

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF HOUSEWIVES' CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE INCREASE IN COOKING OIL PRICES IN SERANG IN 2024

Edi Sumatirta^{1*}, Irsyad Thalib Abdillah², Febri Ana³.

Fakultas Teknik dan Pertanian Universitas Setia Budhi Rangkasbitung

E-mail: edisumatirta@gmail.com, irsyad.thalib10@gmail.com, febricyber2@gmail.com.

Received : 19 July 2025
Revised : 27 July 2025
Accepted : 15 August 2025

Published : 07 September 2025
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/ijerlas.v4i6.2061>
Publish Link : <https://www.ijset.org/index.php/ijset/index>

Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of rising cooking oil prices on consumer behavior, particularly among housewives in Serang City in 2024. The significant price increase during this period triggered various changes in consumption patterns and household financial management strategies. Using a descriptive qualitative approach using survey and interview methods, this study found that the majority of respondents experienced consumption adjustments, such as reducing the frequency of cooking oil use, switching to cheaper brands, and increasing efficiency in monthly shopping. This study shows that consumer behavior is highly responsive to fluctuations in the prices of basic necessities and emphasizes the importance of household economic literacy as a form of preparedness for price crises. The results of this study can be used as a reference in making food policies and strengthening the role of housewives as family economic managers.

Keywords: *cooking oil, prices of basic necessities, consumer behavior, housewives, Serang city*

INTRODUCTION

Cooking oil is a staple household item in Indonesia and plays a crucial role in daily life, particularly in cooking. Nearly all levels of society rely on cooking oil as a primary ingredient in preparing various foods, both for personal consumption and for small- to large-scale culinary businesses. Therefore, the stability of cooking oil prices and availability in the market is a crucial issue and directly impacts people's lives, especially households. In recent years, Indonesia has experienced significant fluctuations in cooking oil prices, even reaching levels that affect household economic stability. The rise in cooking oil prices is not only a concern for the government and industry players but is also directly felt by end consumers, particularly housewives who primarily manage family expenses and daily needs. This phenomenon demonstrates that cooking oil is not just a kitchen commodity but also a strategic commodity that can impact the overall household economic balance. Based on data available from the National Food Agency, the peak increase in cooking oil prices in Indonesia in 2024 will occur in December. On December 20, 2024, the national price of packaged cooking oil reached Rp 18,740 per liter, the highest price during that period. This price increase began in early November 2024 and continued to rise until it peaked at the end of the year. This price spike is a serious concern because it occurred near the end of the year, which is usually synonymous with increased household needs. In Serang City, Banten Province, a similar situation also occurred. The increase in cooking oil prices elicited various reactions and responses from the public, especially household consumers. Many housewives began making various adjustments, such as reducing the frequency of cooking oil use, switching to cheaper brands, and even trying alternative cooking ingredients that do not require cooking oil. These changes indicate a process of adaptation to changing economic conditions and can be further analyzed through a consumer behavior approach.

Consumer behavior in the face of changes in the price of basic necessities is strongly influenced by various psychological and social factors, such as price perception, income level, individual preferences, cultural values, and economic literacy levels. Consumer behavior theory explains that each individual or group will make decisions based on rational and emotional considerations, as well as the availability of available resources. In the context of housewives, these decisions are not only based on personal preferences, but also consider the interests of all family members. Through this study, it is important to explore more deeply how housewives in Serang City adjust their spending patterns in response to the increase in cooking oil prices. What strategies do they implement to maintain a balance in household spending? Are there significant changes in the way they shop, choose products, and manage

household finances as a whole? These questions form the basis for digging a broader understanding of the dynamics of consumer behavior during the crisis of basic necessities prices. This research is expected to contribute to the literature on consumer behavior, as well as serve as a reference for policymakers in formulating strategies to address the food price crisis. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to strengthen awareness of the importance of household economic literacy, especially for housewives as the main managers of the family economy. In the long term, this understanding is expected to shape a more resilient and adaptive society in facing the ever-changing economic dynamics.

METHOD

This research approach is qualitative and descriptive. The researchers conducted a literature review to examine several relevant theories and conducted structured interviews as part of the data collection. This study aims to:

1. To analyze changes in the consumption behavior of housewives in Serang City due to the increase in cooking oil prices.
2. To identify factors that influence consumer behavior based on consumer behavior theory.
3. To describe the strategies for adjusting spending patterns carried out by housewives in the face of rising cooking oil prices.

This research uses a consumer behavior theory approach, which explains how individuals make decisions about using their resources to purchase goods and services. The theories relevant to this research include:

1. Utility Theory

Utility theory is an approach in economics that explains how consumers make decisions about allocating limited resources to maximize satisfaction. According to this theory, each individual acts rationally to maximize utility (satisfaction) from consuming goods and services, according to their preferences and budget constraints.

In the context of rising cooking oil prices, the relative utility of cooking oil will decrease compared to its substitute products. This means that when cooking oil prices increase, consumers will experience a decrease in satisfaction per unit price (marginal utility per rupiah) from cooking oil, leading them to reduce consumption or seek more affordable alternatives. This decision represents a form of rationalization to achieve maximum utility within a limited budget.

Thus, utility theory helps explain consumer responses to price changes, including consumption adjustment strategies as a form of adaptation to economic pressures.

2. Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory explains that consumers act as rational economic agents in making consumption decisions. Each decision is based on a logical consideration of various available alternatives, with the goal of maximizing personal benefit or satisfaction. In this decision-making process, consumers consider a number of factors, such as price, product quality, needs, and budget availability.

In the context of rising cooking oil prices, this theory can explain how consumers, particularly housewives, adjust their consumption behavior by considering the efficiency and effectiveness of household spending. They tend to choose the best alternative, for example, switching to a cheaper brand, reducing the frequency of use, or using other substitute products. These actions reflect an effort to obtain maximum results with minimal costs, in accordance with the principles of economic rationality.

Thus, rational choice theory provides an analytical framework for understanding consumer strategies in dealing with fluctuations in the prices of basic necessities, including how preferences and shopping priorities are rearranged in stressful economic conditions.

3. Consumer Decision Making Process Model

The Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat (EBK) model is a classic model used to explain the systematic stages in the consumer decision-making process. This model illustrates that consumers do not make decisions spontaneously, but rather go through five main, interconnected stages:

1. Problem recognition (Problem Recognition)

The process begins when consumers recognize a gap between their actual and desired ideal conditions. In the context of rising cooking oil prices, housewives may realize that their shopping budget is no longer sufficient to meet their daily needs as before.

2. Information Search

Once a problem is identified, consumers begin searching for information about available solutions. This could include pricing information from various brands, substitute products, promotions, or suggestions from others.

3. Evaluation of Alternatives

Consumers then compare various options based on specific criteria such as price, quality, volume, and brand reputation. At this stage, rational and emotional considerations work together to determine which option best suits their needs.

4. Purchase Decision

After evaluating alternatives, consumers make a final decision about which product to purchase. For example, choosing a cheaper brand of cooking oil or buying a smaller quantity.

5. Post-purchase evaluation

The final stage is reflection on the decision made. Consumers assess whether the product they purchased met their expectations. If they are dissatisfied, they are likely to avoid repeat purchases and will seek alternatives in the future.

This EBK model provides a comprehensive understanding of how consumers, including housewives, respond to changes in the economic environment, such as fluctuations in the prices of basic necessities. This process is dynamic and influenced by both internal factors (attitudes, perceptions, and motivations) and external factors (social environment and market information).

4. Price Perception Theory

Price perception theory explains how consumers assess and interpret a product's price, not solely based on its nominal value, but also based on subjective perceptions of its value, fairness, and affordability. Price perception is influenced by various factors such as previous experience, market knowledge, product quality, and the consumer's social and economic circumstances.

In the context of housewives as the primary managers of household finances, price perception plays a crucial role in determining purchasing decisions. When the price of cooking oil increases, housewives not only assess the increase numerically but also consider whether the price is still considered reasonable or too high compared to the quality and needs.

If the price is perceived as too high and disproportionate to the product's benefits or quality, consumers are likely to reduce their purchase frequency, switch to a more affordable brand, or even seek out substitutes. Conversely, if the price is perceived as reasonable and commensurate with the value received, brand loyalty tends to be maintained.

Thus, price perception becomes one of the key psychological factors in consumer behavior, because it can influence not only short-term purchasing decisions, but also shape long-term brand preferences and loyalty.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Changes in the consumption behavior of housewives

Interview results indicate that the majority of housewives in Serang City have made adjustments to their cooking activities in response to rising cooking oil prices. One of the most common adjustments is reducing the frequency of cooking oil use in daily meals. Some respondents even switched cooking methods, from frequently frying to more frequent boiling or steaming, as a strategy to conserve cooking oil. These changes reflect a rational adaptation of consumption behavior in the face of price pressures, while also demonstrating consumer flexibility in maintaining family food needs without sacrificing all aspects of consumption quality.

B. Factors that influence decision making.

The main factors influencing consumption decisions in the context of rising cooking oil prices include:

1. Price

Rising cooking oil prices are a dominant factor driving changes in household consumption patterns. Consumers are tending to adjust their purchase volumes, choose cheaper alternative brands, or reduce the frequency of cooking oil use.

2. Income

Household income levels significantly influence consumption elasticity. The lower the income, the greater the adjustments made to budget management, including shifting spending to other basic needs deemed higher priorities.

3. Market information

Access to information about prices, discounts, and promotions also influences purchasing decisions. Consumers with more complete and accurate information tend to make more rational and efficient decisions in response to price increases.

C. Adjustment of budget patterns

Based on the results of interviews and surveys, it was found that the majority of respondents made adjustments in their household budget management due to the increase in cooking oil prices. One form of adjustment was a reduction in the budget allocation for cooking oil, which was then diverted to other, more priority basic needs, such as rice and side dishes. Furthermore, a number of housewives adopted alternative consumption strategies, including switching to cheaper cooking oil brands or choosing smaller packages to accommodate their purchasing power. These findings indicate a rational, adaptive response to economic pressures, in accordance with the principles of consumer behavior during a price crisis.

DISCUSSION

These findings align with consumer behavior theory, which explains that individuals actively evaluate market situations, including price changes, and adjust their purchasing decisions to maximize utility within limited resources. In the context of rising cooking oil prices, consumers, particularly housewives, demonstrated an adaptive response through a series of rational decision-making processes.

This process is clearly reflected in the consumer decision-making model proposed by Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat. The first stage begins with problem recognition, when housewives become aware of rising cooking oil prices, which are disrupting the household budget. The next stage involves information seeking and evaluating alternatives, where consumers begin to consider cheaper brands, smaller packaging, or even cooking methods that reduce cooking oil use. Ultimately, consumers arrive at a purchasing decision tailored to their financial situation, demonstrating a rational attitude in the face of constraints.

Thus, the behavior demonstrated by housewives in this study strengthens the relevance of consumer behavior theory and decision-making models in explaining consumption dynamics during times of economic pressure, particularly due to fluctuations in the prices of basic necessities.

CONCLUSION

1. The increase in cooking oil prices in Serang City has triggered significant changes in household consumer behavior, particularly among housewives, who are the primary kitchen managers. These changes are reflected in reduced cooking oil use and adaptations to cooking methods, such as switching from frying to boiling or steaming, to save money.
2. The three main factors influencing consumption decisions are price, household income, and access to market information. Sharp price increases are the primary trigger for consumption adjustments, while low incomes amplify this impact. Furthermore, transparency of information regarding prices and promotions also influences brand choice and purchase volume.
3. In response to the economic situation, housewives are implementing spending adjustment strategies by reducing their budget for cooking oil, switching to cheaper brands, or purchasing smaller packages. These steps reflect rational consumer behavior in managing budget constraints without neglecting other basic needs, such as rice and side dishes.

REFERENCES

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF HOUSEWIVES' CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE INCREASE IN COOKING OIL PRICES IN SERANG IN 2024

Edi Sumatirta **et al**

- Central Statistics Agency. (2023). Statistics on prices of basic necessities in Banten Province. <https://www.bps.go.id>
- Databoks. (2024, July). The price of national packaged cooking oil rose 6.4% in the past week.
- Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W. (1995). Consumer behavior. Dryden Press.
- EsPos Ekonomi. (2024, November). November opened with an increase in the price of bulk cooking oil. <https://ekonomi.espos.id/november-dibuka-dengan-kenaikan-harga-minyak-goreng-curah-2021425?utm>
- Goodstats. (2024, July) Still not going down, this is the price of cooking oil until July 2024. <https://goodstats.id/article/tak-kunjung-turun-inilah-harga-minyak-goreng-sampai-juli-2024-w4dvp?utm>
- <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/index.php/ekonomimakro/statistik/2e6b50117fddfdde/harga-minyak-goreng-kemasan-nasional-seminggu-terakhir-naik-64?utm>
- Kotler, P., & Keller, KL (2022). Marketing Management (16th ed), Pearson.
- Lestari, RA (2022). "The impact of rising cooking oil prices on household consumption" Journal of Economics and Development, 20(1), 45-53.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldana, J. (2020). Qualitative Data Analysis : A Methods sourcebook (4th ed.). Sage publications.
- Schiffman, LG, & Wisenblit, J.. (2019) Consumer behavior (12th ed.). Pearson.
- Solomon, M.R. (2020). Consumer behavior : Buying, Having, and being (13th ed.). Pearson education.
- Sugiyono. (2021). Qualitative, quantitative, and R&D research methods. Alfabeta.
- Widodo, H. & Sari, M. (2021). "Consumer behavior towards changes in the prices of basic necessities." Indonesian Consumer Journal, 9(2), 112-120.