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Public Readiness towards AEB Adoption in Malaysia: Demographic and Perceptual Perspectives

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ABSTRACT – *Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) is a key active safety technology that can reduce crash severity and frequency. In Malaysia, where road traffic injuries remain a major public health concern, understanding public readiness to adopt AEB is essential for shaping policy and industry strategies. This study examined the influence of demographic and perceptual factors on readiness to adopt AEB. A structured survey of 450 respondents captured demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, income, vehicle ownership, vehicle type, driving experience) and perceptual variables (awareness, understanding, impressions, prior experience). Data were analyzed using chi-square tests to identify significant associations with readiness levels. The results show that overall readiness is high, with more than 70% of respondents reporting they are ready or very ready to adopt AEB. Significant demographic associations were observed for gender, education, income, vehicle ownership, vehicle type, and driving experience, while age was not significant. All perceptual factors demonstrated strong associations with readiness, underscoring the importance of awareness, impressions, and experience in shaping acceptance. These findings suggest that while socio-economic characteristics influence opportunities for adoption, perceptual drivers are more decisive in determining readiness. The study provides practical insights for policymakers, manufacturers and ASEAN NCAP, emphasizing the need for awareness campaigns, affordability strategies and wider integration of AEB into vehicle safety standards to accelerate adoption and improve road safety in Malaysia.*

KEYWORDS: Adoption, Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB), demographic factors, perceptual factors, readiness, technology

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1. INTRODUCTION

Road traffic injuries remain a major public health concern globally and in Malaysia, where motor vehicle crashes continue to contribute substantially to national fatality rates. In response to this issue, active safety technologies have increasingly been introduced to mitigate crash risks and reduce injury severity. Among these technologies, Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) has been widely recognized as one of the most effective crash avoidance systems due to its capability to detect imminent collisions and automatically apply braking intervention when the driver fails to respond in time. International evidence has demonstrated the effectiveness of AEB in reducing rear-end collisions and mitigating crash severity, leading many countries and regulatory bodies to move toward mandating its implementation in new vehicles (NHTSA, 2024). Supporting this, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reported that AEB reduced rear-end crash rates by 50% and rear-end injury crash rates by 56% (IIHS, 2016).

Although AEB has demonstrated substantial safety benefits, its adoption in Malaysia continues to be influenced by several barriers, particularly limited public awareness and misconceptions regarding the technology (Fitri et al., 2021). Previous studies have shown that perceptual and psychological factors often play a more significant role in influencing adoption intention than safety considerations alone. For instance, Ishanuddin et al. (2022) found that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and user

attitude significantly influenced continuance intention toward AEB usage, while perceived safety was not found to be a significant predictor. Similarly, Ishanuddin et al. (2021) reported limited user exposure to AEB functionality, where only 70 out of 204 respondents (34%) had experienced the technology despite 89.7% expressing high expectations toward AEB performance. In contrast, Abdul Razak et al. (2021) demonstrated a more optimistic outlook, reporting that 76.8% of 818 Malaysian drivers showed positive attitudes toward Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS). Meanwhile, Mokhtar et al. (2021) identified crash prevention capability and injury reduction as the primary factors influencing AEB ownership intention among Malaysian drivers.

Research concerning AEB and ADAS acceptance within the Southeast Asian region remains relatively limited compared to studies conducted in Europe, Japan, and North America. Nevertheless, recent studies have gradually begun to address this research gap. Existing regional studies include Abdul Razak et al. (2021), which surveyed 818 Malaysian drivers regarding ADAS perceptions, and Purwanto et al. (2023), which investigated factors influencing ADAS adoption among 220 automotive users in Jakarta and Tangerang, Indonesia. In Malaysia, Mokhtar et al. (2021) examined factors influencing AEB ownership intention, while Ishanuddin et al. (2021) proposed a theoretical framework related to AEB perception and acceptance. In addition, Hamid et al. (2019) provided a broader overview of ADAS development trends across Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Although these studies provide valuable preliminary insights, the overall regional evidence remains fragmented, geographically limited, and relatively modest in scale. As such, comprehensive understanding regarding public readiness and acceptance of AEB across Southeast Asian countries remains underdeveloped.

Demographic characteristics have consistently been shown to influence technology acceptance and adoption behaviour. Factors such as age, gender, education level, income, vehicle ownership, vehicle type, and driving experience may significantly affect readiness toward emerging vehicle technologies. Lee et al. (2019) surveyed 3,505 adults in the United States and found that younger age and higher education levels significantly predicted acceptance of autonomous vehicles. Similarly, Chen et al. (2023), through an analysis involving 809 Australian respondents, identified age and driving experience as the two most influential demographic factors affecting technology acceptance. Meanwhile, Jászberényi et al. (2024), in a study involving 949 Hungarian respondents, confirmed that gender and age were among the primary determinants influencing acceptance of automated driving technologies. Collectively, these studies suggest that younger drivers are generally more receptive toward technological innovation, whereas older drivers tend to demonstrate greater caution in adopting automated systems.

Gender differences have also been widely reported in the literature, where male drivers often express stronger enthusiasm toward technological advancement, while female drivers tend to place greater emphasis on safety, reliability, and trust considerations (Kyriakidis et al., 2015). However, findings regarding income level and vehicle ownership remain less consistent. For example, Oliveira & Dias (2019) observed that previous studies showed no consistent relationship between income and vehicle technology preferences. Nevertheless, gender-related findings appear more stable across studies, with several researchers consistently reporting that male respondents demonstrate higher acceptance toward vehicle automation technologies (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, Golbabaei et al. (2020), through a systematic literature review, confirmed that demographic characteristics remain among the key predictors influencing public acceptance and adoption intention toward automated vehicle technologies. Despite this, the influence of driving experience remains inconclusive, as some experienced drivers value the additional protection offered by advanced safety systems, while others tend to rely more heavily on their personal driving capabilities and experience (Charness et al., 2018).

Beyond demographic characteristics, perceptual factors are equally important in shaping public acceptance of AEB technology. Recent studies have further emphasized the importance of perceptual and psychological factors in influencing adoption behaviour. Musau et al. (2025), through a nationwide survey conducted in the United States, demonstrated that higher levels of trust were positively associated with increased ADAS usage, while misconceptions, trust issues, and knowledge gaps continued to hinder widespread adoption. Similarly, Choi & Ji (2015), in a study involving 552 drivers, identified trust as one of the most important determinants influencing intention to adopt autonomous vehicle technologies.

Awareness and knowledge regarding system functionality strongly influence user confidence and trust, while misunderstandings regarding AEB operation may lead to resistance or skepticism toward the technology. For example, drivers who confuse AEB with other safety systems such as electronic stability control or airbags may underestimate its actual function and effectiveness. Furthermore, positive exposure through marketing campaigns, product demonstrations, media information, or peer experiences may contribute to more favorable perceptions and stronger adoption intentions. Previous direct or indirect experiences with AEB technology can also improve familiarity, reduce uncertainty, and increase trust in system reliability and performance (Eckoldt et al., 2012; Kyriakidis et al., 2015).

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate public readiness toward AEB adoption in Malaysia, with particular emphasis on the influence of demographic and perceptual factors. A structured questionnaire survey involving 450 respondents was conducted, and chi-square analysis was employed to examine the associations between selected factors and readiness levels. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, automotive industry stakeholders, and road safety advocates in developing effective awareness strategies, regulatory initiatives, and market approaches that can accelerate the adoption and diffusion of AEB technology in Malaysia.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to assess public readiness to adopt AEB technology in Malaysia. The research specifically examined the relationship between demographic characteristics and perceptual factors in relation to respondents' self-reported readiness to adopt AEB.

2.2 Questionnaire Development

The survey instrument was organized into three main sections:

i. Demographic profile – capturing variables such as age, gender, education level, monthly income, vehicle ownership, vehicle type, and driving experience.
ii. Perceptual constructs – addressing awareness of AEB, knowledge of its functionality, first impressions of AEB, and prior experience with the technology (either direct or indirect).
iii. Readiness indicator – assessing respondents' overall readiness level towards adopting AEB technology.

The questionnaire comprised a combination of categorical and Likert-scale items. A pilot test involving 40 respondents was conducted prior to full distribution to ensure clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of the questions.

2.3 Participants and Sampling

A total of 450 respondents participated in the survey, all of whom were licensed drivers. Respondents were recruited using a combination of convenience and purposive sampling methods to ensure representation across different age groups, genders, education levels, income and vehicle ownership categories.

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted online with the questionnaire hosted on Google Forms and disseminated through popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp groups. These channels were selected to maximize outreach and to encourage participation from a broad segment of Malaysian drivers across different age groups, education levels and regions.

2.5 Data Analysis

All survey responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 30. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize the demographic and perceptual characteristics of respondents, while chi-square tests of independence were conducted to examine associations between readiness levels and the

independent variables. This analytical method was selected because it is appropriate for categorical data and enables the identification of significant relationships between variables. A significance threshold of $p < 0.05$ was adopted for all statistical tests.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 450 survey respondents. A total of 450 respondents completed the survey. As shown in Table 1, the majority were in the 31–40 age group (38.7%), followed by 41–50 years (27.8%) and 18–30 years (24.7%), while only 8.9% were aged 51 years and above. The gender distribution was notably skewed, with male respondents representing 76.4% of the sample compared to 23.6% female respondents.

Education levels were relatively high, with more than half of respondents holding a bachelor's degree (52.2%). This was followed by those with a certificate or diploma (22.0%), a Master's or Doctorate (16.4%), and only 9.3% reporting secondary school as their highest qualification. In terms of income, the largest proportion earned RM2,001–RM5,000 (33.6%), while 20.7% earned RM5,001–RM8,000 and between 14–16% each reported income below RM2,000, RM8,001–RM11,000 or above RM11,000.

Most respondents reported vehicle ownership (92.4%), with sedans being the most common vehicle type (40.7%), followed by SUVs (24.7%) and hatchbacks (15.1%). For driving experience, nearly 70% reported more than 10 years of driving, while smaller proportions reported 6–10 years (14.2%), 1–5 years (13.1%), and less than 1 year (2.9%).

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 450)

Variable	Percent (%)	Variable	Percent (%)
Age		**Vehicle Ownership**	
18 - 30	24.7	Yes	92.4
31 - 40	38.7	No	7.6
41 - 50	27.8	**Vehicle Ownership Type**	
51 and above	8.9	Sedan	40.7
Gender		Hatchback	15.1
Male	76.4	SUV	24.7
Female	23.6	MPV	10.0
Highest Education Level		Pickup Truck / 4x4	2.0
Secondary school	9.3	Do not own a vehicle	7.6
Certificate / Diploma	22.0	**Driving Experience**	
Bachelor's Degree	52.2	Less than 1 year	2.9
Master's / Doctorate	16.4	1 – 5 years	13.1
Monthly Income Range		6 – 10 years	14.2
Below 2,000	14.4	More than 10 years	69.8
RM2,001 – RM5,000	33.6		
RM5,001 – RM8,000	20.7		
RM8,001 - RM11,000	15.6		
More than RM11,000	15.8		

3.2 Perceptual Factors of Respondents

As shown in Figure 2, awareness of AEB among Malaysian drivers was relatively high, with 79.8% of respondents reporting having heard of the technology. In terms of exposure, more than half (54.9%) had experienced AEB either directly through their own vehicles or test drives, or indirectly through family members and peers, while the remaining 45.1% indicated no prior experience with the system. These

findings suggest that the majority of respondents are at least familiar with the concept of AEB, although practical exposure remains uneven across the sample.

Transitioning from exposure to understanding, Figure 3 shows that most respondents (90.2%) correctly identified AEB as an automatic braking system, whereas a small proportion (3.8%) confused it with electronic stability control, 1.1% with an airbag system, and 4.9% admitted they were unsure. Perceptions of usefulness were overwhelmingly positive, with 85.3% describing AEB as useful, while only 6.2% viewed it as complicated, and 8.4% were uncertain about its practicality.

Together, Figures 2 and 3 highlight a generally favorable perception of AEB among Malaysian drivers, although certain knowledge gaps and misconceptions persist. Addressing these through targeted awareness campaigns, interactive product demonstrations, and structured consumer education initiatives will be essential to strengthening acceptance and enhancing readiness for widespread adoption.

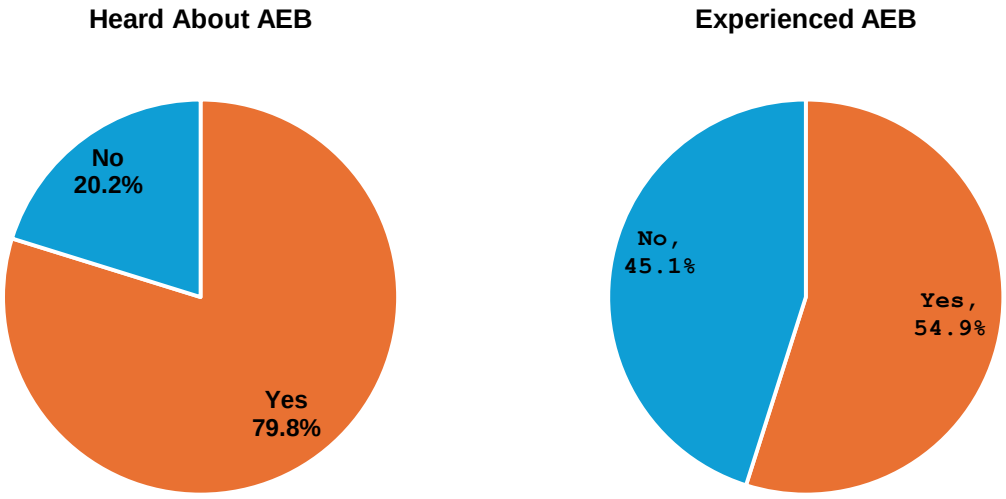

FIGURE 2: Percentage of respondents who had heard of and experienced AEB

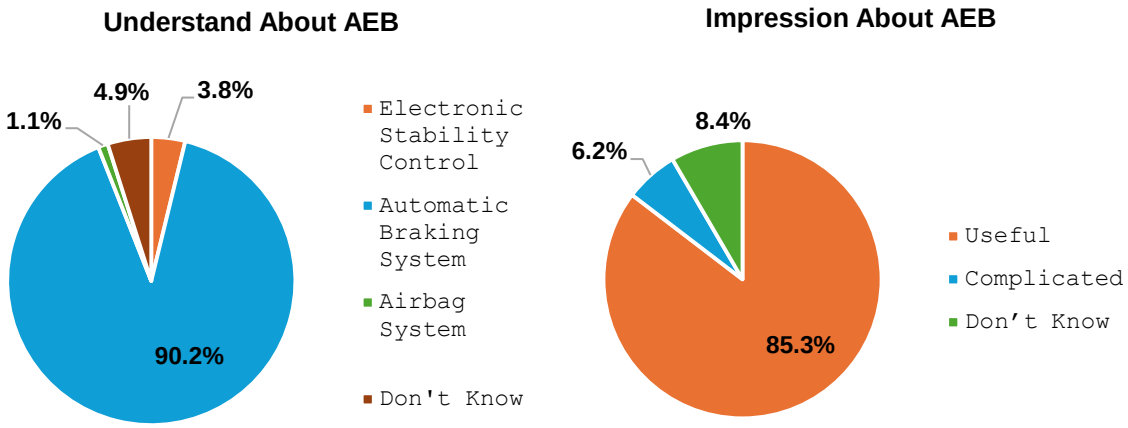

FIGURE 3: Percentage of respondents' understanding and impression of AEB

3.3 Level of AEB Readiness of Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of readiness to adopt and use AEB technology. As illustrated in Figure 4, the majority expressed a positive orientation towards adoption. Specifically, 37.8% reported being very ready, and 34.7% reported being ready. A further 20.7% considered themselves moderately ready, while only a small fraction reported being slightly ready (5.1%) or not ready at all (1.8%).

In total, 72.5% of respondents fell into the ready or very ready categories, suggesting a strong acceptance potential for AEB among Malaysian drivers. This reflects a generally favorable environment for promoting vehicles equipped with AEB, provided that issues of affordability, accessibility, and public awareness are adequately addressed. These findings reinforce the notion that the Malaysian driving public is becoming increasingly open to advanced safety technologies when supported by proper education and market accessibility.

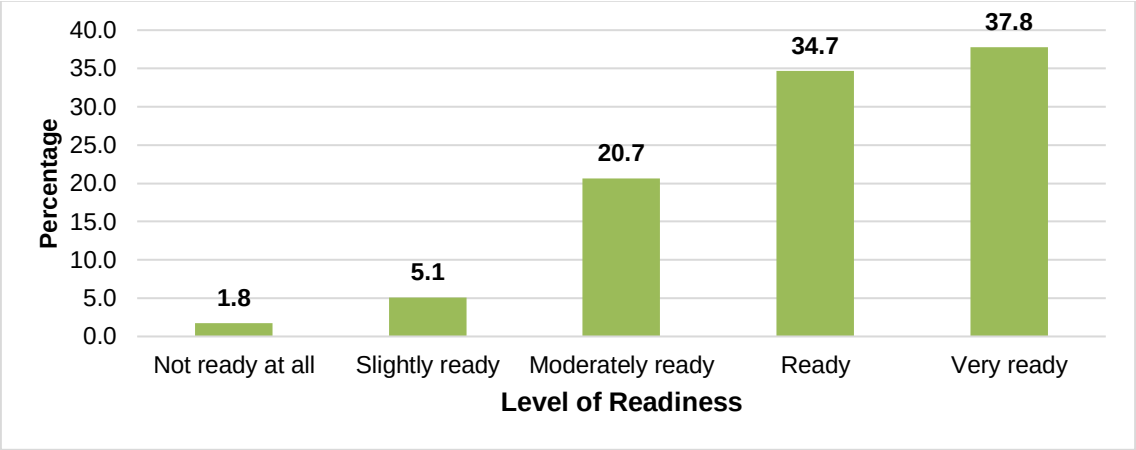

FIGURE 4: Level of readiness to adopt and use AEB among respondents

3.4 Inferential Analysis (Chi-Square Tests)

Table 2 presents the chi-square test results showing the relationships between demographic and perceptual factors and respondents' readiness to adopt AEB technology. The analysis provides insights into whether variations in readiness are statistically associated with specific characteristics or perceptions of AEB.

For demographic factors, six of the seven variables tested showed significant associations with readiness. These included gender ($p < 0.001$), education level ($p = 0.003$), monthly income ($p = 0.010$), vehicle ownership ($p = 0.019$), vehicle type ($p = 0.002$), and driving experience ($p = 0.027$). These findings indicate that socio-economic and experiential attributes such as educational attainment, financial capacity, and vehicle familiarity play an important role in shaping readiness for AEB adoption. In contrast, age was not significantly associated with readiness ($\chi^2 = 5.407$, $p = 0.144$), suggesting that generational differences exert a weaker influence after accounting for other demographic characteristics.

For perceptual factors, all four tested variables showed strong, statistically significant relationships with readiness. Respondents who had heard about AEB ($p < 0.001$) or understood its function ($p = 0.015$) were more likely to report higher readiness levels. Similarly, respondents with positive impressions of AEB ($p < 0.001$) or direct/indirect experience with the system ($p < 0.001$) also reported significantly greater readiness.

TABLE 2: Chi-square test results for factors associated with AEB readiness

Factor	Variable	χ^2	p-value
Demographic	Age	5.407	0.144
	Gender	17.43	**<0.001**
	Highest Education Level	13.691	**0.003**
	Monthly Income Range	13.231	**0.010**
	Vehicle Ownership	5.499	**0.019**
	Vehicle Ownership Type	12.917	**0.002**
	Driving Experience	9.214	**0.027**
Perceptual	Heard About AEB	70.325	**<0.001**
	Understanding of AEB	5.965	**0.015**
	Impression of AEB	50.439	**<0.001**
	Experienced AEB	68.599	**<0.001**

Overall, the chi-square analysis confirms that readiness to adopt AEB in Malaysia is jointly influenced by demographic and perceptual dimensions, with the latter showing particularly strong associations. These findings highlight the need to address both structural enablers (education, income, and vehicle access) and psychological drivers (awareness, impressions, and experience) to effectively enhance public readiness for advanced vehicle safety technologies.

3.5 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that public readiness to adopt AEB in Malaysia is generally high, with more than 70% of respondents reporting that they are either ready or very ready to use the technology. This indicates a favorable environment for the diffusion of AEB, consistent with global evidence showing that advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) gain wider acceptance when awareness, exposure, and affordability increase (Kyriakidis et al., 2015).

From a demographic perspective, readiness was significantly influenced by gender, education, income, vehicle ownership, vehicle type, and driving experience. Higher levels of education and income served as important enablers, aligning with previous findings that access to knowledge and financial capacity enhance openness to safety innovations (Madigan et al., 2017; Hardman et al., 2017). Gender differences mirrored earlier research, in which men often showed greater eagerness for technological features, whereas women placed greater emphasis on safety, trust, and reliability (Bansal & Kockelman, 2018).

Vehicle ownership and type also played a role, suggesting that exposure to newer or higher-end vehicles where AEB is more likely to be available increases readiness. Driving experience was similarly associated with readiness, possibly because seasoned drivers recognize AEB's potential to reduce crash risk, even though some may still rely on their personal driving skills. In contrast, age was not a significant factor, suggesting that generational differences may be less influential once socio-economic and perceptual factors are taken into account. This finding aligns with Kyriakidis et al. (2015), who observed similar patterns across global samples.

From a perceptual perspective, all variables measured were strongly associated with readiness. Awareness of AEB and an accurate understanding of its function were critical, although misconceptions such as confusing AEB with electronic stability control or airbags highlight the continuing need for education. Positive impressions of AEB also played a substantial role in promoting acceptance, emphasizing the importance of shaping first encounters through vehicle demonstrations, marketing efforts, and public awareness campaigns (Eckoldt et al., 2012). Souders & Charness (2016) also identified that increasing familiarity with advanced driver assistance systems is important for adoption and safe usage among older adults.

Taken together, these findings indicate that while demographic characteristics shape readiness by influencing access, resources, and exposure, perceptual drivers are more decisive in determining acceptance. Addressing misconceptions, enhancing awareness, and providing hands-on opportunities are essential strategies for accelerating AEB adoption in Malaysia. These findings carry important implications for policymakers, manufacturers, and road safety stakeholders in designing targeted interventions that bridge knowledge gaps, improve affordability, and build trust in advanced safety technologies.

The findings from Malaysia align partially with global acceptance patterns but also highlight unique regional challenges, such as affordability constraints and uneven public exposure. Compared to studies conducted in Japan and Western Europe, Malaysian drivers show comparable optimism but lower functional understanding of AEB operation, reflecting differences in market maturity and technology availability. This suggests that while international lessons are valuable, localized strategies, including affordable model integration and large-scale public demonstration programs, are necessary to accelerate AEB adoption within ASEAN markets.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined Malaysian drivers' readiness to adopt AEB technology, focusing on the influence of demographic and perceptual factors. The findings indicate that public readiness toward AEB adoption in Malaysia is generally high, with more than 70% of respondents reporting that they are ready or very ready to use the technology. Among demographic variables, gender, education, income, vehicle ownership, vehicle type, and driving experience were significantly associated with readiness, while age was not. For perceptual variables, awareness, understanding, impressions, and prior experience all showed strong associations, confirming that psychological and attitudinal dimensions are critical in shaping acceptance. Taken together, the results suggest that while socio-economic and experiential factors influence opportunities for adoption, perceptual drivers remain the most decisive in determining readiness. Addressing misconceptions, strengthening public awareness, and providing opportunities for hands-on experience are essential to building consumer confidence and accelerating adoption. The practical implications are clear: policymakers should prioritize awareness campaigns and affordability strategies; manufacturers should expand AEB availability beyond premium models and conduct public demonstrations to enhance trust; and ASEAN NCAP should leverage public readiness findings to advocate for broader integration of AEB in regional safety assessments. By aligning technological advancement with consumer readiness, Malaysia is well-positioned to strengthen its road safety agenda and support ASEAN’s collective efforts to reduce traffic fatalities through the widespread adoption of life-saving technologies such as AEB.

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