

# Factors Affecting Consumers' Intention to Adopt Electric Vehicles – A Conceptual Framework

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## Abstract

This study examines the key factors influencing Malaysian consumers' intention to adopt electric vehicles (EVs) within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). While EVs are recognized as a promising solution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change, adoption rates in Malaysia remain low despite government incentives and infrastructure initiatives. A review of empirical literature identified five primary determinants: public awareness of climate change, knowledge about EVs, financial factors, public charging infrastructure, and EV safety concerns. Each factor is discussed in terms of its psychological and situational influence on consumer attitudes, perceived social pressure, and perceived behavioural control. The proposed conceptual framework suggests that enhancing environmental awareness, improving public knowledge, offering financial incentives, expanding charging infrastructure, and addressing safety perceptions can significantly strengthen consumer intention to adopt EVs. This framework offers guidance for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers in formulating targeted strategies to accelerate EV adoption in Malaysia and similar emerging markets.

**Keywords:** Electric Vehicle, Adoption Intention, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Public Awareness, Financial Incentives, Charging Infrastructure, Safety Concerns

## Introduction

Electric vehicles (EVs) are increasingly recognized as a critical component in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change, particularly in urban areas where transportation demand is high. According to the Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation (2023), the transport sector remains one of the largest contributors to national carbon dioxide emissions. In response, the Malaysian government has introduced various incentives, such as tax exemptions, purchase rebates, and road tax reductions, alongside investments in EV charging infrastructure, with the aim of accelerating EV adoption.

Despite these initiatives, the uptake of EVs in Malaysia remains relatively low. One possible reason is limited public awareness and understanding of the benefits, functionality, and

environmental impact of EVs. Factors such as climate change awareness, financial considerations, charging infrastructure availability, and safety concerns have all been identified as potential determinants of consumers' intention to adopt EVs (Ahmed et al., 2024). However, there is a lack of empirical research examining how these factors interact to influence local consumer behavior.

Studies indicate that the success of EV adoption is closely linked to consumer behavior and decision-making patterns. Uddin et al. (2024) emphasize that understanding the motivations, perceived barriers, and behavioral drivers of consumers is essential for designing effective policies and marketing strategies. Without such insights, government and industry efforts to promote EV adoption may fail to address the real psychological and practical barriers faced by potential users. Given these gaps, it is important to explore the specific reasons influencing Malaysian consumers' decisions to adopt electric vehicles. This study seeks to address that need by examining a set of key factors, including public awareness, financial considerations, charging infrastructure, and safety concerns, to better understand their collective impact on EV adoption in the local context.

#### *Previous Study on Intention to Adopt EV*

The intention to adopt electric vehicles refers to a consumer's willingness or desire to purchase and use an EV in the future. Ramachandran et al. (2022) described EV adoption intention as the likelihood of a consumer purchasing an electric vehicle, which is influenced by affordability, government incentives, and product knowledge. Their study in Malaysia found that although consumers may have a positive attitude towards EVs, their intention to adopt is often limited by affordability issues. Specifically, willingness to adopt was found to be strongly dependent on environmental factors and price, while the availability of charging stations had relatively limited influence.

Ahmed et al. (2024) similarly define EV adoption intention as consumers' willingness to purchase EVs, shaped by factors such as financial considerations, public charging infrastructure, and safety concerns. Gupta et al. (2024) observed that even consumers with high intention scores often delayed adoption due to uncertainties regarding performance and pricing. Their study highlights the importance of awareness and knowledge in increasing consumers' willingness to adopt EVs. In addition, He et al. (2022) identified non-economic drivers such as perceptions of government policy and environmental efficacy as significant influences on adoption intention. Their study in Hong Kong revealed that factors including the number of nearby chargers, accessibility awareness, environmental awareness, and prior experience with EVs all play a substantial role in shaping willingness to purchase.

A review of empirical findings suggests five key factors influencing the intention to adopt EVs, as summarized in Table 1.0., which are Public Awareness on Climate Change, Knowledge About EV, Financial Factors, Public Charging Infrastructure and EV Safety Concerns.

Table 1

*Empirical studies on Factors Affecting EV Adoption*

	Ramachandran et al. (2022)	Ahmed et al. (2024)	Gupta et al. (2024)	He et al. (2022)
Public Awareness on Climate Change	ü		ü	
Knowledge About EV			ü	ü
Financial Factors	ü	ü	ü	
Public Charging Infrastructure	ü	ü	ü	ü
EV Safety Concerns		ü		

*Public Awareness on Climate Change*

Public awareness on climate change refers to the extent to which individuals understand, recognize, and are concerned about the causes and effects of climate-related environmental changes. It involves knowledge of issues such as global warming, extreme weather events, the influence of human activities (e.g., carbon emissions), and the necessity of transitioning to environmentally sustainable actions. There are well-established links between high public awareness and the advancement of environmental policies, as well as the adoption of green technologies such as electric vehicles (EVs) (Ferdousee, 2022). In the EV adoption process, public awareness serves as a key psychological motivator, influencing pro-environmental behavior and ultimately shaping the intention to adopt EVs.

Public awareness is a vital component of climate action. Once people understand the effects of global warming and the contribution of factors such as fossil fuel consumption and air pollution, they are more likely to adopt pro-environmental actions, such as using low-emission modes of transportation like EVs (Gupta & Rhoads, 2022). This relationship is particularly significant in developing nations, where consumer readiness for green solutions and environmental literacy may still be in the early stages.

Ahmed et al. (2024) found that public awareness of climate change is positively correlated with consumer interest in EVs and their understanding of environmental impacts. Their research in Oman revealed that consumers are becoming more aware of the ecological benefits of EVs, such as reducing air pollution and decreasing dependence on fossil fuels, making them more likely to support and adopt such technologies. They also emphasized that public awareness campaigns could play an important role in increasing purchase intentions, especially in regions where awareness remains limited.

Gupta et al. (2024) further highlighted the mediating role of awareness and knowledge in shaping behavioral intention. They found that individuals who are better informed about climate-related issues are more likely to perceive EVs as a necessary and responsible alternative to internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles. This awareness of climate change strengthens the intention to choose greener transportation options.

Motor vehicles remain one of the primary contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), which exacerbates urban air pollution and climate instability. According to Kollmuss & Agyeman (2002), educating citizens about the environmental impact of ICE vehicles and the potential of EVs to mitigate these effects can

influence consumer behavior and policy support. Enhanced public awareness fosters a positive perception of EVs, not only as a means of transportation but also as a climate solution. In Malaysia, awareness of environmental degradation is increasing; however, a significant gap remains between awareness and action. Ramachandaran et al. (2022) noted that while Malaysian consumers show interest in environmental issues, their purchase intentions are often constrained by cost and convenience factors. Nonetheless, environmental awareness remains a crucial factor in shaping public attitudes toward EV adoption.

#### *Knowledge About EV*

Knowledge about electric vehicles (EVs) can be defined as the extent to which consumers are aware of the features, benefits, limitations, and operating mechanisms of EV technology. This includes technical expertise on EV systems as well as an understanding of their practical benefits, such as reduced operating costs, environmental gains, and government support for adoption (Rezvani et al., 2015). It also covers knowledge of charging systems, driving range, maintenance costs, energy savings, and the environmental impact of using EVs compared to traditional vehicles. In the adoption process, knowledge plays a cognitive role that informs consumer decision-making and shapes attitudes and intentions.

Knowledge is a major precursor to attitudes and behaviors, and it plays a critical role in influencing consumers' intentions to adopt new technology, particularly technologies focused on sustainability. According to Gupta et al. (2024), knowledge has a significant effect on customers' intentions to adopt EVs. Their study found that individuals who are well educated on the functioning and benefits of EVs tend to have a more positive attitude towards them, which in turn increases their intention to adopt EVs. Knowledge not only reduces people's anxiety and perceived risk, but also increases consumer confidence in shifting towards new transportation technologies.

Ahmed et al. (2024) also highlighted the role of knowledge in their research conducted in Oman. They found that limited understanding of EV operations and charging requirements among consumers was one of the biggest barriers to EV adoption. The study recommended enhancing information on EVs through public awareness campaigns, which could help close the information gap and promote adoption. Similarly, research by Egbue and Long (2012) in the context of EV adoption found that more knowledgeable individuals tend to have more positive attitudes towards EVs and view them as a viable alternative to internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles. Knowledge of battery range, charging capabilities, maintenance requirements, and vehicle availability in the local market can reduce uncertainty and build confidence in the new technology. Furthermore, interest in EVs has been shown to be positively influenced by awareness created through media campaigns, advertisements, and car exhibitions.

Conversely, poor understanding of EVs among consumers can lead to resistance to adoption, as misconceptions about high operating costs or poor performance may persist. Therefore, enhancing education and awareness among the public is a strategic priority for policymakers and manufacturers aiming to encourage EV adoption in developing markets such as Malaysia.

### *Financial Factors*

Financial factors refer to the economic aspects that affect consumers' decisions to adopt electric vehicles (EVs). These include the initial purchase price of EVs, government subsidies, resale value, battery cost and efficiency, and maintenance expenses. Cost is often the most critical factor influencing whether consumers switch to EVs or remain with internal combustion engine (ICE) or traditional vehicles (Li et al., 2017). Higher upfront costs may discourage EV adoption, although EVs may become cost-effective in the long term due to lower fuel and maintenance costs.

One of the most frequently cited barriers is the higher initial purchase price of EVs compared to traditional vehicles. However, according to Sierzchula et al. (2014), financial incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, rebates, and reduced road tax can substantially lower the real purchase price and encourage EV adoption. Moreover, advancements in battery technology have reduced EV costs and increased resale value, making them a better long-term investment. Another important consideration is maintenance costs. Overall, EV maintenance is typically lower than that of conventional cars because EVs have fewer moving parts and do not require engine oil, transmission fluid, or exhaust system repairs (Rezvani et al., 2015). Consumers who recognize these financial benefits may be more willing to adopt EVs despite higher purchase prices.

Ramachandaran et al. (2022) found that financial cost is one of the strongest factors predicting the intention to adopt EVs in Malaysia. Their research concluded that although environmental awareness is increasing, many consumers are still unwilling to adopt EVs because they perceive them as expensive to own compared to conventional cars. However, the study also observed that purchasing intentions could be significantly enhanced through financial incentives such as tax reductions, rebates, and interest-free loans.

Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2024) reported that in Oman, financial incentives and acquisition costs were major obstacles to widespread EV adoption. They concluded that ensuring EVs are competitively priced compared to conventional cars is crucial, and proposed that a well-developed financial assistance system from either the government or private sector could positively influence consumer behavior. In a broader context, Gupta et al. (2023) reinforced the importance of price perceptions in shaping intentions to adopt EVs. Their research found that even environmentally conscious consumers were unwilling to switch if they perceived EVs as not cost-effective. Therefore, financial considerations such as perceived affordability are important alongside actual prices and incentives.

Given these consistent findings across various regions and socioeconomic backgrounds, financial factors are considered a key independent variable in this study. They encompass both objective cost aspects such as price, savings, and government subsidies, and subjective perceptions, including affordability and return on investment.

### *Public Charging Infrastructure*

Public charging infrastructure refers to the availability, accessibility, and convenience of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations that can be used by anyone. This factor plays a critical role in influencing consumers' intention to adopt EVs because it directly affects how they

perceive convenience, usability, and range anxiety, the fear of being left with limited battery power and no nearby charging station.

One of the major concerns for prospective EV users is range anxiety, which refers to the fear that the vehicle will run out of charge before reaching the next charging point. According to Sierzchula et al. (2014), the availability and distribution of public charging points play a significant role in reducing this fear. Convenient charging comparable to refueling at petrol stations is key to building consumer confidence in EV usability. Furthermore, integrating workplace charging, implementing fast-charging technology, and encouraging investment from both the private and public sectors are essential to improving the charging ecosystem and fostering EV adoption.

He, Sun, and Luo (2022) identify the accessibility and presence of public charging terminals as among the most dominant predictors of EV adoption intention. In their Hong Kong study, they compared objective accessibility (actual access and number of chargers), perceived accessibility (awareness of charging station locations), and future expectations (government expansion plans). Their findings indicate that when consumers are confident they can easily charge their EVs, their intention to adopt them increases significantly.

Ramachandaran et al. (2023) also highlight the issue of insufficient public charging infrastructure in Malaysia. Although their findings suggest that charging infrastructure has a relatively narrow direct effect on EV adoption compared to financial factors, they emphasize that disparities between urban and rural areas, particularly the lack of fast-charging stations may significantly affect adoption, especially in underdeveloped regions. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2024) note that the lack of charging infrastructure development poses a major obstacle in Oman. Their study underscores the need for both government and private sector investment in national charging infrastructure to support EV adoption objectives. Without a strong charging ecosystem, consumers are less likely to view EVs as practical for daily use.

Gupta et al. (2023) further point out that infrastructure and technological support act as mediators of EV adoption. Consumers are more inclined to adopt innovative technologies like EVs when they have easy access to charging points. Another important factor is public awareness of existing and expanding charging infrastructure. As Li et al. (2023) observe, adoption may remain low even when infrastructure exists if people are unaware of it. Therefore, automakers and governments should not only enhance infrastructure but also make it more visible to boost consumer confidence.

Based on these findings, this study identifies public charging infrastructure as an important independent variable. This includes both tangible and intangible aspects such as the location and accessibility of charging points, ease of access and reliability, perceived convenience compared to petrol stations, and overall user confidence in the charging network.

### *EV Safety Concerns*

EV safety concerns refer to consumers' perceptions and fears regarding the overall safety, reliability, and performance of electric vehicles. These concerns often include worries about battery explosions, fire hazards, performance in accidents, system failures, and the impact of

extreme weather conditions such as heavy rain or floods, particularly relevant in Malaysia's tropical climate.

Safety concerns can be defined as the perceived risks and uncertainties in consumers' minds, especially in relation to technological reliability, battery durability, user experience, and general vehicle performance. Since EVs are relatively new compared to conventional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, many consumers in emerging markets may hesitate to adopt them due to unfamiliarity and lack of confidence in the technology (Rezvani et al., 2015).

Ahmed et al. (2024) found that safety perceptions significantly influence EV adoption in Oman. Many potential consumers were reluctant to adopt EVs due to uncertainty about the safety and long-term reliability of battery power. This psychological barrier stems from fears of electrical failures or explosions, which are amplified by the lack of historical performance data compared to ICE vehicles.

Perceptions of safety risks may arise from several factors. One is the absence of engine noise, which can compromise pedestrian and driver safety and make it harder for users to detect mechanical problems. Another major concern is battery safety, as consumers worry about overheating, fire risks, and gradual deterioration over time (Egbue & Long, 2012). Although EVs are designed according to rigorous safety standards, such concerns remain prevalent, especially among first-time users or those with limited exposure to EV technology (Hardman et. al., 2016).

A further psychological barrier is the reluctance to be an early adopter (Zhang et al., 2011). To avoid perceived risks and unexpected costs, many consumers prefer to wait until the technology is more mature and widely used. These issues can directly reduce purchase likelihood or delay adoption.

Based on these insights, this study considers EV safety concerns as one of the independent variables. It accounts for both objective safety performance, reflected in specifications and crash test results, and subjective safety perceptions, shaped by consumer beliefs and media influence.

#### *Underpinning Theory: Theory of Planned Behavior*

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen in 1988, will be applied in this study to explain how consumers form intentions to adopt EVs based on psychological and situational factors. TPB has been widely used to predict and explain behavioral intentions across domains such as health, education, environmental sustainability, and technology adoption. According to Ajzen (1991), human behavior is not entirely voluntary but is influenced by perceived control over the action.

TPB posits that behavioral intention is shaped by three key constructs: Attitude Toward the Behavior, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control, which together influence actual behavior (Axsen et. al., 2016). In the context of EV adoption, TPB suggests that the intention to adopt will be stronger when consumers (i) hold a positive attitude toward EVs,

(ii) perceive social support for the adoption, and (iii) believe they possess the ability and resources to make the switch (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

#### *Attitude toward Behavior*

Attitude reflects the degree to which a consumer evaluates EV adoption favorably or unfavorably. In this study, key influencing factors include knowledge about EVs and safety concerns. Positive attitudes are fostered when consumers are well-informed about EVs' environmental and economic benefits, such as reduced emissions, lower operating costs, and long-term savings. Confidence in the safety and reliability of EV technology also enhances favorable attitudes. Conversely, misinformation or safety doubts can create negative perceptions.

#### *Subjective Norms*

Subjective norms refer to perceived social pressure to perform or avoid a particular behavior. Public awareness of climate change, while not directly measured, serves as a proxy for societal values and the general discourse around sustainable mobility. When family, peers, and society encourage the shift to eco-friendly transport, individuals are more likely to feel obligated to comply by choosing EVs. Heightened awareness of environmental issues indirectly strengthens social influence and perceived expectations toward adoption.

#### *Perceived Behavioral Control*

This construct reflects an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of adopting EVs, influenced by internal and external constraints. Key factors in this study include financial considerations (e.g., upfront costs, incentives, and subsidies) and the availability of charging infrastructure. High purchase prices and limited charging facilities can reduce perceived control, whereas government incentives and a well-developed charging network can make adoption seem more feasible and within reach.

In sum, TPB provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multidimensional factors; attitudes, social influences, and perceived control that shape consumer intentions and ultimately influence EV adoption behavior.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study adopts a conceptual framework grounded in the premise that five key variables identified in the literature review exert a direct influence on the intention to adopt electric vehicles. These variables are public awareness of climate change, knowledge about EVs, financial factors, public charging infrastructure, and EV safety concerns. The framework, presented in Figure 1,

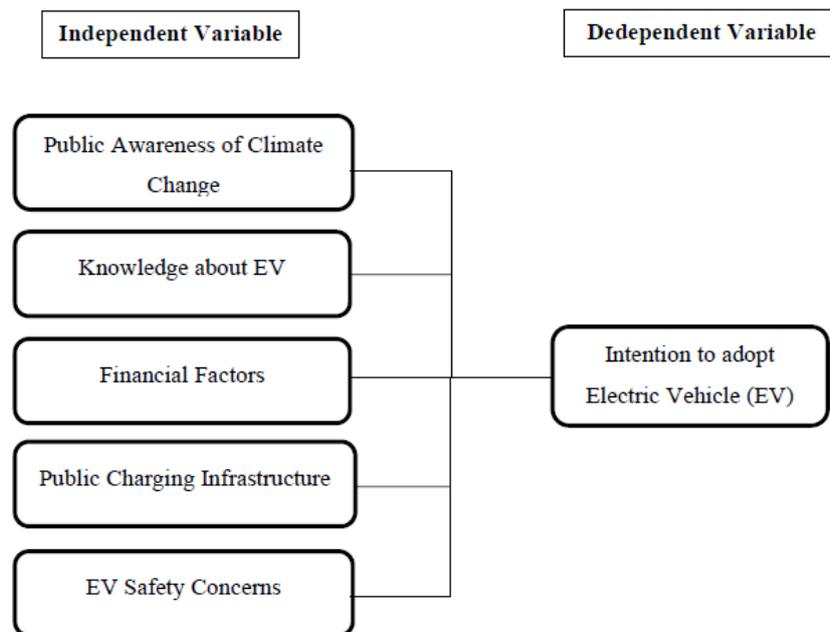


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of factors influencing the intention to adopt electric vehicles

The proposed framework posits that consumers' intention to adopt electric vehicles (EVs) is shaped by five primary factors derived from prior empirical studies:

**Public Awareness of Climate Change** - Awareness of the impacts of climate change can motivate pro-environmental behaviours, including the adoption of EVs. Consumers who recognise the environmental benefits of EVs are more likely to view them as a viable means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Knowledge about EVs** - Knowledge encompasses consumers' understanding of EV technology, operational features, charging methods, and maintenance requirements. A higher level of knowledge reduces uncertainty and builds confidence in adopting EVs.

**Financial Factors** - Affordability, total cost of ownership, government incentives, and financing options are critical determinants of EV adoption. High purchase costs or insufficient incentives can significantly reduce intention, even among environmentally conscious consumers.

**Public Charging Infrastructure** - The perceived availability, accessibility, and reliability of charging stations influence consumers' confidence in the practicality of EVs. Limited infrastructure may create "range anxiety," discouraging adoption.

**EV Safety Concerns** - Consumers may be cautious about adopting EVs if they have concerns regarding battery safety, accident performance, or overall vehicle reliability. Positive perceptions of EV safety can enhance trust and willingness to adopt.

In this framework, each of the five variables is hypothesised to have a direct positive relationship with the intention to adopt EVs. The relationships are supported by empirical evidence indicating that improvements in environmental awareness, knowledge, financial

feasibility, infrastructure availability, and safety perceptions can collectively drive EV adoption.

### **Conclusion**

The adoption of electric vehicles in Malaysia faces a complex interplay of psychological, economic, and infrastructural challenges. This paper reviewed existing literature and identified five key factors; public awareness of climate change, knowledge about EVs, financial considerations, public charging infrastructure, and EV safety concerns that directly influence consumer intention to adopt EVs. Anchored in the Theory of Planned Behavior, the proposed conceptual framework demonstrates that these factors collectively shape attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which in turn determine behavioral intentions.

The findings underscore the need for a multi-pronged approach to boost EV adoption. Increasing public awareness of environmental issues can generate stronger pro-environmental attitudes, while targeted education campaigns can enhance technical knowledge and reduce misconceptions. Financial incentives, such as subsidies, tax breaks, and low-interest financing, are critical to improving perceived affordability. Expanding and promoting reliable public charging infrastructure will reduce range anxiety and enhance consumer confidence, while proactive communication of EV safety performance can address lingering concerns.

By addressing these determinants simultaneously, policymakers, automakers, and stakeholders can create a more favorable environment for EV adoption. This integrated strategy has the potential to accelerate Malaysia's transition toward sustainable mobility, contributing to national environmental goals and aligning with global efforts to mitigate climate change.

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