NIQ Perspectives
Grocery

December 16, 2025

"Value has shifted from price tags to time saved. With shoppers fatigued by deal-hunting and prepared food prices rising, retailers must price convenience with discipline—introduce speed tiers, meal-level bundles, and transparent 'minutes-back' claims—while manufacturers redesign SKUs and pack sizes to deliver speed without sticker shock. My recommendation: make minutes the metric, and set price ladders so the time premium never outruns the value story."

Chris Costagli

Vice President, Thought Leadership F&B Insights Lead, NielsenIQ

The takeaway…

- Time is the new currency, convenience is now a core value driver
- The time premium is real, but motives differ by income
- Deal fatigue meets rising prices, retailers must balance convenience with affordability

Your next move…

- Design for minutes saved, launch SKUs optimized for speed
- Price strategically for value, ensure convenience feels like smart value, not a splurge
- Merchandise for missions, shift space ingredient solutions to meal solutions

NielsenIQ

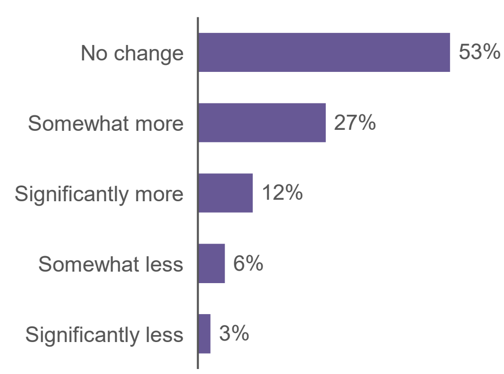
Time Over Price: Shoppers Are Trading Deals for Speed and Simplicity

Implications for the Food Industry

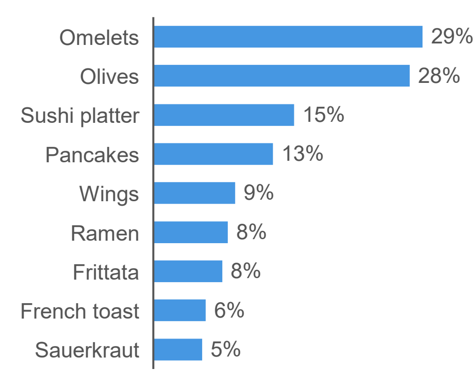
Minutes are the new margin

Time is becoming a leading value driver. Expect to see retailers pivot towards more of a restaurant operating model, shifting assortment and merchandising from ingredients to ready-to-eat solutions. Zero-prep formats cater to time-crunched shoppers and are growing as brands that compete on "minutes saved per dollar" take disproportionate share.

HOW TIME CRUNCHED CONSUMERS FELT DURING THE PAST 6- MONTHS[1]



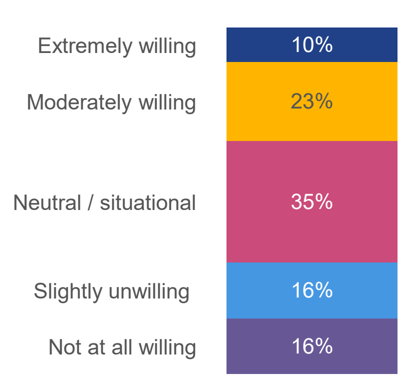
GROWING PREPARED FOOD CATEGORIES[2]



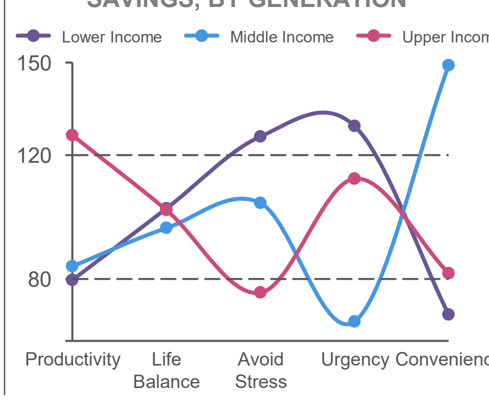
The time premium arrives

Willingness to pay for time savings means the FMCG will start to price and merchandise by minutes saved. With one-third of shoppers ready to pay and clear income-based motives, expect "speed tiers," time-back claims, and prep-time price ladders. The 35% neutral group is convertible—make time savings explicit and deliver without trade-offs to pull them in.

WILLINGNESS TO PAY MORE FOR TIME SAVING[1]



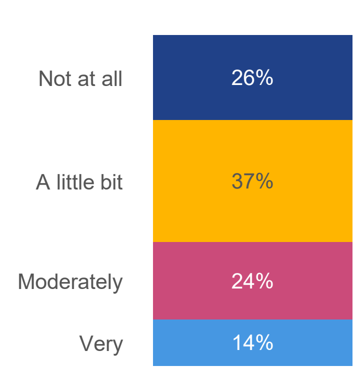
MAIN REASONS TO PAY FOR TIME SAVINGS, BY GENERATION[1]



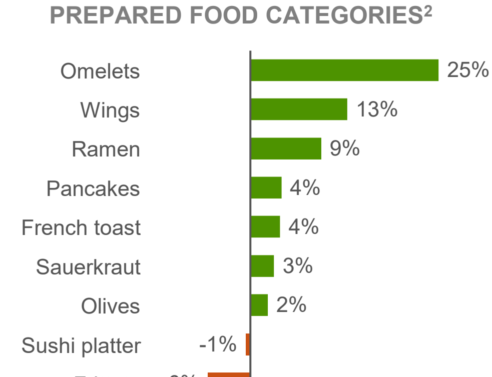
The value tightrope

The FMCG Industry is facing a balancing act where shoppers are fatigued from chasing deals, yet unit prices in prepared foods are climbing. Convenience wins only if price hikes don't erase its advantage. Retailers will need strategic pricing and tiered offers—keeping ready-made affordable enough to feel like smart value, not a splurge.

FATIGUE LEVEL DUE TO CONSTANTLY SEEKING LOWEST PRICES / DEALS[1]



UNIT PRICE CHANGE IN GROWING PREPARED FOOD CATEGORIES[2]



Industry Analysis Sources: [1]NIQ, BASES Quick Question Omnibus Survey, October 2025, n=1,025; [2]NIQ, RMS, Total US Full View, Periods Ending 11/29/2025

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