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The Demography Effect on Plant-based Meat Buying Decision

Astrid Putri Handayani[1], Lilik Noor Yuliati[2], Nimmi Zulbainarni[3]
[1]School of Business, IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia, astridputrihandayani@gmail.com
[2]Department of Family and Consumer Science, IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia, lilikny@apps.ipb.ac.id
[3]School of Business, IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia, nimmizu@apps.ipb.ac.id

Corresponding Author: astridputrihandayani@gmail.com[1]

Abstract: This study examines the demographic characteristics that influence consumer interest and buying intention toward plant-based meat products. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 368 respondents through an online voluntary sampling approach. Cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to identify patterns between demographic variables and purchase intention. The results show that younger adults, particularly those aged 25–34, females, and respondents with higher education levels demonstrate the strongest interest in plant-based meat. Consumers residing in urban areas, especially Jakarta, and those with stable occupations and middle-level income also exhibit higher buying intention. Lifestyle factors further shape receptiveness, with health-oriented individuals and moderate meat consumers showing greater openness to plant-based alternatives. The findings indicate that interest in plant-based meat products is driven not by medical necessity, but by general health awareness, lifestyle preferences, and demographic advantages such as education and urban exposure. Overall, the study concludes that demographic factors play a central role in shaping consumer interest in plant-based meat and provides critical insights for understanding the emerging market potential of alternative protein products.

Keywords: Plant-Based Meat, Demographic Factor, Buying Intention, Consumer Behavior, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Global changes in population structure, dietary awareness, and consumer lifestyles have contributed to a rapid increase in interest toward plant-based meat products. Recent research shows that demographic factors, such as age, gender, education level, income, and urbanization play crucial roles in shaping consumer receptiveness to plant-based alternatives. According to Fischer and Garnett (2016), demographic shifts, especially the rise of younger, urban, and health-conscious populations, have driven the global demand for sustainable food options. Such consumers often respond positively to food innovations that offer environmental and health-related benefits. Likewise, emerging markets in Asia have shown significant momentum in the adoption of meat alternatives, supported by broader transitions in dietary culture and socioeconomic development.

In Southeast Asia, Indonesia represents one of the most dynamic markets for plant-based products. With a large youthful population and rapidly expanding middle-income class, consumer interest in healthier and more sustainable food has intensified (Fabiosa et al., 2022). Urbanization continues to influence lifestyle changes, as city dwellers have higher exposure to global food trends and easier access to alternative protein products (Reynolds et al., 2021). Studies of Indonesian consumer behavior indicate that demographic profiles, including education attainment and employment category, have direct associations with interest in plant-based meat (Astuti & Santoso, 2020). Higher education levels generally correlate with greater knowledge of health and environmental issues, which increases openness to plant-forward diets.

Gender differences also play a meaningful role. Research consistently shows that women tend to express a stronger interest in reducing meat intake and adopting plant-based alternatives due to heightened health awareness (Rizzo et al., 2013). Similar findings are echoed in studies of Asian consumers, where female respondents more frequently report concerns about diet quality and long-term wellbeing (Dahlan et al., 2021). Age is another important demographic determinant. Younger consumers particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are more willing to experiment with meat substitutes, often driven by exposure to digital information, social media, and modern dietary influences (Bryant et al., 2019).

Income and socioeconomic status further contribute to varying degrees of interest in plant-based meat. Although prices of meat alternatives are gradually becoming more competitive, they are still perceived as premium products in many markets. Therefore, higher-income groups are generally early adopters (Tso et al., 2021). Employment type and occupational background also shape consumption habits; individuals in professional or health-related sectors tend to adopt dietary behaviors aligned with health consciousness (Kanerva, Heinonen, & Ruusunen, 2013). These demographic determinants are essential for researchers seeking to understand which consumer segments have the strongest potential for adopting meat alternatives.

As the plant-based meat industry grows, the importance of accurately describing and analyzing respondent demographics becomes even more significant. Comprehensive demographic analysis provides fundamental insight into who the potential consumers are and how their background characteristics may influence their interest in plant-based products. According to survey-based studies, understanding demographic patterns allows researchers and marketers to identify target groups, develop tailored communication strategies, and anticipate shifts in dietary preferences (Graça, Godinho, & Truninger, 2019). Examining variables such as age, gender, income, education level, and diet history also enables a deeper understanding of the diversity of consumer motivations and the structural factors influencing food choices.

Given these demographic dynamics, this study aims to explore and present a detailed descriptive profile of respondents with an interest in plant-based meat. Understanding these characteristics is essential not only for interpreting consumer behavior but also for informing broader discussions about sustainable food transitions in Indonesia. A demographic-centred approach provides the foundation for further analysis on how specific population groups respond to plant-based meat, thereby strengthening the relevance and contextual grounding of the research.

METHOD

Research is fundamentally a systematic and organized effort to acquire knowledge and explain particular phenomena. This study adopted a descriptive research design, which is commonly used to describe characteristics of a population and examine the distribution of variables within a specific group. A descriptive design is appropriate for this study because the primary objective is to analyze the demographic characteristics of respondents who show interest in plant-based meat products and to provide an overview of the variables associated with consumer background. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), descriptive

research is effective for studies seeking to understand "what is happening" within a population by presenting an accurate profile of events, people, or situations.

The population in this study is people who have purchased Green Rebel products and live in Jabodetabek. The total sample for this study consisted of 238 respondents. The sample size was determined based on feasibility and the need for sufficient representation across demographic groups. To recruit participants, a voluntary sampling technique was used. Voluntary sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which individuals self-select to participate in the study. This method allows researchers to reach respondents who are genuinely interested in the topic and willing to provide information without compulsion. As Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) note, voluntary sampling is commonly used in behavioural and consumer studies where participant motivation and interest play important roles. This technique was selected due to the lack of a specific sampling frame for consumers of plant-based meat products and the need for participants who are aware of or interested in the subject matter.

This research was conducted in Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek) because Jakarta was the first region to launch GreenRebel, with the surrounding areas serving as supporting cities, namely Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The estimated data collection time was three months. Data collection was conducted online using Google Forms. Online data collection provides advantages such as broader outreach, reduced cost, and convenience for respondents, especially in dispersed or urban populations (Evans & Mathur, 2018). Participants received the questionnaire through digital platforms and social networks, enabling them to complete the survey at their own convenience. Respondents were assured of anonymity to encourage honest responses and reduce response bias. No personally identifiable information was collected, and participation was entirely voluntary.

The questionnaire included sections on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, income, occupation, lifestyle, and dietary habits. These variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics to generate frequency distributions, percentages, and demographic profiles of the respondents. In addition, cross-tabulation was applied to explore how buying intention in plant-based meat varies across demographic categories. Overall, the methodological approach ensured that the study obtained reliable, relevant, and ethically collected data suitable for descriptive and exploratory analysis related to demographic patterns in plant-based meat interest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The number of respondents in this study was 238. This number meets the minimum requirement as explained in Method Section. A descriptive analysis of the respondents' characteristics can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Characteristics	Total (n=250)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	97	41
	Male	**141**	**59**
Age	>45 Tahun	14	6
	35-44	9	4
	25-34	**175**	**73**
	17-24	40	17
Domicile	Bekasi	9	4
	Bogor	25	10
	Depok	25	11
	Jakarta	**162**	**68**
	Tangerang	17	7
Level of Education	Elementary School	2	1
	Middle School	1	0
	Senior high school	41	17

	Associate degree	21	9
	Undergraduate	**138**	**58**
	Graduate	30	13
	Postgraduate	5	2
Job	Not working	13	5
	State-Owned Enterprise/Civil Servant	57	24
	Housewife	19	8
	Private Employee	**66**	**28**
	Student	37	16
	Self-Employed/Entrepreneur	46	19
Income	≤ Rp 500.000	12	5
	Rp 500.001 – Rp 999.999	24	10
	Rp 1.000.000 – Rp 2.999.999	36	15
	Rp 3.000.000 – Rp 4.999.999	61	26
	Rp 5.000.000 – Rp 9.999.999	**65**	**27**
	≥ Rp 10.000.000	40	17
Lifestyle	Weight loss diet	40	17
	Healthy lifestyle	**94**	**39**
	Plant-based diet	27	11
	Low cholesterol/fat	33	14
	Vegetarian/Vegan	18	8
	None of the above	26	11
Medical Reasons	Yes, due to doctor's recommendation	53	22
	Yes, due to personal considerations	87	37
	No	**98**	**41**
Meat Consumption	4-6 times per week	36	15
	1-3 times per week	76	32
	1-3 times per month	**87**	**37**
	Every day	24	10
	Never at all	15	6
Meat Purchase Expenses	< Rp100.000	36	15
	Rp100.000 – Rp199.999	57	24
	Rp 200.000 - Rp 399.999	**64**	**27**
	Rp 400.000 - Rp 599.999	47	20
	Rp 600.000 - Rp 999.999	11	4
	> Rp 1.000.000	23	10

The findings of this study provide an important overview of the demographic characteristics of consumers who show interest in plant-based meat products. Overall, the demographic distribution indicates that interest in plant-based meat is concentrated among specific consumer groups defined by gender, age, education, occupation, income, lifestyle, medical reasons, meat consumption, and meat purchase expenses. These demographic patterns align with previous studies that highlight the role of sociodemographic variables in shaping consumer acceptance of meat alternatives. The largest proportion of respondents resided in Jakarta (68%) (Table 1), suggesting that urban environments may provide greater exposure to plant-based innovations. Jakarta's higher accessibility to modern retail channels, digital marketing, and food trends may contribute to a stronger interest in alternative proteins. Additionally, 59% of respondents were female (Table 1). This aligns strongly with Profeta et al. (2021), who found that female consumers tend to show a higher preference for plant-based meat products, and with Siegrist & Hartmann (2019), who demonstrated that women are more open to meat alternatives due to their heightened awareness of health and environmental impacts. These findings indicate that female consumers represent a key segment in the adoption of plant-based meat and likely exhibit higher purchasing interest compared to male consumers.

Age distribution further reinforces the understanding of consumer trends. The majority of respondents (73%) were between 25 and 34 years old (Table 1). This corresponds with Mintel

(2020), which identifies the 25–34 age group as the primary driver of global plant-based protein growth. Studies by Chen (2022) and Hwang et al. (2020) also reported dominance of younger respondents, suggesting that curiosity toward alternative protein products is higher among younger generations. Their familiarity with digital information and openness to food innovation may explain their stronger inclination toward trying plant-based meat products. Education level is another important demographic predictor. More than half of the respondents (58%) held an undergraduate degree (Table 1), indicating that higher educational attainment is associated with greater interest in plant-based meat. This supports findings by Szenderák et al. (2022), who reported that consumers with higher education tend to show stronger preferences for plant-based alternatives and engage in higher weekly consumption. Educated consumers may be more receptive to information regarding sustainability, nutrition, and new food technologies, thereby increasing their openness to adopting plant-based meat substitutes.

In terms of occupation and income, the results show that private sector employees represented the largest proportion of respondents (28%) (Table 1), followed by civil servants and government-linked workers. Income levels were concentrated in the range of IDR 5,000,000 to IDR 9,999,999 (27%) (Table 1). This suggests that respondents with formal employment and stable income tend to have stronger purchasing power and better access to lifestyle-oriented food products. These findings are consistent with Hwang et al. (2020) and Chen (2022), both of whom note that consumers with middle- to upper-income levels are more likely to try plant-based meat alternatives. Stable economic conditions may contribute to a greater willingness to experiment with premium-priced food innovations. Lifestyle patterns also play a significant role in shaping interest in plant-based meat. In this study, the largest lifestyle category (39%) was “healthy lifestyle” (Table 1), followed by “weight loss diet” (17%). This indicates that respondents were largely motivated by general health maintenance and dietary regulation. Interestingly, most respondents (41%) reported no medical reasons requiring them to avoid meat (Table 1). This aligns with the Good Food Institute (2020), which states that consumers are not primarily motivated by medical reasons when considering plant-based products. Instead, motivations are more commonly linked to general health awareness, environmental values, or ethical considerations rather than medical necessity.

Patterns of meat consumption offer additional insight into potential plant-based adoption. Most respondents consumed meat at moderate frequencies: 37% consumed meat 1–3 times per month, and 32% 1–3 times per week (Table 1). Monthly expenditure on meat was also moderate, with the largest proportion (27%) spending IDR 200,000–399,999 per month (Table 1). These findings indicate that the majority of respondents are not heavy meat consumers but also have not eliminated animal products. This demographic profile reflects the “flexitarian” segment described by Hartmann & Siegrist (2020), who highlight that consumers with moderate meat intake are a promising target group for meat alternatives, as they acknowledge the health and environmental impacts of meat consumption yet are not prepared to fully transition away from animal products. This is further supported by Hoek et al. (2011), who found that consumers who are not strict vegetarians are actually more receptive to meat substitutes than non-vegetarians, indicating strong potential for adoption in this demographic.

Taken together, the demographic characteristics observed in this study, such as female gender, younger age, higher education, stable employment, middle income, and health-oriented lifestyle, represent a consumer profile consistent with global patterns of early adopters of plant-based meat alternatives. These findings reinforce the notion that openness to plant-based meat is strongly influenced by a combination of sociodemographic and lifestyle factors rather than by medical or restrictive dietary requirements. Furthermore, the patterns observed indicate that plant-based meat products may be particularly attractive to urban, educated, and health-conscious consumers who exhibit moderate meat consumption but remain open to reducing their intake. In summary, the results suggest that interest in plant-based meat is shaped by an interplay of demographic characteristics and lifestyle tendencies that align closely with findings

from prior literature. These insights provide an important foundation for understanding potential target markets and for developing strategies to enhance consumer acceptance of plant-based meat products in Indonesia. Future research may build upon these findings by examining behavioral motivations in greater depth and assessing how these demographic patterns influence long-term adoption of alternative proteins.

Table 2. Cross tabulation between demographic characteristics and buying intention

		Buying Intention	
		Yes	No
Gender	Female	125	16
	Male	85	12
Age	17-24	32	8
	25-34	158	17
	35-44	7	2
	>45	13	1
Domicile	Jakarta	142	20
	Bogor	22	3
	Depok	22	3
	Tangerang	16	1
	Bekasi	8	1
Level of Education	Elementary School	2	0
	Middle School	0	1
	Senior high school	32	9
	Associate degree	18	3
	Undergraduate	126	12
	Graduate	28	2
	Postgraduate	4	1
Job	Not working	6	7
	State-Owned Enterprise/Civil Servant	54	3
	Housewife	15	4
	Private Employee	64	2
	Student	31	6
	Self-Employed/Entrepreneur	40	6
Income	≤ Rp 500.000	6	6
	Rp 500.001 – Rp 999.999	18	6
	Rp 1.000.000 – Rp 2.999.999	32	4
	Rp 3.000.000 – Rp 4.999.999	56	5
	Rp 5.000.000 – Rp 9.999.999	60	5
	≥ Rp 10.000.000	38	2
Lifestyle	Weight loss diet	34	6
	Healthy lifestyle	83	11
	Plant-based diet	25	2
	Low cholesterol/fat	28	5
	Vegetarian/Vegan	17	1
	None of the above	23	3
Medical Reasons	Yes, due to doctor's recommendation	49	4
	Yes, due to personal considerations	76	11
	No	85	13
Meat Consumption	4-6 times per week	28	8
	1-3 times per week	68	8
	1-3 times per month	80	7
	Every day	22	2
	Never at all	12	3
Meat Purchase Expenses	< Rp100.000	32	4
	Rp100.000 – Rp199.999	51	6
	Rp 200.000 - Rp 399.999	57	7
	Rp 400.000 - Rp 599.999	39	8
	Rp 600.000 - Rp 999.999	9	2
	> Rp 1.000.000	22	1

The analysis of cross-tabulated data between demographic characteristics and buying intention reveals clear patterns that align with existing literature on plant-based meat consumers. Gender differences were evident in the results: female respondents demonstrated a higher buying intention (125) compared to male respondents (85) (Table 2). This finding strengthens previous research by Profeta et al. (2021), who reported that women tend to prefer plant-based meat products more than men. Similarly, Siegrist and Hartmann (2019) found that women show greater openness toward plant-based alternatives due to their heightened health consciousness and environmental awareness. The consistency between the present data and previous studies suggests that gender remains a significant determinant of purchasing intention in the plant-based category.

Age also emerged as an influential factor, with the 25–34 age group showing the highest buying intention (158 respondents) Table 2. This finding supports Mintel (2020), which identified consumers aged 25–34 as the main market drivers of the plant-based protein segment. Furthermore, research by Chen (2022) and Hwang et al. (2020) similarly noted that younger adults tend to display higher curiosity and openness toward alternative protein products. Their comfort with food innovations and familiarity with global dietary trends may explain their strong representation among those intending to purchase plant-based meat.

Educational attainment also showed a significant relationship with buying intention. Respondents with an undergraduate degree (126) or graduate qualifications (28) exhibited the highest levels of purchase intention Table 2. This aligns with Szenderák et al. (2022), who demonstrated that higher education levels correlate with greater understanding and acceptance of plant-based meat alternatives. Educated consumers are more likely to access diverse sources of nutrition and sustainability knowledge, which enhances their acceptance of plant-based innovations. Thus, education appears to play a key role in shaping informed consumer choices.

Domicile findings further reinforce the demographic patterns observed. Respondents residing in Jakarta (142 respondents) had the strongest buying intention compared to other regions Table 2. This reflects the urban concentration of plant-based product adoption, consistent with the notion that metropolitan consumers are more exposed to global food trends, have higher purchasing power, and greater access to plant-based products.

Occupation and income also influenced purchasing intention. Private sector employees recorded the highest buying intention (64 respondents), followed by civil servants (54 respondents) and entrepreneurs (40 respondents) Table 2. These occupational categories generally reflect stable employment and steady income, which is supported by the income data. Respondents earning IDR 5,000,000–9,999,999 (60 respondents) and IDR 3,000,000–4,999,999 (56 respondents) showed the highest purchasing intention Table 2. Previous studies by Hwang et al. (2020) and Chen (2022) similarly concluded that consumers with stable and moderate to high income levels exhibit greater willingness to try plant-based meat products. These findings indicate that economic capacity remains a significant enabler of plant-based product adoption.

Lifestyle preferences also played an important role. Respondents who reported living a healthy lifestyle (83 respondents) and those pursuing a weight-loss diet (34 respondents) showed higher buying intention than other groups Table 2. These findings demonstrate that lifestyle-driven motivations, rather than strict medical needs, are more influential in determining interest in plant-based meat. This is supported by the Good Food Institute (2020), which found that consumers often adopt plant-based alternatives due to health, ethical, and environmental considerations, not merely medical recommendations. In this study, respondents with no medical reasons displayed the highest buying intention (85 respondents) compared to those with doctor recommendations (49 respondents) or personal medical considerations (76 respondents).

Meat consumption patterns further contextualise purchasing intention. Respondents consuming meat 1–3 times per month (80 respondents) and 1–3 times per week (68 respondents) exhibited the strongest intention to buy plant-based meat Table 2. These levels indicate moderate meat consumption, suggesting that the respondents are not heavy meat eaters nor strict vegetarians. This aligns with Hartmann and Siegrist (2020), who identified moderate meat consumers as a prime target group for plant-based alternatives because they recognize the health implications of meat without fully eliminating animal products. Additionally, Hoek et al. (2011) emphasised that consumers who are not strict vegetarians are more likely to accept meat substitutes than non-vegetarian respondents, supporting the pattern observed in the present results.

Monthly meat purchase expenditures produced a similar trend. Respondents spending IDR 200,000–399,999 (57 respondents) or IDR 100,000–199,999 (51 respondents) demonstrated the highest intention to purchase plant-based meat Table 2. These expenditure levels reflect moderate consumption habits and align with the idea that consumers who have not fully committed to vegetarian diets may be more inclined to explore plant-based alternatives.

Overall, the integrated results and discussion show that buying intention for plant-based meat in this study is shaped by a combination of factors: gender, age, education, domicile, occupation, income, lifestyle, medical considerations, and meat consumption behaviors. Each of these demographic patterns aligns closely with existing research, reinforcing the credibility of the findings. The result paints a consistent consumer profile: young, educated, health-conscious, urban, and moderately meat-consuming individuals with stable income, mirroring global trends in plant-based product adoption. These insights provide valuable guidance for product positioning, market segmentation, and targeted marketing strategies within Indonesia's growing plant-based market.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how demographic characteristics shape consumer interest and buying intention toward plant-based meat products. The descriptive analysis and cross-tabulation results consistently show that demographic factors play an important role in determining the likelihood of purchasing plant-based meat. The findings indicate that consumers who are young, highly educated, urban-dwelling, and economically stable demonstrate the strongest interest in plant-based products. These respondents also tend to adopt health-oriented lifestyles and maintain moderate meat consumption patterns, suggesting that openness toward plant-based meat is not limited to individuals with medical dietary restrictions but is instead driven by general health awareness and lifestyle preferences.

The dominance of respondents from Jakarta highlights the influence of urban environments on exposure to new food technologies and sustainable dietary trends. Gender differences also emerged, with female respondents showing higher interest and buying intention, reinforcing prior research that positions women as more proactive in adopting healthier and environmentally conscious food choices. Similarly, higher education levels were consistently associated with greater acceptance of plant-based alternatives, reflecting the importance of knowledge, information access, and awareness in shaping consumer perceptions.

Overall, the study concludes that demographic profiles remain a critical foundation for understanding consumer receptiveness to plant-based meat. The demographic patterns identified in this research contribute to the broader body of knowledge on sustainable food transitions by confirming that plant-based meat adoption is most likely to emerge among younger, educated, and health-motivated populations living in urban settings. These findings strengthen the evidence that demographic drivers are central to the market development of plant-based products and offer valuable insights for future research seeking to deepen the understanding of behavioural motivations underlying alternative protein consumption.

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