

## Driving Factors of Ready-to-Eat Foods



Ready-to-eat (RTE) foods or synonymously known as ready meals, packed foods or instant ready meals are foods that require little or no preparation<sup>1</sup>. They include ready-to-eat rice or noodles, cooked meats and poultry, cold vegetable dishes with dressings and sauces which are very popular as they are intended for direct consumption<sup>8</sup>.

Rapid urbanization, lack of cooking time and changes in consumers' lifestyles are the factors that fuel the RTE food market growth. Changes in consumers' perceptions and buying values have influenced consumer behaviour related to dietary life, such as food selection and consumption<sup>4</sup>. Individuals' food choices are based on their life experiences that influence their food selection decision such as the desire for healthy foods<sup>4</sup>. Studies have also shown that consumers are concerned about food safety due to the growing awareness of the relationship between diet and health<sup>3</sup>. Quality of food and taste sensation also become essential factors for consumers before making any purchasing decisions<sup>5</sup>.

According to a consumer survey, 52% of people consume RTE food two to four times a week<sup>1</sup>. The frequency of consuming RTE food has been rising with the relative importance of its convenience and time-saving factors<sup>6</sup>. Younger generations are the most convenience-driven and prefer food that is easy to buy, preserve, prepare and cook<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, as a reaction to such demand, the food industry has expanded its ready meal options to a variety of flavours, textures and appearances<sup>1,7</sup>.

Nowadays, innovations in product offerings of ready-to-eat foods are available in frozen form. Thus, it will make the durability and availability of RTE products last longer<sup>5</sup>. Advancement in areas of packaging technology and attractive packaging design are also the most notable factors contributing to a positive buying experience of ready-to-eat foods<sup>5</sup>.

## **Conclusion,**

In conclusion, changes in lifestyles as well as increasing demand for convenience and healthy food are the two major driving factors for the ready-to-eat food sector to have significant growth in many years ahead.

## References

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