

CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOR FOR LOCAL MEAT AMONG MALAYSIAN: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia has experienced significant economic growth in recent decades, and its prosperity has accounted for an increase in meat consumption. The demand for meat in Malaysia exceeds the supply, leading to a reliance on imported meat to satisfy consumers' needs. Therefore, it is important to understand the underlying consumers' preference to purchase local meat. Through a comprehensive literature synthesis and theoretical analysis, this paper endeavours to illustrate the new factors of consumers' purchasing preferences, such as best-before date, marbling, and traditional methods used in the production of local meat among Malaysians when purchasing local meat. This paper aims to provide a conceptual roadmap for understanding how Malaysian consumers evaluate information on best-before dates, marbling, and traditional methods used in production when purchasing local meat by suggesting a conceptual framework that incorporates these variables. This conceptual study seeks to lay the groundwork for future empirical research and strategic planning for local meat suppliers, enabling a more thorough understanding of the complex processes that influence consumer behavior when purchasing local meat.

Keywords: Purchasing preference, local meat, consumers' preference

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Currently, Malaysia is experiencing a significant increase in economic growth, which has also increased demand for meat. Malaysia has a wide variety of meats, including red meat of beef, goat, and lamb. According to a report from Credence Research (March 5, 2024), pork and beef are the most popular meat varieties consumed in Malaysia, while beef and mutton are favoured among certain ethnic groups. It was projected in 2023 that the Malaysian meat market will expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.50%. Meat and beef consumption has had a steady rise over the past twenty years, reaching unprecedented levels (Whitton et al., 2021). According to Smith et al. (2018), beef ranks as the third most consumed meat in Malaysia, after chicken and pork. In 2018, Malaysia produced 752,500 cattle for consumption (Hirschmann, 2020). Nevertheless, Malaysia faces a substantial issue with beef production.

In Malaysia, there is a higher demand for beef than supply, as beef is the most preferred by Malaysians among meat categories. As a result, the country is required to import up to 70% of its beef (Buda & Mohamed, 2021). Because of this issue, beef production in Malaysia has fallen in recent years (Hirschmann, 2020). This situation has compelled the government to

intervene in the cattle production process. The Malaysian government's objective was to augment cattle production within the nation by 2025 (Nasir et al., 2021). The government intends to graze specific palm oil plantations in order to repurpose them for beef production. When the demand for beef exceeds the supply, beef prices typically experience significant increases. There is substantial apprehension among consumers in the nation regarding the cost of cattle. The government must ensure that the price of beef remains affordable.

However, the data is still ambiguous about whether the price of beef has a crucial role in customers' choices for buying beef and beef-related products. Interestingly, there is a prevailing belief that a rise in beef production will result in a concurrent decline in beef prices. Although considerable efforts have been undertaken to enhance beef production in the country, there has been a dearth of attention on ascertaining if consumers exhibit a predilection for domestically produced beef in comparison to imported cattle, as well as the determinants that influence these preferences. Additional variables besides costs may be influencing the situation. In the absence of this knowledge, the increase in production may have a negative effect, as consumers may continue to reject beef that is produced locally. Malaysians continue to favour local beef due to its consistent halal status and superior quality in comparison to imported meat. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research on cattle that is sourced locally (Harun et al., 2022). As a result of insufficient production, most of the research on the beef business has concentrated on the production site over the past ten years.

Nevertheless, there is a limited amount of research that has investigated the preference of consumers towards locally sourced beef (Harun et al., 2022), and a low number of studies investigate the factors that contribute to how beef production impacts customer purchasing preferences, specifically among Malaysians. It is essential to identify and close this gap promptly. Notwithstanding the increasing focus on bolstering local food systems, customer purchasing behaviour regarding local meat in Malaysia is still inadequately comprehended. Current research predominantly emphasises generic food consumption or preferences for imported meat, frequently overlooking the distinct cultural, economic, and psychological elements that shape Malaysians' decisions concerning locally sourced meat. Moreover, the theoretical frameworks utilised in previous studies are disjointed, providing minimal explanatory capacity about the incentives and obstacles influencing customer choices in this situation. This conceptual study seeks to fill this vacuum by formulating an integrative theoretical model that amalgamates consumer behaviour theories, socio-cultural influences, and value-based perceptions to elucidate local meat purchasing behaviour among Malaysians.

Considering existing research gaps, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to define and illustrate the factors of consumers' purchasing behaviour for local meat among Malaysians in order to develop new insights, address gaps, and advance the current factor of local meat purchasing preferences. This move ensures that the government's efforts to enhance local meat supply are in harmony with the demands of customers. Given that prices play a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions for many products, it is quite probable that price is one of the most significant elements that determine consumer preferences when buying local meat. Evaluating these critical criteria can help the government understand the extent to which local beef production aligns with local customers' demands and tastes.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Consumer Behavior in Meat Purchasing

2.1.1 Consumer Preferences

Consumer preference is the individual's selection of products and services, influenced by factors such as ownership, identity, and initial expenses. Purchase preference is the cognitive process by which consumers choose a particular product from a range of options (Zhang &

Gupta, 2018). Individuals implicitly assume that the products are beneficial and vital when they make a purchase. Understanding Malaysians' purchasing preferences is crucial for businesses to thrive in a competitive market. In purchasing imported beef meat, consumers preferred meat with a Halal logo. With the Halal logo, Muslim people are guaranteed that the food is permissible to eat (Jamaluddin & Suhaimi, 2022). The halal certificate was labelled as the first factor that influenced the respondent's preference towards meat and meat products with traceability systems (Nawi et al., 2018). According to Widyarma et al. (2023), religiosity exerts the most significant influence on the decision to purchase a product, specifically halal items, followed by price and then halal awareness.

Consumer preference is the individual's selection of products and services, influenced by factors such as ownership, identity, and initial expenses (Allen & Hung, 2000). Consumer behaviour comprises the entirety of a customer's actions, starting from the search for appropriate services and products to the utilisation and eventual disposal of these services or products (Zhang & Gupta, 2018). Companies utilise this knowledge and expertise to ascertain the most effective methods of influencing the decisions and choices of numerous consumers in their favour. In order to effectively promote services or products, marketing companies must possess a thorough comprehension of the various phases that comprise the customer purchasing process. This knowledge is provided by various models and is essential for maximising productivity in marketing efforts (Ratasuk, 2019).

According to Duong et al. (2022), only limited studies have studied consumers' preferences when purchasing meat, and the most preferred determinant is freshness, whereas Ma, Verkuil, Reinbach, and Meinert (2017) examined origin, price, and package type on quality and freshness of the meat. Based on Azizan et al. (2022), consumers who possess confidence in food labelling and ingredient information that aligns with their ideas about the safety and halal status of food products are likely to depend on their positive and robust attitudes. According to a previous study by Alanis et al. (2022), price, tradition, animal origin (Ortega et al., 2011; Ai et al., 2024), and closeness of meat production are the most important criteria valued by meat consumers in Mexico. Another study from Ortega et al. (2022) revealed that Chinese customers exhibit the highest preference for the government certification attribute when buying meat. Most previous studies have identified different preferences based on the study's focus and origin, as individuals from different places tend to have different attitudes and behaviours. However, it is crucial to identify and understand which determinant Malaysian consumers prefer when purchasing local meat. Therefore, the current study, which is exploratory in nature, is grounded in a conceptual analysis of the preferences of local meat consumers when purchasing meat in Malaysia.

2.1.2 Price Sensitivity

In Malaysia, meat plays an important role in both traditional and modern culinary cuisine. Beef, chicken and mutton are used in many household meals as well as festive dishes. The demand for these meats has been steadily increasing, driven by changing preferences and increasing disposable incomes. Price plays a crucial role in this change, as it will directly influence how often and which types of meat are consumed. Price is the financial amount that customers must pay in return for a specified product or service. To clarify, a price can be defined as a proposition to exchange a certain item for a specified sum of money. The quality of beef products in Malaysia significantly influences a customer's purchasing decision. Besides, pricing also plays a crucial role in increasing consumers' loyalty and satisfaction with beef products in Malaysia. Furthermore, Maslowska and Viswanathan (2017) describe the price as the market's expenditure. Pricing products and services is important for the company, customers, and society. It is a determining factor for success in business, consumer happiness, and the appropriate use of economic resources. It is an essential element of a

company's marketing strategy, directly impacting profits and generating revenue from sales. In addition, pricing plays a crucial role in the marketing strategy of a small firm (Suhaily & Darmoyo, 2017).

Worldwide, researchers have conducted numerous studies on consumers' preferences when purchasing meat. According to Ai et al. (2024), Török et al. (2023), Duong et al. (2022), Jamaluddin and Suhaimi (2022), Wang et al. (2018), Merlino et al. (2018) and Ma et al. (2017), price is one of the most important extrinsic cues, or product-related cues that are not part of the physical products. Price influences the frequency of mutton meat purchases in Mexico, and consumers base their purchasing decisions for meat substitutes on a combination of factors, including price (Alanis et al., 2022). Additionally, consumers primarily interpret perceived value as a favourable balance between price and quality. However, the study by Nawi et al. (2018) did not consider price as a determinant impacting customers' choice for meat and meat products.

2.1.3 Perceived Quality

The concept of high-quality products is critical in both the service and manufacturing industries, and it has consistently been critical in ensuring client safety. In Malaysia, meat consumption has become an integral part of the nation's dietary culture. As the demand for high-quality meat continues to rise due to increasing incomes and evolving consumer preferences, the concept of quality has become a key driver in the meat industry. Today's world views quality as a crucial aspect of life, and businesses must effectively maintain their competitiveness in the market. Research by Harun et al. (2022) shows Malaysian consumers are willing to pay higher prices for beef if it has a higher quality.

The overall quality of a product directly affects both consumer loyalty and company profitability (Ghezelbash & Khodadadi, 2017). Health-related attributes such as visual appearance, taste, firmness, juiciness, tenderness, and flavour commonly determine the quality of meat. Furthermore, although we can objectively measure the nutritional content of meat, consumers' perception of its eating quality is highly subjective (Wantara & Tambrin, 2019). Moreover, the appropriateness of a product or service for a specific purpose often determines its quality.

The quality of a product or service is determined by the extent to which its features enable the consumer to fulfil their needs. It is essential for a company, sector, or organisation to achieve its unique objectives and attain success by offering items of superior quality at a competitive price with minimal waiting time for the consumer (Ghezelbash & Khodadadi, 2017). Moreover, the satisfaction of both perceived and actual demands is entirely dependent on the quality of products, particularly meat products. The quality of the meat is crucial for both the suppliers and the buyers. In situations where meat products are significantly scarce, it often leads to additional expenses for inspection, screening, discarding, repairing, and managing numerous complaints. Consequently, this frequently results in the distributor facing several accusations (Wantara & Tambrin, 2019).

The quality of a product can significantly impact clients' purchasing decisions in the marketplace. The way customers perceive a specific brand, including its value, services, and products, can have a significant impact on their purchasing behaviour in the market (Chamhuri & Batt, 2015). If a firm is able to cultivate favourable opinions about quality, it is likely that it will maintain its sustainability and loyalty and expand its consumer base. In addition, a high-quality product might positively influence consumers' purchasing decisions when considering established products and services (Uys & Bisschoff, 2016). For example, the quality

component in the customer decision-making process might impact the beef business in Malaysia. Increased daily client orders positively correlate with higher beef quality. In addition, if the quality of beef is poor, clients have the option to switch to alternative goods available in the market. Also, when there is a high demand for animal goods like beef in the livestock business, it leads to increased rivalry with other industries. Consequently, this compels organisations to enhance their management, analyse the market, and foster innovation in existing beef goods to fulfil the desires and requirements of all clients (Khan & Muhammad, 2020). Because of these pressures, customers will perceive the Malaysian livestock production industry as competitive. Nevertheless, the choice of diverse marketing channels and the distribution of reasonable prices connect to an effective marketing plan. In the Malaysian marketplace, there are two marketing channels: indirect and direct (Nawi et al., 2018).

This study quantifies the indirect distribution channel, which includes the intermediate and intermediary entities that are involved in the delivery of beef products to the final consumers in the market. Mega-retail establishments and hypermarkets dispersed throughout Malaysia comprise this channel. These channels directly offer a wide range of meat and other items at reduced prices. Additionally, they allow buyers the option to make large orders. In most developed countries, customers often prefer a one-stop centre for their purchasing needs, as seen by their buying behaviours. Additionally, when it comes to Malaysian beef, buyers experience an increase in their discretionary cash due to their enhanced living standards. Hence, buyers have a strong desire for beef and other items in specific quantities and qualities that may adequately satisfy their desires and requirements (Uys & Bisschoff, 2016).

2.1.4 Taste and Freshness

The taste of meat is a highly intricate characteristic of culinary enjoyment. Although the importance of tenderness in determining consumer acceptability of meat has been well recognised for a considerable period, it has become more evident that flavour also requires attention (Calkins & Hodgen, 2007). Török et al. (2023), Duong et al. (2022), Jamaluddin and Suhaimi (2022) and Merlino et al. (2018) agreed that taste is one of the consumers' preferences when purchasing meat. Certain consumers value meat based on its colour and smell. Typically, the hue of meat falls within the red spectrum and can range from dark red, bright red to faint red. However, it is just possible for pink, grey, and brown hues to also manifest. Often, the colour of the meat serves as an indicator of the specific type and level of treatment it has undergone, as well as its extent of freshness. According to Harun et al. (2022), Malaysians continue to favour local cattle due to their consistent halal status and superior quality in comparison to imported meat. Jamaluddin and Suhaimi (2022) reported that freshness and cleanliness are the important preferences described by consumers when purchasing imported meat, supporting Font-i-Furnols and Guerrero (2014), who found that consumers utilised labels, brands, freshness, and leanness of beef as quality indicators.

2.1.5 Origin and Safety of Meat

The term "origin of the meat" refers to the location or state of production. In Malaysia, as in many other countries, the origin and safety of meat are critical factors that influence consumer decisions. With growing awareness about food quality and traceability, Malaysians are increasingly concerned about where their meat comes from and how it is produced. According to Monathan et al. (2018), Mohammad et al. (2021) and Mohammad and Shaari (2022), when it comes to meat and other goods produced from animals, it is just as important to confirm the animals' nutritional history as their place of origin. The rationale behind this is

that diet can be a distinctive feature of particular production systems, such as "organic" or "grass-fed", and it can significantly affect the nutritional and sensory qualities as well as composition. Research by Jamaluddin and Suhaimi (2022) found that meat safety emerged as one of the primary factors for consumers in selecting beef in Johor Bahru. Consumers prioritised the food safety factors, including proper slaughtering methods and hygiene practices. Loureiro and Umberger (2007) found that consumers are more willing to initially pay a higher price for certified and secure meat. They would then value a meat that is traceable, has a guaranteed origin, and is ultimately tender. Based on previous literature, many scholars have linked the origin of meat products to consumers' preferences and purchasing behaviour, indicating that consumers are willing to pay for meat products from their own country of origin (Ehmke, 2006; Loureiro & Umberger, 2004). Besides, Ehmke (2006), Schupp and Gillespie (2001) agreed that the origin of meat is associated with product safety.

2.2 Conceptual Gaps of Consumer Purchasing Behaviour

Notwithstanding the growing focus on food consumption and sustainability, research about consumer purchasing behaviour on local meat in Malaysia is still scarce and disjointed. Most current research concentrates on general food items or imported meat, frequently highlighting price and food safety as the primary factors influencing purchasing decisions (Abd Ghani et al., 2024; Isahak et al., 2024; Chamhuri & Batt, 2013). Nevertheless, these studies infrequently include other socio-cultural and psychological factors, like trust in local producers, cultural values, environmental issues, or subjective norms. Furthermore, there is an absence of integration of comprehensive theoretical frameworks, particularly the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Value-Based Theories, in the investigation of local meat consumption. Moreover, despite Malaysia's diversified and culturally affluent population, few research examines the impact of cultural identification or religious preferences (e.g., halal knowledge) on local meat selections. Investigations into local food systems in Southeast Asia indicate a widespread underutilisation of indigenous produce attributed to unfamiliarity, insufficient exposure, and inadequate consumer education (Ng et al., 2017), which may also pertain to local meat. These inadequacies underscore the necessity for a conceptual framework that includes behavioural, cultural, and contextual aspects to enhance the understanding and prediction of local meat purchasing behaviour among Malaysian consumers.

Table 1 (in the appendix) shows the summary of Malaysian consumers' purchasing preferences when purchasing meat, while Table 2 (in the appendix) presents a summary of the previous literature on consumers' purchase preferences for meat worldwide from 2010 to 2025. Based on the above list from Table 1, the most preferred preferences among Malaysian consumers when purchasing meat are price, quality of meat, taste and texture, appearance, halal certificate, freshness, and origin of meat. However, there are several preferences that have not yet been studied or measured in studies on consumers' purchasing preferences among Malaysians. It is hoped that this finding will help studies in Malaysia to better recognise and understand the needs of Malaysians when purchasing local meat.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a systematic review methodology, which entailed the collection and analysis of articles that were relevant to the subject of this paper (Kamaruddin, 2022). We have reviewed journals such as Food Quality and Preference, Meat Science, Future Foods, Food Research, Journal of Agrobiotechnology, and others as quantitative and qualitative reference databases. We searched for and adopted references in this study using keywords such as "purchasing preferences", "meat purchase", "consumer preferences", "purchase behaviour", "meat consumption", "personality traits", "purchase intent", and "attributes". To

ensure our literature search was both manageable and representative of the diversity in consumer purchasing preferences, we restricted our search to articles published in the last 15 years (2010 to 2025) from four academic databases: Scopus, Elsevier, Science Direct, and Emerald Insight. Findings were organised thematically to identify patterns, trends, and meaningful insights. It is important to note that our conceptual paper aims to find the preferences that have not yet been studied among Malaysian 'consumers when purchasing local meat.

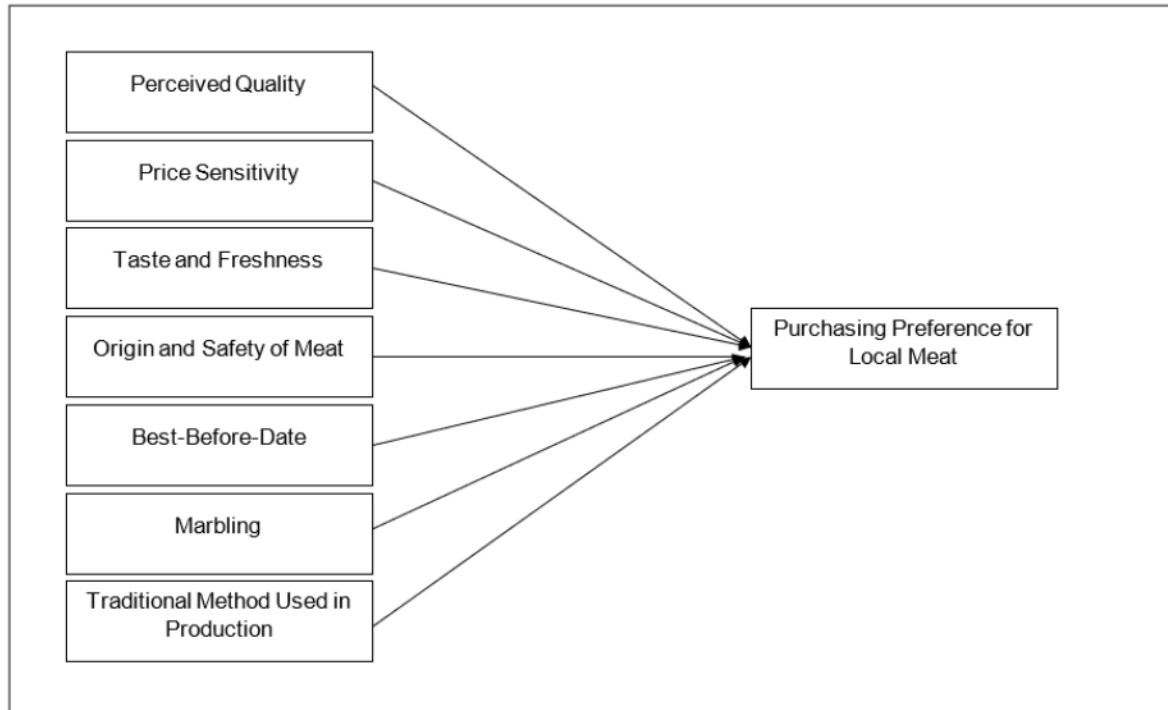


Fig. 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework for Consumer Purchasing Preference for Local Meat

Fig. 1. illustrates the conceptualization of a new preference, yet it remains unexplored in Malaysian studies to date. This finding will be a novelty that can be used in future studies in Malaysia. The study focuses on the purchasing preferences of Malaysians for local meat.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this conceptual paper has endeavoured to elucidate the determinants of Malaysians' purchasing preferences when buying local meat, such as halal, freshness, quality, and food safety. Through an extensive review and theoretical synthesis, this paper has identified the most significant local meat purchasing preferences among Malaysians and identified a new attribute that is still not measured and studied among Malaysians, such as best-before-date, marbling, and the traditional method used in production. The new attribute is believed to contribute to a future understanding of consumers' purchasing preferences for local meat in Malaysia.

This study will be a reference source for butchers and also relevant ministries to understand the behaviour and needs of buyers when purchasing local meat because the demand for meat among Malaysians is increasing over time. This study adds to the growing body of literature on the factors that influence Malaysians' purchasing preferences for local meat, specifically halal, freshness, quality, and food safety. Additionally, this study aids in

identifying the variables that significantly influence consumers' purchasing preferences. Early identification of these factors could assist local meat suppliers in enhancing and organising their planning when selling local meat, thereby ensuring Malaysians are satisfied and encouraged to purchase local meat. The study will also aid the Department of Veterinary Services in formulating policies and livestock commodities to ensure sufficient stock and superior quality of local meat. This study differs from prior research by offering specific, empirical insights into the relationship between purchasing preferences when buying local meat and advocating for more efficient strategies and priorities when buying local meat.

5.0 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This conceptual paper presents several important implications for stakeholders in Malaysia's meat industry. The findings can guide policymakers in developing targeted interventions, including subsidies, quality assurance programmes, and enhancements in halal certification, to support the local meat sector. Marketing practitioners can gain valuable insights into essential consumer drivers, including trust, price sensitivity, health consciousness, and religious alignment, to create more effective promotional strategies suited to the Malaysian context. The study emphasises the significance of supporting local meat production, thereby contributing to overarching objectives of food security and rural economic development. The results highlight the necessity for consumer education initiatives that focus on the safety, traceability, and economic advantages of buying locally sourced meat. Future studies should experimentally evaluate the suggested conceptual framework by quantitative methods, such as surveys or structural equation modelling, to substantiate the impact of identified variables on purchasing behaviour. Exploring demographic segmentation is crucial to ascertain how variables such as age, income, education, and geographic location influence customer preferences for local meat. Comparative research among various ethnic groups in Malaysia or other Southeast Asian nations could yield further cultural and contextual insights. Moreover, behavioural tests or outdoor investigations could effectively elucidate genuine customer behaviour beyond self-reported data. Considering recent global disruptions, future research should investigate how crises such as pandemics, food safety scandals, or supply chain shocks affect consumer dependence on local meat sources. Ultimately, incorporating environmental and ethical factors—such as sustainability, animal welfare, and carbon footprint—into future models may uncover evolving attitudes that influence purchase decisions among Malaysian consumers.

CO-AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Summary of Previous Study for Consumers' Purchase Preferences for Meat in Malaysia

Author	Country	Factor of Purchase Preference
Jamaluddin & Suhaimi (2022)	Malaysia	Halal logo Taste & texture Religion Health Appearance Colour Price
Nawi, Basri, Kamarulzaman & Shamsudin (2018)	Malaysia	Halal certificate Confidence Transparency Food safety Quality Knowledge Country of Origin
Harun et., (2022)	Malaysia	Price Quality of beef
Pathmananathan & Kenny (2021)	Malaysia	Food safety Meat characteristic

Table 2: Summary of Previous Study for Consumers' Purchase Preferences for Meat Worldwide

Author	Country	Factor of Purchase Preference
Liu et al., (2025)	China	Price Brand Nutritional value Religion Convenience Safety Organic Certification Colour Marbling
Melios et al., (2025)	Greece	Price Nutritional value Sensory quality Safety Ethics Origin and traceability
Dahal et al., (2024)	German, Japanese, and British	Price Colour Marbling Brand Quality seal Quality certification Nutrition label Date of expiration Traceability
Török et al., (2023)	European Countries	Product's country of origin Best-before date Price

		Traditional methods used in production Taste of product Product's region of origin
Wang et al., (2018)	China	Package type Preservation method Place of origin Price
Merlino et al., (2018)	Northwest Italy	Price Country of origin Brand Colour Organic label Tenderness Taste/Flavor
Ai et al., (2024)	China	Price Freshness Production sustainability Quality-safety certification Species Origin
Duong et al., (2022)	Australia	Price Packaging type Taste Quality grading Best before date
Li et al., (2022)	China	Version (color & marbling) Texture Brand Packaging date/Expire date Food certificate