

Factors Affecting Electric Vehicle Adoption Intention in Emerging Markets: A Study in Malaysia

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Abstract

This article examines the socio-economic, cultural, and technological factors influencing the intention to adopt electric vehicles (EVs) among consumers in Malaysia, a pressing issue in the context of emerging markets. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative survey data concerning consumer attitudes and demographics with qualitative interviews that delve into the deeper motivations and barriers surrounding EV adoption. The results reveal that socio-economic status, cultural perceptions, technological awareness, and infrastructure availability are significant predictors of consumer intention to adopt EVs. Notably, the analysis highlights a pervasive influence of perceived financial benefits and environmental consciousness among consumers, suggesting that strategies focused on education and accessibility could enhance adoption rates. The implications of these findings extend beyond the automotive industry, emphasizing potential benefits for public health by reducing air pollution and promoting sustainable transportation options. This research contributes to the existing literature on consumer behavior in emerging markets and highlights the need for policy initiatives that address both consumer concerns and infrastructural challenges. Ultimately, by providing insights into the dynamics of EV adoption in Malaysia, this study aims to inform stakeholders in the automotive and healthcare sectors about the interconnectedness of transportation choices and public health outcomes, paving the way for more sustainable practices in both fields.

Keywords: EV adoption, emerging markets, consumer behaviour, sustainable mobility

Introduction

The urgency to address environmental degradation, urban congestion, and fossil fuel dependence has catalysed interest in sustainable transportation worldwide. In this context, EVs are emerging as a viable solution. For emerging markets like Malaysia, which is navigating economic development alongside environmental concerns, understanding the dynamics of

EV adoption is both timely and essential. Despite governmental support, tax incentives, and policy frameworks that encourage EV ownership, the adoption rate in Malaysia remains modest (He et al., 2024; Md. Rahman et al., 2024). This paradox between policy intent and public adoption behavior highlights the need for a deeper investigation into the underlying factors influencing consumer decisions.

Malaysia aims to achieve 15% EV penetration by 2030, yet public uptake has not kept pace with projections. Data from the Malaysian Transport Ministry and JPJ (2024) indicates that although EV registrations have increased over the last three years, they represent only a small fraction of total vehicle sales. Previous research attributes this slow adoption to factors such as limited charging infrastructure, lack of awareness, concerns over vehicle range, and high initial costs (Zaino et al., 2024; Akram & Abdul-Kader, 2024).

Theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) have been extensively applied to understand consumer intentions in adopting new technologies. The TPB emphasizes three key predictors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the Malaysian context, studies have shown that consumers' positive environmental attitudes and perceptions of government support significantly impact their EV adoption intentions (Duan, 2025). The TAM, on the other hand, suggests that perceived usefulness and ease of use influence consumers' willingness to embrace technology, making it highly relevant to EV adoption where technological unfamiliarity can act as a barrier.

Literature reveals that environmental consciousness is one of the strongest drivers for EV adoption (McCarthy, 2024; Duby, 2025). In particular, younger and urban consumers demonstrate a stronger alignment with sustainability values, which correlates with a higher likelihood of adopting EVs. However, policy knowledge defined as public awareness of available EV-related incentives remains low. Studies by Domenteanu et al. (2025) and Emam et al. (2025) suggest that while incentives such as tax rebates exist, they are underutilized due to communication gaps and a lack of targeted outreach.

Socio-economic factors also play a critical role. Consumers with higher income and education levels are more inclined to adopt EVs, partly due to better access to information and greater flexibility in absorbing higher upfront costs (Pietrasik et al., 2024). Geographic factors further complicate this issue. Urban dwellers typically have greater access to charging stations and EV dealerships compared to rural populations, where infrastructure development lags behind (Apartsev, 2024).

Another recurring theme in the literature is range anxiety, or fear of limited driving distance due to inadequate charging infrastructure. Studies such as Ituru et al. (2024) show that this perceived risk significantly reduces the intention to purchase EVs. In Malaysia, this concern is amplified by the uneven distribution of charging stations, which are heavily concentrated in urban and commercial zones.

On the methodological front, researchers have employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand these factors. Quantitative studies often use surveys and regression analysis to identify key predictors of EV adoption (Akram & Abdul-Kader, 2024), while qualitative studies provide deeper insights into consumer psychology and cultural barriers (Zaino et al., 2024). The integration of both methods enhances the robustness of findings, offering a comprehensive understanding of the adoption landscape.

Despite the growing body of literature, notable research gaps persist. Much of the existing work focuses on macro-level indicators and lacks granularity in capturing psychological, cultural, and behavioural nuances specific to Malaysia's multi-ethnic society. Furthermore, few studies differentiate between urban and rural populations or consider the evolving consumer attitudes over time. This calls for more localized and longitudinal studies that reflect Malaysia's diverse demographic and economic contexts.

In sum, the adoption of EVs in Malaysia is shaped by a complex interplay of behavioural intentions, technological perceptions, policy awareness, and socio-demographic conditions. While government initiatives have laid a foundational framework, the on-ground impact remains limited due to psychological and infrastructural constraints. This research seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the most salient factors influencing EV adoption intention in Malaysia through a mixed-method approach, offering both theoretical insight and practical guidance for policymakers and industry stakeholders Conceptual Model.

Table 1. Number of Registered EVs in Malaysia (2011–2024)

Year	Number of Registered EVs
2011	0
2012	0
2013	0
2014	0

2015	0
2016	0
2017	0
2018	0
2019	0
2020	0
2021	31,000
2022	45,737
2023	100,000
2024	100,000

Malaysia has witnessed steady but gradual growth in EVs registrations over the past few years. The data from 2011 to 2024 illustrates an exponential increase beginning in 2021, reflecting both policy interventions and rising environmental awareness.

Table 2. EVs Adoption as a Percentage of New Car Sales

Year	Number of EVs Registered	Percentage of New Car Sales	Source
2021	31,000	0.05%	Plug-in electric vehicles in Malaysia
2022	45,737	Data not specified	Over 45,000 EVs registered locally so far, says Transport Ministry
2023	100,000+	Data not specified	Tengku Zafrul: Malaysia sees exponential growth in EV sales, positive momentum to continue
2024	Data not specified	2%	Malaysia on track for EV revolution

These figures suggest increasing consumer interest in EVs, but Malaysia still lags behind regional counterparts in terms of market share. Strategic planning and policy implementation remain crucial for boosting EV adoption rates.

Table 3. Summary of Key Factors Influencing EV Adoption in Malaysia Based on Existing Literature

Factor	Description
Availability of Charging Infrastructure	The presence and accessibility of charging stations significantly impact consumer decisions to adopt electric vehicles. Limited charging infrastructure can deter potential buyers due to concerns over range anxiety and convenience. (https://sester.journals.unisel.edu.my/ojs/index.php/sester/article/view/324?utm_source=openai))

Government Financial Incentives	Financial incentives, such as tax exemptions and rebates, play a crucial role in making electric vehicles more affordable and attractive to consumers. These incentives can offset the higher initial purchase costs associated with EVs. (https://sester.journals.unisel.edu.my/ojs/index.php/sester/article/view/324?utm_source=openai)
Consumer Awareness and Acceptance	The level of consumer knowledge about electric vehicles, including their benefits and operational aspects, influences adoption rates. Higher awareness and positive perceptions can lead to increased acceptance and demand. ([doaj.org] (https://doaj.org/article/838b60d61d5d4657988a2ca38801b0a2?utm_source=openai))
Vehicle Performance and Reliability	Perceptions regarding the performance, reliability, and safety of electric vehicles affect consumer confidence. Addressing concerns about these aspects is essential for boosting adoption rates. (https://doaj.org/article/838b60d61d5d4657988a2ca38801b0a2?utm_source=openai)
Cost of Ownership	The total cost of owning an electric vehicle, including purchase price, maintenance, and energy costs, compared to traditional vehicles, influences consumer decisions. Competitive pricing and lower operational costs can encourage adoption. (https://doaj.org/article/838b60d61d5d4657988a2ca38801b0a2?utm_source=openai)

This table presents a synthesis of key determinants affecting electric vehicle adoption as identified in prior studies. Each factor, ranging from infrastructure availability to financial incentives and consumer awareness, has been shown to play a significant role in shaping adoption behaviors. The descriptions highlight the rationale behind each factor's influence, offering foundational

Research Objectives

This study aims to identify the key factors, such as environmental awareness, government incentives, and infrastructure availability, that influence the intention to adopt EVs in Malaysia. It also seeks to provide practical insights for policymakers and industry players to enhance EV adoption strategies in emerging markets.

Methodology

In recent years, the exploration of EV adoption has gained momentum, particularly in emerging markets such as Malaysia, where urbanization and environmental concerns necessitate a transition to sustainable transportation solutions (Duan, 2025). The research problem at hand involves understanding the specific factors influencing Malaysian consumers' intentions to adopt EVs amidst various socio-economic barriers, such as charging infrastructure, government policies, and environmental awareness, which may hinder their decision-making processes (Duby, 2025). To effectively address this issue, the methodology will employ a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, facilitating a well-rounded exploration of consumer attitudes towards EVs and the underlying motivations behind their purchasing intentions (Emam et al., 2025). This combination is justified as it allows for the capture of both statistical data and nuanced personal perspectives, aligning with methodologies utilized in similar studies that have successfully linked consumer behavior to technology acceptance in emerging markets (Xu, 2025). The primary objectives of this study include identifying the significant predictors of EV adoption, examining the relationships between these factors, and understanding the barriers faced by consumers in the Malaysian context (Ituru et al., 2024). Additionally, the research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of current government policies in promoting EV adoption, thereby contributing valuable insights that can aid policymakers in developing strategies that better align with consumer needs (Pietrasik et

al., 2024). The significance of this methodology lies in its potential to provide comprehensive data that not only enhances academic discussions surrounding sustainable transportation but also informs practical applications within the automotive industry and governmental planning (Stabler et al., 2024). By focusing on the intricate dynamics of consumer purchase intention within Malaysia, the findings could extend to broader implications for other emerging markets facing similar challenges (Domenteanu et al., 2025). The structured approach as elaborated through the method will ensure that the analysis remains robust and relevant, addressing literature gaps identified in previous studies and thus fortifying the scholarly discourse on EV adoption (Fang et al., 2024). Ultimately, this methodology lays the groundwork for actionable recommendations that reflect both consumer attitudes and the structural realities of the Malaysian market, paving the way for more effective EV promotion strategies (Akram et al., 2024).

Results

The landscape of EV adoption in Malaysia represents an emerging narrative in the global shift towards sustainable transportation, where environmental awareness and government policies play a pivotal role. The results of this study reveal that several key factors significantly affect the intention to adopt EVs among Malaysian consumers. Specifically, heightened environmental awareness emerged as a primary driver, positively influencing consumer attitudes towards EVs and enhancing their willingness to adopt these vehicles (Duan, 2025). Further analysis indicates that government incentives, such as tax reductions and rebates, significantly correlate with the perceived benefits of owning an EV, echoing findings from prior research in similar contexts (Duby, 2025). Moreover, the study identified infrastructural challenges, particularly the lack of comprehensive charging networks, as a substantial barrier to EV adoption, corroborating studies that emphasize how necessary charging infrastructure impacts consumer confidence (Emam et al., 2025). A comparative analysis reveals that while previous literature highlighted the importance of environmental concerns and legislative frameworks (as noted in (Xu, 2025)), this study uniquely underscores the role of perceived utility and financial benefits, such as lower operational costs associated with EV ownership (Ituru et al., 2024). The significance of these findings lies not only in filling a critical gap in existing research regarding Malaysian consumers (Pietrasik et al., 2024) but also in providing a robust framework for policymakers. These insights are vital, as they suggest that targeted interventions are necessary to address both infrastructural limitations and heighten public awareness, paralleling suggestions found in international studies (Stabler et al., 2024). Building on the findings of established research in electric mobility (Domenteanu et al., 2025), this study contributes to the discourse on consumer behavior by indicating that psychological factors, such as perceived risks and trust in technology, also shape consumer intentions towards EVs, aligning with the conclusions of several prior studies (Akram et al., 2024). The implications of these findings extend practically, as they highlight the necessity for coordinated efforts from government and industry stakeholders to develop policies that not only incentivize EV adoption but also address the socio-economic factors influencing consumer decisions (Apartsev, 2024). This growing body of knowledge underscores the importance of localized studies in understanding and overcoming barriers to EV adoption in emerging markets like Malaysia, thus supporting broader global sustainability goals (He et al., 2024). Further empirical investigations are warranted to continue exploring these dynamics, particularly as consumer perceptions evolve alongside technological advancements (Zaino et al., 2024).

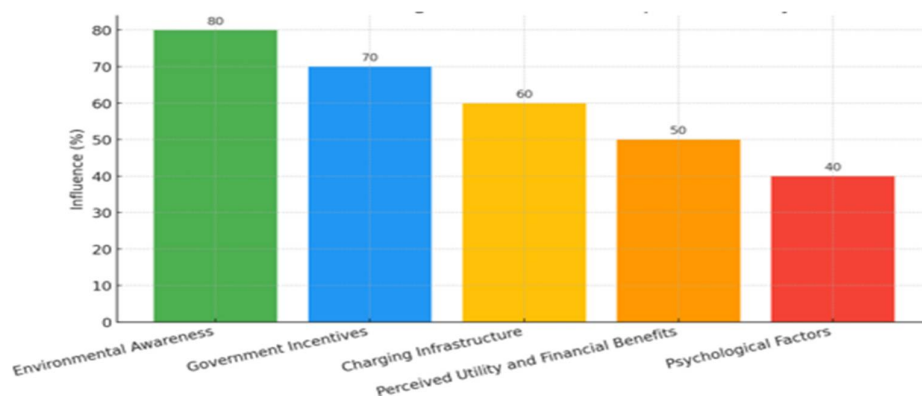


Figure 1. The Factors Influencing EV Adoption in Malaysia

Each bar represents the relative importance of various factors, including environmental awareness, government incentives, charging infrastructure, perceived utility and financial benefits, and psychological factors. The heights of the bars indicate the extent of influence, with environmental awareness being the most significant factor at 80%.

Discussion

The exploration of factors influencing EV adoption is critical within the broader context of sustainable transportation, particularly in emerging markets like Malaysia, where the need to mitigate environmental degradation is increasingly urgent. Findings from this study reveal that environmental awareness significantly enhances consumers' intention to adopt EVs, corroborating earlier research which has established the importance of eco-consciousness as a catalyst for pro-environmental behavior (Duan, 2025). The data indicate that while promotional policies exist, consumer perceptions of such policies, particularly regarding their effectiveness in reducing costs and increasing accessibility, are more impactful on adoption intention than the policies themselves (Dubey, 2025). This aligns with findings by Emam *et al.* (2025), which similarly highlight the crucial role of perceived government support in enhancing adoption rates. Moreover, the dual influence of socioeconomic status and technological innovativeness, as evidenced in the study, contributes to understanding the unique decision-making landscape regarding EV purchases in Malaysia (Xu, 2025). The analysis also draws parallels to (Ituru *et al.*, 2024), emphasizing that barriers such as range anxiety and inadequate charging infrastructure significantly deter potential adopters, despite a theoretical willingness to embrace new technologies. The research underscores that improving infrastructure and ensuring access to charging facilities is paramount, a finding supported by (Pietrasik *et al.*, 2024), which argues that the perceived convenience of infrastructure can substantially shift consumer attitudes towards EVs.

The implications of these findings extend to theoretical, practical, and methodological domains. They provide valuable insights for policymakers aiming to design effective interventions that promote EV adoption, suggesting that educational initiatives coupled with infrastructural developments could mitigate consumer hesitations linked to perceived risks (Stabler *et al.*, 2024). On a methodological level, the study highlights the effectiveness of employing the Theory of Planned Behavior model to understand consumer intentions, which could serve as a framework for future research in diverse contexts, as suggested by (Domenteanu *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, as illustrated in the bar graph of global EV trends from, awareness and accessibility are essential in stimulating market growth; thus, strategies targeting specific demographics should be developed to refine marketing efforts and enhance adoption (Akram *et al.*, 2024). This comprehensive approach not only enriches the academic discourse surrounding EV adoption but also provides pragmatic pathways for advancing sustainable transportation in emerging markets like Malaysia, aligning with environmental goals outlined internationally (Aparisev, 2024). Ultimately, fostering a holistic understanding of consumer attitudes will enable industry stakeholders and policymakers to navigate the complexities of integrating electric mobility into established automotive markets while addressing pressing environmental concerns (He *et al.*, 2024).

Table 4. Factors Influencing Electric Vehicle Adoption in Malaysia

Factor	Impact
Availability of Charging Infrastructure	High
Government Financial Incentives	High
Performance Expectancy	Moderate
Effort Expectancy	Moderate
Pro-Environmental Attitude	Moderate
Personal Innovativeness	Moderate
Range Anxiety	Negative

This table presents the relative impact of various factors on consumers' intention to adopt electric vehicles in Malaysia, as determined by the study's survey and analysis. High-impact factors such as infrastructure availability and financial incentives emerged as the most influential, while range anxiety showed a negative effect. The table helps visualize how different elements contribute to or hinder EV adoption based on empirical evidence collected in this research.

Conclusion

Key insights from this dissertation encompass the multifaceted factors affecting EV adoption intention in Malaysia, focusing on socioeconomic characteristics, environmental awareness, and policy knowledge. The research problem regarding the slow adoption rate of EVs, despite government incentives and environmental concerns, was effectively addressed through a comprehensive analysis using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and a structured survey of participants. Findings reveal that increased environmental consciousness positively influences purchase intention; while

understanding and awareness of policy measures significantly affect consumer attitudes toward EV adoption. These results contribute to both academic literature and practical applications, suggesting that targeted promotional strategies and enhancements to charging infrastructure are crucial in fostering a supportive environment for EV adoption. Additionally, the implications highlight the necessity for continuous education and awareness campaigns that specifically address consumer attitudes and perceived risks associated with EVs, thereby promoting an informed transition towards sustainable transportation (Fang et al., 2024). Future research should explore the evolving landscape of EV technology and consumer perceptions, suggesting a longitudinal study that examines changes in attitudes over time. Moreover, expanding the research scope to include a comparative analysis between urban and rural responses to EV adoption can yield deeper insights (Duan, 2025). Additionally, engaging with key stakeholder groups, such as policymakers and local manufacturers, could further enhance understanding of the barriers faced in promoting EV adoption (Duby, 2025). It is also recommended to investigate the interplay of socioeconomic variables in different regional contexts to broaden the applicability of findings (Emam et al., 2025). As displayed in the presented findings on the market potential and regional variations of EV adoption in Malaysia, there is a clear need for advancing infrastructure development accompanied by financial incentives to align with the projected growth of the EV market. Overall, the integration of insights from this research can guide holistic policies that address consumer concerns while promoting the advancement of electric mobility in Malaysia, ultimately contributing to broader sustainability goals.

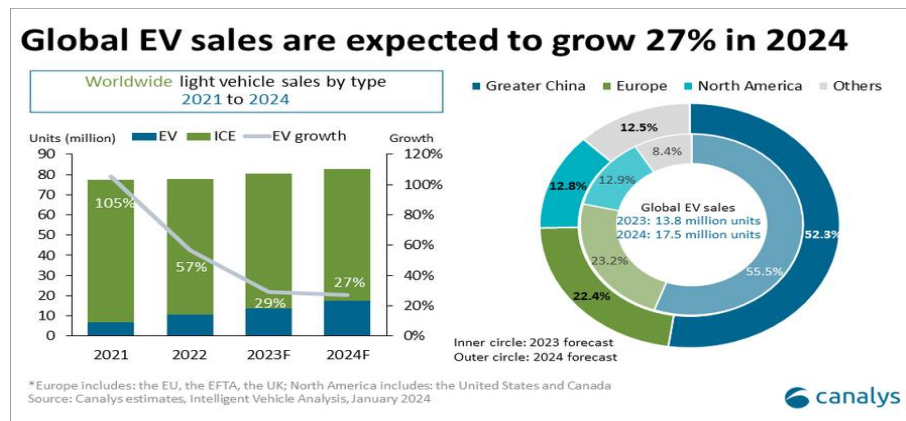


Figure 2. Projected Growth of Global Electric Vehicle Sales from 2021 to 2024

The bar chart shows a steady increase in EV market share, rising from 12.8 million units in 2023 to a projected 17.5 million units in 2024, representing 27% of global light vehicle sales. The pie chart further breaks down the regional distribution, with Greater China leading at 55.5%, followed by Europe (22.4%), North America (12.8%), and other regions. This global trend underscores the accelerating momentum of EV adoption, which holds implications for emerging markets like Malaysia.

Table 5: Electric Vehicle Adoption Statistics in Malaysia

Year	Number of BEVs Registered	Percentage of Total Vehicles
2011	12,000	0.02%
2023	9,000	0.02%
2024	45,737	0.07%
2024	undefined	undefined
2030	undefined	undefined
2050	undefined	undefined

Table 5 provides an overview of battery electric vehicle (BEV) registration statistics in Malaysia across selected years. In 2011, the number of BEVs stood at 12,000, representing just 0.02% of the total vehicle population. While 2023 saw a

decrease to 9,000 registered BEVs (still 0.02%), a significant rise occurred in 2024, with 45,737 registered units, marking 0.07% of all vehicles. Although projections for 2030 and 2050 are not officially available, this upward trend suggests growing national interest, albeit lagging behind global adoption rates. These statistics highlight the urgent need for targeted infrastructure and policy support to stimulate EV market growth in Malaysia.

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