfy immediate cravings *yet also* consider long-term impacts. In this negotiation, no perfect choices exist. Consumers always compromise, prioritizing certain factors and sacrificing others depending on situations and conditions. Producers understanding this complexity can design products and marketing strategies more aligned with real consumer needs. They sell not merely products but solutions to dilemmas faced by modern consumers. Deep understanding of these decision determinants becomes key to surviving and thriving in increasingly competitive ready-to-eat food markets.

Thus, this study enriches understanding of how macro factors such as urbanization and social structural changes impact micro-level daily consumption decisions. Consumer decision-making models need to accommodate the complexity of interactions between rational factors such as price and emotional factors such as memories and identity. Furthermore, the concept of trade-offs in decision-making requires greater attention because consumers rarely obtain everything they desire in a single product. Practically, implications for ready-to-eat food producers include the necessity of continuous innovation focusing not only on taste and packaging but also on health and sustainability aspects. Producers capable of offering practical, delicious, and healthy products will possess significant competitive advantages. For marketers, understanding consumer segmentation based on their priorities becomes key to designing appropriate communication. Good communication can enhance organizational effectiveness (Darmawan, 2013). For policymakers, implications of this study include the need for comprehensive approaches to address negative impacts of ready-to-eat product consumption. Nutritional education alone is insufficient without accompanying policies making healthy choices easier and more affordable.

Regulations on nutritional labeling, restrictions on unhealthy product advertising to children, and incentives for healthy products are several instruments that can be considered.

CONCLUSION

This writing has examined in depth how modern lifestyles shape changes in ready-to-eat product consumption patterns and factors influencing consumer decisions to choose such products. From the analysis conducted, it becomes clearly evident that consumption pattern shifts do not occur by chance but rather constitute adaptive societal responses to increasingly complex contemporary demands. Urbanization, family structure changes, time pressures, and food technology developments synergize to create conditions highly supportive of ready-to-eat product consumption growth. Urban populations, particularly younger generations and workers, make ready-to-eat products solutions to limited time and energy for cooking. Practicality becomes the primary value sought, overriding other considerations in many situations. Yet consumer decisions are not that simple. They result from complex negotiations among various mutually influencing factors, including price, taste, health awareness, social influences, marketing, availability, packaging, brand trust, emotional bonds, product innovation, and seasonal factors. Consumers continuously grapple with dilemmas between desires for practicality, health, economy, and taste satisfaction. In this negotiation, no perfect choices exist. Consumers always compromise, prioritizing certain factors and sacrificing others depending on situations and conditions. Producers understanding this complexity can design products and marketing strategies more aligned with real consumer needs, while consumers themselves are expected to make more conscious choices by considering various aspects in balanced ways.

Based on the overall discussion, several suggestions can be offered for relevant parties. For ready-to-eat food producers, it is recommended to continuously innovate to create healthier products without sacrificing taste and practicality. Gradual reduction of sugar, salt, and fat content, use of natural ingredients, and fortification with vitamins and minerals can constitute positive steps. Nutritional information transparency also needs enhancement so consumers can make more conscious choices. For marketers, it is recommended not to rely solely on conventional tactics such as massive advertising but also to build dialogue with consumers through social media and communities. Listening to consumer complaints and feedback and responding promptly will build long-term loyalty. For consumers, it is recommended to be more conscious and critical in choosing ready-to-eat products. Reading nutritional labels, limiting consumption frequency, and combining with fresh foods are simple steps that can be taken. Teaching children about the importance of healthy food also constitutes an extremely valuable long-term investment. For policymakers, it is recommended to formulate regulations encouraging healthy product innovation while protecting consumers from misleading marketing practices. Collaboration with industry, academics, and consumer organizations needs strengthening to create better food ecosystems. For future researchers, this study opens opportunities for further exploration using quantitative methods to measure the strength of each factor's influence on consumer decisions. Cross-generational and cross-cultural research would also prove valuable for understanding how these factors vary across different population groups. Thus, understanding of ready-to-eat product consumption dynamics will continue to develop and provide broader benefits for all parties.

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