

Factors Influencing Purchase Intention of Ready-To-Cook Food Products in Chennai City

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ABSTRACT

Purchase intention refers to a customer's willingness to acquire a product or service, marking the initial phase of the decision-making process. Consumer behaviour is a dynamic and complex field within marketing studies, centered on human activities related to the purchasing, consuming, and utilizing of products and services. Grasping consumer behaviour presents a significant challenge, as it encompasses the psychological processes individuals undergo when identifying needs, seeking solutions, making purchasing decisions, interpreting information, planning, and executing those plans through comparison shopping or actual purchases. This intent is a strong predictor of purchasing behaviour and can be swayed by various factors, such as personal needs, preferences, and external influences like advertising and recommendations from peers. In India, attributes such as product cleanliness, absence of pesticides, freshness, health benefits, and a tidy sales environment are highly valued by consumers when purchasing food products. Other critical factors include value for money, overall quality, taste, the availability of diverse products in one location, seasonality, flavour, attractive product displays, proximity, and a pleasant shopping atmosphere. Conversely, promotional offers tend to have minimal influence on food product sales, and consumers generally do not favour food products from other countries when making purchasing decisions.

Key Words: Purchase Intention, Taste Perception, Brand Awareness, Convenience Foods

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, ready-to-cook food products are essential in meeting the demands of contemporary consumers. RTC foods have transformed the lifestyles of both urban and rural communities through mass communication and advertising. Seizing this opportunity, businesses from small manufacturers to multinational corporations have begun to innovate and market easy-to-cook food items. However, the consumption of food outside the home is on the rise due to urbanization, the breakdown of traditional joint family structures, a desire for quality and time efficiency, which leads to a greater need for convenience, an increasing number of working women, rising per capita income, evolving lifestyles, and the growing affluence of the middle-income group, all of which have altered food habits. The shifts affecting food retailing, along with changes in consumer demographics and preferences, have prompted consumers to seek greater convenience, higher quality, more variety, improved nutrition, and enhanced services while still being price-conscious. Retailers have explored new selling methods, highlighting the need to identify the factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions for RTC food products.

Ready-to-cook products are foods that have been processed or prepared to require minimal additional effort, making them a convenient option. These products are often referred to as convenience foods. Ready-to-cook food products entered the market only a few years ago and are currently marketed through general retail stores, department stores, and supermarkets. The demand for ready-to-cook food is rising due to several factors, such as the easy availability, cultural acceptance, nutritional value, minimal processing, and urbanization of domestic labour, lack of time, convenience, increased per capita income, and affordability for the middle class (Temgire et al. 2021).

A ready-to-cook (RTC) meal refers to food that is partially prepared and necessitates the addition of several ingredients before cooking. The Indian processed food market differentiates between ready-to-eat (RTE) food, which only requires heating before serving, and ready-to-cook (RTC) food, which needs various ingredients added prior to cooking. A ready-to-cook (RTC) meal fulfills certain criteria, including convenience, nutritional adequacy, and proper

storage. Since the advent of reporting technology, the sales of ready-to-cook (RTC) meal products have surged attributed to enhanced packaging, taste, and flavor options.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Agarwalm (2015) This research seeks to explore how prepared the market and consumers are to embrace Ready to Cook / Eat food products via a multi-level marketing channel, allowing individuals to earn commissions as both salespeople and buyers. Consequently, it is recommended that future researchers further investigate the proposed hypotheses. The study outlines the potential for creating a robust distribution channel for both established and newly launched brands of Ready to Cook / Eat food products through multi-level marketing. This research addresses a recognized need to evaluate the effectiveness of utilizing a multi-level marketing channel for Ready to Cook / Eat food products.

Alam (2016) states that consumer behaviour is an exciting and complex field in marketing studies, as it revolves around how people buy, use, and consume products and services. Grasping consumer behaviour presents a significant challenge. It encompasses the mental processes that consumers experience when they identify their needs, seek solutions, make purchasing choices, interpret information, plan, and execute those plans through comparison shopping or by buying a product. The low cost of preparing food at home and varying tastes were the main reasons for not consuming certain products, while the convenience and time-saving aspects of Instant Food Products drove their consumption. Retail stores serve as the primary source of information and purchasing for Instant Food Products.

According to Udaiyar (2018), the evolving trends in food consumption and the advantages associated with Ready-to-Cook food have led to a notable increase in the RTC market. This study aimed to explore the reasons behind the growing appeal of Ready-to-Cook food among women. It specifically examines the perceptions of both working and non-working women regarding Ready-to-Cook food and how various factors influence their purchasing intentions. To achieve a focused understanding of the findings, the research was limited to branded Ready-to-Cook products and targeted consumers who were knowledgeable about RTC food items. The results indicate that 'Ease of Use' and 'Time Savings' are the two primary factors influencing both current and potential buyers of RTC food.

Islam (2019) Recently in Bangladesh, the frozen and ready-to-cook food industry is expanding rapidly because city residents have a high demand for these products. These processed frozen and ready-to-cook items mainly include fruits and vegetables, fish and meat products, as well as wheat-based foods, among others. The findings indicate that the factors affecting consumers' perceptions of frozen and ready-to-cook food products include time-saving, being helpful and economical, low prices, variety, health benefits, brand image and quality, availability of frozen foods, taste, and appealing packaging. The relationships between individual factors reveal that aspects like time-saving, helpfulness and economy, low prices, variety, health benefits, brand image and quality, and availability of foods are significant. However, factors such as the taste of the food and attractive packaging are not considered significant in this study.

Khurana and Goyal (2021) state that food is a fundamental component for all living beings. It serves as the substance that is ingested to deliver nutritional benefits and sustain all forms of life. Currently, consumer habits and purchasing behaviours have undergone significant transformations. Factors such as increased urbanization, the shift from joint families to nuclear families, evolving job and business landscapes, time constraints, convenience, and lifestyle changes have caused a shift in consumer preferences from fresh and nutritious food to ready-to-eat or instant food options. This paper offers insights into the perceptions of Indian youth regarding instant food products. Additionally, it explores the various factors that affect the purchasing decisions of these young consumers in India.

Velankar and Anekar (2021), people's dietary habits have intentionally shifted. Numerous families have found it challenging to balance work obligations with the aspiration to maintain a healthy diet. While home-cooked meals are generally favored, consuming them consistently is often not pleasurable. Additionally, the emphasis on quality time has restricted the ability of women, whether working from home or managing the household, to dedicate all their time to extensive cooking in the kitchen.

Babu et al (2021) aimed to discover what influences people in Chennai city to buy Ready-to-Eat food products. They used both primary and secondary data for their research. The study identified several key factors: Convenience, Quality, Mood, and Sensory Appeal.

Ganapathiraju and Fernandes (2022) report that in India, the demand for ready-to-cook products surged significantly following urbanization. The first model indicates that store presence and product availability are important at a 90% confidence level. Conversely, factors such as consumption, quality, and discounts are deemed significant at a 95% confidence level based on consumer satisfaction regarding ready-to-cook food items. The second model suggests that store characteristics and packaging hold significance at a 90% confidence level. In contrast, consumption, taste, and discounts are significant at a 95% confidence level when evaluating consumer satisfaction with specific brands of ready-to-cook food products. This research examines the consumption trends of ready-to-cook food items among consumers from various professions, income brackets, and age demographics.

Roy and Khatun (2023) this hectic lifestyle alters their consumption behaviours and dietary preferences. The ongoing transformation in consumer viewpoints about their eating habits could enhance the appeal of ready-to-cook food. Therefore, it is crucial to explore consumers' purchasing intentions related to RTCF. The main objective of this study is to examine the factors that affect consumers' readiness to purchase RTCF. This research combines the unique importance of motivating factors that affect the acquisition of RTCF and is significant for both theoretical and managerial fields.

Khatun (2023) aims to explore the factors that drive consumers' intentions to purchase ready-to-cook foods. The researcher conducted correlation analysis to illustrate the relationships among the variables, as well as regression analysis to assess the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The findings indicated that all motivations, including perceived price, perceived safety, perceived convenience, perceived packaging, preparation time, and brand image, are strongly correlated with buying intention. Furthermore, regression analysis demonstrated that perceived packaging and brand image significantly contribute to the proposed model. This study will assist marketers in making informed marketing decisions.

Cui et al. (2024) A comparison was made between innovative technologies that could be utilized in the RTC food processing and packaging industry and existing methods, in order to illustrate potential future advancements. The information and viewpoints provided will clarify the ideas and current obstacles associated with RTC food, improve consumer awareness and understanding of comparable products, and offer valuable insights for stakeholders interested in these offerings.

The study by Teja and others (2025) was specifically conducted in the Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, India. To understand how consumers buy ready-to-cook food products, they gathered primary data using a pre-structured interview schedule. They used statistical methods like mean, frequency analysis, and the chi-square test to analyze the data.

Anggrasari et al (2025) this research looks into what affects people's choices when buying ready-to-cook vegetable packages, which are becoming more popular because city dwellers have less time. The findings indicate that for these products, the packaging is a key indicator of freshness and cleanliness, which is more important than usual factors like price or advertising.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i) To understand the Reason for purchase of Ready to Cook products and mode of purchase.
- ii) To determine the Importance of Purchase Intention of Ready-to-Cook Food Products in Chennai city.
- iii) To find out the Buying intention of RTC food products.
- iv) To identify the Factors influencing the consumers purchase of RTC foods and the Purchase Intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Present investigation undertaken to know the awareness of consumers about ready to cook food products.

A. Description of study area

B. Sampling design and data collection

C. Analytical tools

A. Description of Study Area

The primary consumers in the study region are significantly affected by the constantly evolving urban environment. Regarding food items, there is a noticeable shift among consumers from traditional foods to ready-to-cook products. This research focused specifically on Chennai city. A total of 250 consumer samples were chosen using Simple Random sampling.

B. Collection of Data

To assess the goals of the study, necessary data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data

The data required for the study were collected from the selected respondents by the personal interview method using a well-structured schedule. General information from the individual respondents on their social, economic, and demographic characteristics, like age, educational status, occupation, income, family size, and family type. Information regarding the consumption pattern of ready-to-cook food products and also regarding decision making relating to RTC food products.

Secondary Data

The supplementary data regarding location, demographics, and additional information about the study area were obtained from the city statistical office as well as various records and journals.

C. Analytical Tools

The gathered data was examined using SPSS, where Descriptive Analysis, Chi-square tests, ANOVA One-Sample Statistics, and Univariate Analysis of Variance were applied. A well-organized questionnaire featuring closed-ended questions was utilized.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Descriptive Analysis

Table - 1: Reasons for Purchase of Ready to Cook

Reasons for Purchase of Ready to Cook	Frequency	Percent
Saves Time	40	16.0
Easy to Cook	56	22.4
Lower Price	33	13.2
Better Quality	23	9.2
Easy to Store	45	18.0
Tasty	53	21.2
Total	250	100.0

The reasons for purchasing ready-to-cook foods are primarily easy to cook (22.4%) and tastiness (21.2%), followed by ease of storage (18%) and time saving (16%). Relatively fewer consumers cite lower price (13.2%) and better quality (9.2%) as their main reasons for purchase.

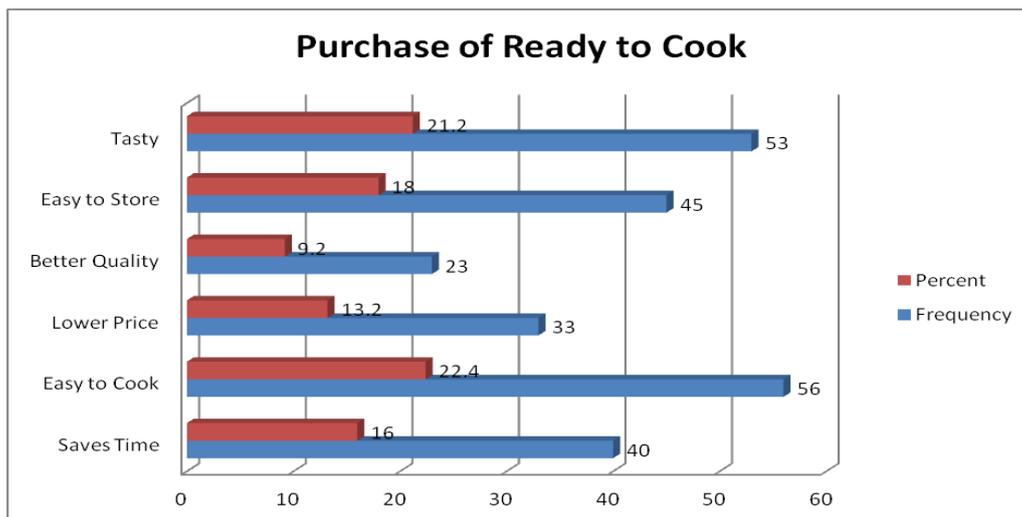


Figure - 1: Reasons for Purchase of Ready to Cook

Table - 2: Occasion of Purchase

Occasion of Purchase	Frequency	Percent
Weekends	92	36.8
Once in a day	73	29.2
Special Events	46	18.4
Regular	39	15.6
Total	250	100.0

The occasion for purchasing ready-to-cook foods are mainly during weekends (36.8%), followed by once day consumption (29.2%). Purchases made for special events account for 18.4%, while regular purchases constitute 15.6% of the total.

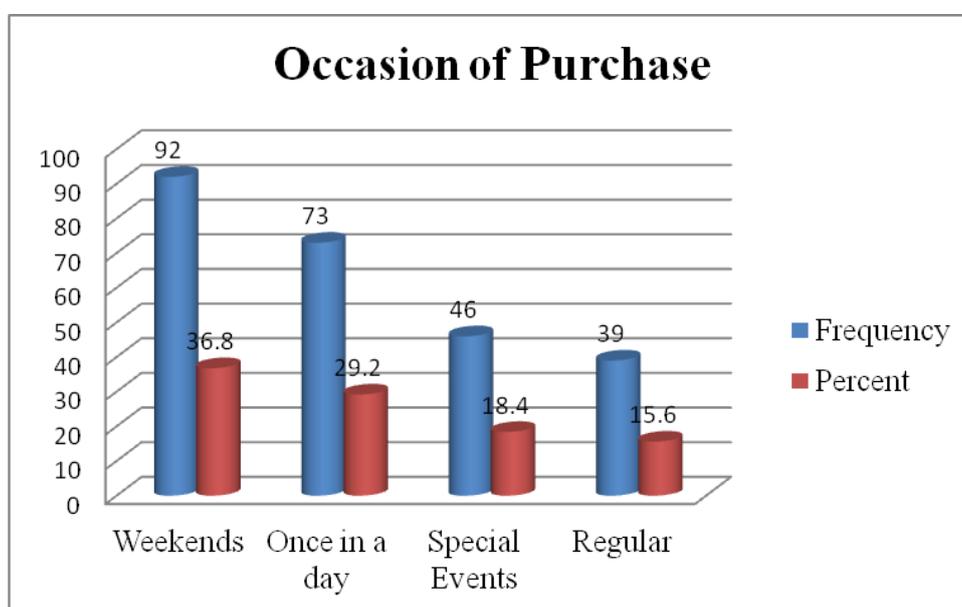


Figure - 2: Occasion of Purchase

Chi-Square Tests

Table - 3: Cross tab - Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Nature of family	17.392 ^a	.000
Number of Members in the family	34.650 ^a	.000
Reason for selection as mode of purchase	23.003 ^a	.000

The Pearson Chi-square values of 17.32, 34.650, and 23.003 are reported in the Value column of the Chi-square Tests table. The corresponding p-value of 0.000 appears in the Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) column. Since the p-value is less than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, the results are statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and indicating that the variables are not independent.

Table - 4: Cross tab - Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Occupation	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Number of Members in the family	33.005 ^a	0.001
Occasion of Purchase	24.253 ^a	0.019
Reason for purchase of RTC	61.852 ^a	0.001
Reason for selection as mode of purchase	83.241 ^a	0.001

The Chi-square statistics of 33.005, 24.253, 61.852, and 83.241 can be found in the Value column of the Chi-square Tests table, adjacent to the "Pearson Chi-Square". The corresponding p-values of 0.001, 0.019, 0.001, and 0.001 are situated in the "Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)" column within the same row. A p-value that is equal to or less than the alpha level (typically set at 0.05) is deemed significant. In this case, the p-value is below the conventional alpha threshold, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis which posits that the variables are independent.

ANOVA

Table - 5: Factors Influencing Purchase Intention and the Gender of the Respondents

ANOVA						
Factors Influencing Purchase Intention		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Convenience & Time Savings	Between Groups	19.037	1	19.037	29.200	.000
	Within Groups	161.687	248	.652		
	Total	180.724	249			
Quality & Food Safety	Between Groups	15.167	1	15.167	22.940	.000
	Within Groups	163.969	248	.661		
	Total	179.136	249			
Price Value	Between Groups	47.748	1	47.748	24.731	.000

	Within Groups	478.816	248	1.931		
	Total	526.564	249			
Taste & Sensory Appeal	Between Groups	27.372	1	27.372	17.854	.000
	Within Groups	380.212	248	1.533		
	Total	407.584	249			
Socio demographic & Lifestyle Factors	Between Groups	7.579	1	7.579	4.676	.032
	Within Groups	402.021	248	1.621		
	Total	409.600	249			
Brand Image & Availability	Between Groups	30.380	1	30.380	15.024	.000
	Within Groups	501.496	248	2.022		
	Total	531.876	249			

Based on the table presented above, a significant difference is observed between the factors influencing purchase intention and the gender of the respondents across all six factors. This significance is evident where the calculated significance values are below the p-value threshold of 0.05. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected for Convenience & Time Savings, Quality & Food Safety, Price Value, Taste & Sensory Appeal, Socio-demographic & Lifestyle Factors, and Brand Image & Availability.

Table - 6: Buying Intention of RTC and the Number of Members in the Family

ANOVA						
Buying intention of RTC		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand image	Between Groups	12.027	2	6.014	5.140	.006
	Within Groups	288.969	247	1.170		
	Total	300.996	249			
Preparation time	Between Groups	7.875	2	3.938	2.991	.052
	Within Groups	325.149	247	1.316		
	Total	333.024	249			
Perceived packaging	Between Groups	14.051	2	7.025	10.512	.000
	Within Groups	165.085	247	.668		
	Total	179.136	249			
Perceived convenience	Between Groups	13.368	2	6.684	3.217	.042
	Within Groups	513.196	247	2.078		
	Total	526.564	249			
Perceived safety	Between Groups	19.331	2	9.665	7.301	.001
	Within Groups	327.005	247	1.324		

	Total	346.336	249			
Perceived price	Between Groups	8.004	2	4.002	3.361	.036
	Within Groups	294.096	247	1.191		
	Total	302.100	249			

Based on the table above, a significant difference is observed between the respondents' buying intention toward ready-to-cook (RTC) foods and the number of family members across all six factors. This difference is evident where the significance values are less than the p-value threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected for the factors of brand image, preparation time, perceived packaging, perceived convenience, perceived safety, and perceived price.

Table - 7: Factors Influencing the Consumers Purchase of RTC

One-Sample Statistics				
Consumers Purchase	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Cost saving	4.07	1.318	48.841	.000
Quality	4.38	.848	81.724	.000
Taste	3.59	1.454	39.012	.000
Hectic lifestyle	4.39	1.279	54.278	.000
Influence of children	4.36	1.283	53.750	.000
Convenience	3.64	1.462	39.336	.000
Nutrition	4.00	1.099	57.582	.000
Advertisements	4.35	1.156	59.501	.000
Lack of cooking skill	4.38	.848	81.724	.000
Habitual	3.59	1.454	39.012	.000

The results show that several factors strongly influence consumers' purchase of ready-to-cook (RTC) foods. Quality (Mean = 4.38), hectic lifestyle (Mean = 4.39), influence of children (Mean = 4.36), advertisements (Mean = 4.35), and lack of cooking skills (Mean = 4.38) are the most important factors, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents. Cost saving (Mean = 4.07) and nutrition (Mean = 4.00) are also considered important reasons for purchasing RTC foods. In comparison, taste (Mean = 3.59), convenience (Mean = 3.64), and habitual buying (Mean = 3.59) have a moderate influence. Overall, the high t-values suggest that all these factors significantly affect consumers' decisions to purchase ready-to-cook food products.

Univariate Analysis of Variance

Table - 8: Univariate Analysis of Variance - Importance of Purchase Intention of Ready-to-Cook Food

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Occasion of Purchase					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.

Corrected Model	192.992 ^a	32	6.031	13.504	.000
Intercept	36.670	1	36.670	82.109	.000
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_1	9.778	3	3.259	7.298	.000
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_2	8.922	3	2.974	6.659	.000
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_3	11.836	4	2.959	6.626	.000
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_4	10.601	3	3.534	7.912	.000
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_5	8.108	4	2.027	4.539	.002
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_6	6.622	4	1.655	3.707	.006
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_7	6.814	4	1.703	3.814	.005
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_8	2.619	3	.873	1.955	.122
Importance_of_Purchase_Intention_RTC_9	29.221	4	7.305	16.358	.000
Error	96.912	217	.447		
Total	1422.000	250			
Corrected Total	289.904	249			
a. R Squared = .666 (Adjusted R Squared = .616)					

Importance of Purchase Intention of Ready-to-Cook Food Products Saving cooking time, Affordable price, Perceived value for money, Taste of ready-to-cook food products, Quality of ingredients used in ready-to-cook foods, Health and nutritional value, Hygiene and food safety, Brand reputation, Trust in the brand. When the significant value drops below the 0.05% "P" value threshold, the disparity is visible. The null hypothesis is thus disproved.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Although the term ready-to-cook food is still unfamiliar to many people, the rising marketing practices of marketers will boost this industry. If marketers give importance to the motivations to purchase ready-to-cook foods it will make a revolution in the food industry since the sale is increasing day by day. The six motivations: perceived price, perceived safety, perceived convenience, perceived packaging, preparation time, and brand image are related to the buying of ready-to-cook foods. The motivation of perceived packaging and brand image are significantly contributing to this study whereas perceived price, perceived convenience, perceived safety and preparation time are not significant in this study.

Consumers nowadays prefer to purchase packaged food products mostly from retail outlets as they have wider choices for product selection. So, the display of the products on shelves of the stores is an area of focus in the marketing strategy of the packaged food manufacturers. The high price was an important reason for not purchasing certain categories of packaged food products as stated by the majority of the respondents. So manufacturers must strive to reduce the price to make it affordable for all the categories of the consumers. As the usage of packaged food products is more during special occasions like birthdays and get together, the marketers can adopt the strategy of product bundling to offer product combinations relating to the occasions.

Due to the increasing number of nuclear and double income families, long working hours are the major reason for purchasing these products. Consumer behaviour towards buying ready to cook food had huge impact of socioeconomic profile of consumers. This also brings large deviation in taste and preference for products. Reasons for not preferring particular brand of the product by respondents was due to the factors such as high price followed by poor taste, poor quality and less keeping quality. It was found that children and youngsters prefer these foods more than adults and they can promote their products in a way that it attracts more adults. The easy to cook, convenience, satisfaction, usefulness and saving of time are the major reasons for purchasing RTC products. The factors that influenced brand

Preference of the selected instant food products were best quality followed by retailer's influence, ready availability and convenience.

RTC food industry has experienced significant growth, driven by increasing consumer demand for convenience and healthier eating options. Our review highlights advancements in key processing and packaging technologies. Nevertheless, there is still a long road ahead for commercial applications of emerging technologies, considering cost-benefit analysis, consumer safety, and sustainability. Moreover, consumer perception and awareness will continue to shape the future of RTC foods, necessitating industry efforts to produce new RTC foods with high quality and low safety risks. The dataset size of our survey and the inaccessibility of information from practical production may limit our ability to fully capture the operational challenges in real industrial settings, highlighting the need for future research with a wider scope of investigation and detailed industry collaborations.

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