# An Analysis of Determinant Factors of Malaysian Consumers' Purchase Intention toward Heritage Food: A Case Study of Malaysia Tok Beef Rendang

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**DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.91100009**

**Received: 07 November 2025; Accepted: 14 November 2025; Published: 27 November 2025**

## ABSTRACTS

This study investigates the determinants influencing Malaysian consumers' purchase intention toward heritage food processed using retort ready-to-eat (RTE) technology, with a specific focus on Malaysia Tok Beef Rendang. As demand for convenient and culturally authentic food grows, retort technology offers a viable solution by ensuring extended shelf life, safety, and preservation of sensory quality. The research examines five key determinants—quality, price, technology, convenience, and intention to purchase—within the context of RTE heritage food consumption. A cross-sectional quantitative method was employed using a structured questionnaire developed from established measurement items. A total of 150 prospective respondents assessed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate relationships between determinants and purchase intention. Findings highlight that perceived quality, affordability, technological assurance, and convenience significantly shape consumers' behavioural intention toward retort-processed heritage foods. The results underscore the potential of retort technology in sustaining Malaysia's culinary heritage while aligning with modern lifestyle demands. The study provides meaningful insights for food manufacturers, policymakers, and gastronomy stakeholders on enhancing product acceptance, improving market strategies, and promoting Malaysian heritage dishes internationally through innovative food technology.

**Keywords:** Malaysian Heritage Food, Retort ready-to-eat (RTE), perceived value, customer satisfaction, behavioural intention.

## INTRODUCTIONS

Retort Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food technology uses thermal processing to ensure the safety and extended shelf life of food products that can be consumed without further preparation. This technology is particularly relevant in Malaysia, where demand for convenient, safe food options is growing amid rapid urbanisation and changing lifestyles.

Malaysian Tok Beef Rendang, a traditional dish made from beef, coconut milk, and various spices, has been adapted for modern convenience through retort-ready-to-eat (RTE) food technology. This method ensures long-term storage, safety, and quality while maintaining the dish's traditional flavors. The Retort Processing involves Thermal Treatment, whereby food is subjected to heating within hermetically sealed containers, such as retortable pouches, to achieve sterilisation of both the food product and the container. This approach guarantees the elimination of microorganisms and prolongs the product's shelf life to exceeding one year at ambient temperatures. Retort-ready-to-eat technology effectively adapts traditional Malaysian Tok Beef Rendang for modern consumption, ensuring long shelf life, safety, and quality. This method preserves the dish's rich flavours and nutritional value, making it a convenient and reliable option for consumers.

Ready-to-Eat (RTE) foods have become increasingly popular due to their convenience, extended shelf life, and minimal preparation requirements. These foods are processed and packaged in a way that allows them to be consumed without further cooking or preparation, making them ideal for busy lifestyles and emergencies [1], [2] [3]. The retort process, a thermal sterilisation method, is a key technology in the production of RTE foods. This process involves sealing food in airtight containers and then heating them to high temperatures to destroy microorganisms and enzymes that could cause spoilage [4] [5]

Retort processing is particularly beneficial for ensuring the safety and extending the shelf life of RTE foods. By using high temperatures, typically around 121°C, for a specified duration, the process effectively eliminates pathogenic microorganisms, including spores, which are resistant to other forms of sterilisation [4] [6]. This method is widely used for a variety of food products, including meats, vegetables, and traditional dishes, ensuring that they remain safe and palatable over extended periods [7].

The application of retort technology to authentic Malay foods offers a unique opportunity to preserve and distribute traditional dishes while maintaining their quality and safety. Malay cuisine, known for its rich flavors and diverse ingredients, can benefit from the retort process by ensuring that dishes such as rendang, nasi lemak, and various curries retain their taste, texture, and nutritional value [8] [9]. The use of retort pouches, which are flexible and durable, allows for the efficient packaging and distribution of these foods, making them accessible to a wider audience [10]

## Objective

The study aims to examine the factors of RTE's food technology that influence the purchase intention of the products among Malaysian consumers. The study findings may improve RTE's food technology regarding perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intention towards Malaysian heritage food. The study findings could help stakeholders of RTE's food technology meet consumer preferences to enhance their business sustainability, improve Malaysian gastronomy products, and promote Malaysian heritage food internationality.

**Key Aspects of Retort RTE Food Technology**

| Aspects | Description | Study |
|---|---|---|
| Thermal Processing | Retort processing uses thermal treatment to ensure the microbiological safety and long-term storage of RTE foods. The food and containers are sterilised using steam or pressurised hot water. | [11][12] [13] |
| Packaging | Protecting food at high temperatures requires resealable bags made from layers of synthetic materials or aluminium foil. It takes less time to heat treat them and the sense quality is kept because they are good at conducting heat. | [11] [10] |
| Shelf Life and Safety | Retort processing ensures commercial sterility, thereby prolonging product shelf life and preserving consumer safety. This method effectively prevents microbiological contamination and thereby ensures food safety during storage. | [14] [15] |
| Applications | Retort technology is applied across a range of food products, including meat, cereals, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and pulses, rendering them convenient and ready-to-eat. | [1] [16] [8] |
| Consumer Acceptance | Retort-processed foods are typically favoured by consumers for their convenience, safety, and sustained quality during extended storage durations. | [16] |

Retort RTE food technology primarily revolves around thermal processing to ensure long-term storage and microbiological safety. The use of retortable pouches, which offer good thermal conductivity, is essential in this process. This technology not only extends the shelf life of RTE foods but also maintains their safety and sensory quality. Innovations such as the addition of hydrocolloids and antioxidants can further enhance the quality attributes of these foods. Proper hygiene practices during processing are crucial for ensuring better

microbiological quality. Retort technology is versatile, applicable to a wide range of food products, and generally well-accepted by consumers for its convenience and reliability.

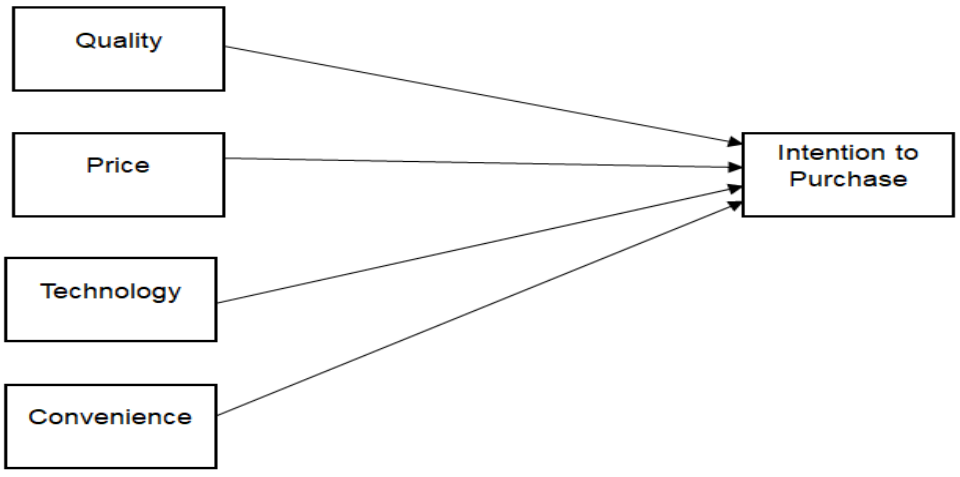
## LITERATURE REVIEW

The retort processing technology has been widely explored for its potential to extend the shelf life and ensure the safety of ready-to-eat (RTE) foods, including traditional Malay dishes. This technology involves thermal processing, which guarantees long-term storage at room temperature while maintaining the quality and microbiological safety of the food [11]. The use of retortable pouches, which are made from laminates of synthetic materials or aluminium foil with synthetic materials, is particularly advantageous due to their good thermal conductivity, reducing the required heat treatment time and retaining the sensory quality of the product.

In the context of traditional Malay food, the application of modern technology, including retort processing, has been debated among professionals. However, it has been found that modern equipment can significantly benefit the preparation of traditional foods by reducing labour costs, easing food preparation, saving time, and ensuring standardisation in food management without compromising the authenticity of the dishes [17]. This is particularly relevant for the hotel industry in Malaysia, where large quantities of food need to be prepared efficiently while maintaining traditional flavors and authenticity

Studies on various traditional foods have demonstrated the effectiveness of retort processing in enhancing shelf life and safety. For instance, the retort processing of "Ayam Taliwang" and "Sate Rembiga," traditional Indonesian meat-based dishes, showed that the foods met the requirements for distribution with extended shelf life and safety from microbial contamination [18]. Similarly, the development of RTE rice dishes, such as liwet rice substituted with corn analog rice, using retort processing has shown promising results in terms of physicochemical and organoleptic characteristics, making it suitable for emergency food supplies [8].

The retort processing of traditional fermented foods, such as mandai, has also been explored. The canning of RTE mandai using thermal pasteurisation significantly improved its quality and safety, making it a viable option for commercial manufacturing [19]. Additionally, the development of RTE fish curry, such as tilapia fish curry, using retort processing has been successful in maintaining the nutritional value and sensory quality of the product over extended storage periods




## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Intention to purchase

Intention to purchase RTE. The purchase intention for ready-to-eat (RTE) food is influenced by a variety of factors, which can be broadly categorised into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intention to purchase ready-to-eat (RTE) food is influenced by various factors, primarily driven by convenience and lifestyle changes. Studies indicate that convenience is a significant factor, especially among working individuals who lack time to prepare meals from scratch [20] [21] [22]. The Theory of Planned Behaviour has been applied to understand these

purchase intentions, highlighting that convenience is a significant factor in the decision-making process for RTE foods [21]. Additionally, the socio-demographic changes, such as urbanisation and increased earning potential, have also contributed to the growing preference for RTE foods [23]. To understand the intention to purchase Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food in Malaysia, it is essential to explore various factors influencing consumer behaviour. The convenience of RTE foods is a significant motivator for Malaysian consumers. Studies indicate that a substantial portion of consumers purchase RTE foods primarily for their convenience, with 47.3% of respondents in one study citing this as their main reason. Additionally, the frequency of RTE food consumption is notable, with 40.7% of respondents purchasing RTE foods more than twice a week. This high frequency of consumption underscores the importance of convenience in driving purchase intentions. Furthermore, the demographic characteristics of consumers, such as gender and education level, play a role in their food safety knowledge, which can influence their purchasing decisions [24]. Consumer perceptions and safety concerns also significantly impact the intention to purchase RTE foods. A study focusing on university students and employees in Kuala Lumpur found that 52% of respondents consumed RTE food two to four times a week, with lunch being the most common meal for RTE food consumption [25]

**Quality**

One of the most important aspects that determines whether or not consumers intend to buy ready-to-eat (RTE) foods is the quality of the product. The perceived quality significantly impacts purchasing intentions. Consumers frequently associate premium RTE foods with superior flavour, safety, and nutritional value [26] [27] [28] For example, a key factor in determining purchase intention is sensory appeal, which includes flavour, sight, and taste. The nutritional quality, encompassing health benefits and the availability of important nutrients, is a significant consideration. RTE foods with nutritional advantages are preferred by consumers who are becoming more health-conscious.

H1: Quality of the product will significantly influence the intention to purchase RTE Foods

**Price**

The significance of pricing in the intention to purchase ready-to-eat (RTE) foods is well demonstrated in numerous studies. The price significantly affects customer behaviour and purchase intentions about RTE foods. Price is another critical determinant, with affordability being a major consideration for many consumers [29]. On top of that, Price is a critical factor, with consumers often balancing cost against perceived value. Competitive pricing can positively influence purchase intentions [20] [30]. The price is an important consideration influencing the intention to purchase RTE foods. A study revealed that price constituted 79.9% of the variance in purchase intention, emphasising its significant impact [29]. In conclusion, price is one of the most important things that determines whether someone will buy RTE foods. Hence, this statement formulates the hypothesis that price significantly influences purchase intention

H2: Price of the product will significantly influence the intention to purchase RTE Foods

**Technology**

The importance of retort technology in determining the intention to purchase ready-to-eat (RTE) foods is varied, involving factors such as food safety, quality, convenience, and consumer perception. Within the scope of this study, the technological component of concern is the retort processing technique. Technological Advancements were adapting to continuous innovation in retort processing, including the use of non-thermal sterilisation methods and improved packaging materials, which help maintain the nutritional and sensory quality of RTE foods while ensuring safety [4], [31]. These advancements address consumer concerns about the potential negative effects of thermal processing on food quality, thereby supporting a positive purchase intention. In conclusion, retort technology significantly impacts the purchasing intent for RTE foods by guaranteeing safety, extending shelf life, preserving quality, and providing convenience. These elements synergistically augment consumer trust and contentment, hence stimulating the market for RTE products. In addition, the hypothesis regarding the significance of technology in influencing the intention to purchase has been developed.

H3: Technology of the product will significantly influence the intention to purchase RTE Foods

**Convenience**

Convenience significantly impacts consumers' willingness to buy ready-to-eat (RTE) foods. The importance has been demonstrated by numerous studies that investigate the determinants influencing consumer intention about RTE foods. In terms of practicality and convenience, RTE foods' convenience is a key factor in consumers' intentions to buy, particularly those who are busy and don't have the time to make meals from scratch [20] [26]. Retort packing significantly improves convenience by offering a ready-to-eat option that necessitates neither refrigeration nor extra preparation, rendering it exceptionally convenient for consumption on the move. in light of hectic lifestyles and time constraints, RTE foods are preferred by many customers because of their convenience, particularly by those who lead hectic lives and have demanding job schedules. Due to time constraints, RTE foods are a desirable alternative [20] [32]

H4: Convenience of the product will significantly influence the intention to purchase RTE Foods

# METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study gathered quantitative data on respondents' attitudes towards price, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and behavioural intention. The G*Power software was used to calculate the study sample size. The number of predictors was set as four (4), and the power analysis generated 150 the minimum sample size. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A focuses on demographic information, while Section B focuses on consumer purchase intention and its determinants. The instrument was developed by first reviewing the literature. We adopted existing construct items from past studies to ensure the best possible item reliability and validity. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’). With a convenience sampling approach

Before the data was collected, the instrument and the items were validated and pre-tested. A *pre-test* is a procedure that will require responses and feedback from a small set of respondents from the population. For face validity, the constructs and the items were checked and examined by three faculty members who were experts in the field. The procedure was performed as a strategy to ensure each item represents the meaning of the construct, to indicate the research content was related to the dimensions and variables, and to ensure no bias on this research initiative was presented. To examine the measurement and structural models, we followed the Anderson and Gerbing (1988) guideline and used SmartPLS version 4 for partial least square (PLS) modelling. The method is highly appropriate for theory building, hypothesis testing, and predicting the determinants (Hair et al., 2017). PLS modelling is an acceptable method that can accommodate a smaller sample size without a normality assumption (Chin et al., 2003).

The measurement items were tested for both convergent and discriminant validity. The results of the reliability convergent validity analyses are presented. The indicator loadings, composite reliability (CR) , and average variance extracted (AVE) assessed the convergent validity. The loadings for all reflective items exceeded the recommended value of 0.600. The CR values exceeded the minimum value of 0.700, and the AVE exceeded 0.500 for all constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, some evidence indicates an adequate convergent validity of the measurement model

# CONCLUSION

The demand for RTE foods is driven by the need for convenience, especially among urban populations with busy lifestyles. The ability to quickly prepare and consume a meal without extensive cooking aligns well with modern consumer preferences [3]. Moreover, the growing interest in traditional and ethnic foods presents a significant market opportunity for authentic Malay RTE products. By leveraging retort technology, food manufacturers can offer high-quality, safe, and convenient options that cater to both local and international markets [9]. Retort Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food technology represents a significant advancement in food processing, offering a reliable method to preserve the safety, quality, and convenience of traditional dishes. For authentic Malay foods, this technology provides an excellent means to maintain the rich culinary heritage while meeting the demands of

modern consumers. Continuous innovation and optimisation in retort processing and packaging will further enhance the appeal and market potential of these traditional foods, ensuring their place in the global RTE food market.

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