

## VEHICLE NUMBER PLATE STANDARDIZATION: ASSESSING TOWARDS ITS NON-COMPLIANCE

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### ABSTRACT

*In contemporary times, the acquisition and display of "fancy number plates" have evolved into a source of life satisfaction for specific vehicle owners, particularly when purchasing new vehicles. Consequently, ensuring standardization of number plates has gained significant attention in Malaysia, particularly within the jurisdiction of the Road Transport Department (RTD). The use of non-compliant number plate standards introduces various considerations and can be influenced by an array of factors. Over time, the issue of non-compliance with number plate standardization is poised to become an offense that authorities must address comprehensively to mitigate the misuse of number plates by vehicle owners. This study seeks to identify the variables that influence vehicle owners' decisions to opt for non-compliant number plate standardization in Malaysia. Data for this research was collected through a questionnaire survey distributed across the Kulim, Kedah region. The study identified variables that contribute to the inclination towards non-compliance with number plate standardization. Notably, the research highlights affordability as the most pivotal factor in the selection of a license plate. The findings of this study serve multiple purposes. First and foremost, they offer a valuable reference for the RTD, equipping it to enforce laws pertaining to non-compliance with number plate standardization more effectively. Moreover, the insights gained can lay the groundwork for potential updates to existing regulations, particularly in the Malaysian context. In conclusion, the growing significance of "fancy number plates" as a symbol of personal satisfaction among vehicle owners has led to concerns regarding non-compliance with standardization in Malaysia. By contributing to enhanced law enforcement and policy refinement, this study can aid in better managing the phenomenon of non-compliant number plate standardization in the country.*

**Keywords:** Authority, Non-compliance, Number plate standardization, Road Transport.

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## 1. Introduction

The recent adoption of non-compliant number plate standardisation by Malaysian car owners has become a very serious problem. Even while the RTD frequently carried out operations and issued summonses against the use of illegal accessories, particularly on the offence of a number plate, it is challenging to address the problem because there is no attempt to limit its sale in the market. This is also due to the fact that number plates and other identification devices are not generally standardised (2021). The Road Transport Act (RTA) of 1987, which mandates that every driver install a vehicle registration number in line with the standards, makes it illegal to use number plates that do not comply with standardization as per APJ Section 14.4 of 1987. This was done with the intention of assisting the RTD and other authorities in locating the correct vehicle registration number in situations involving speeding, accidents, robberies, and other traffic violations. The use of fancy or non-compliant number plates will make it difficult for the RTD and other authorities to identify and recognise the car that is involved in a traffic infraction. This may also cause the investigative process to take longer if there was a fatality case. The study's goal is to discover the most important issue that causes vehicle owners to fail to install vehicle registration numbers in accordance with RTD's specifications and to identify the elements that contribute to non-compliance with number plate standardisation among Kedah's vehicle owners.

In order to achieve customer satisfaction even in summons cases, the study will suggest alternative solutions to the problem and make the number plate laws and regulations more acceptable and dependable to everyone. The RTD was having trouble getting everyone to use the same style of licence plate. There are numerous number plate designs and patterns available right now that are approved by the government but do not adhere to RTD SOP. The Enforcement Division has been the focus of this study because it is currently having trouble implementing Section 14 (1) of the RTA, which states that the registration number assigned to a vehicle at the time of registration, or a new registration number assigned under Section 11 shall be displayed and illuminated on the number plate in the manner specified by rules made under this Act. Sutton (2010) asserted that a strong regulation system with sufficient documentation is essential for consistent work in an organisation in order to assure the success of the enterprise.

Various vehicle accessories are prohibited from being used on vehicles, due to violating the rules set by the Road Transport Department (RTD), which were found allowed to be sold directly to the consumers. "DO NOT use but can sell?" means those accessories and components are completely prohibited from being used but still available for sale and displayed openly at vehicle accessory stores, which requires RTD to run intensified enforcement operations. According to the observations, several accessories such as vehicle registration numbers, High-Intensity Discharge (HID) lights, and dark films did not meet the specifications and were sold at accessory stores. The reason the seller keeps continuing to sell these prohibited accessories is because they were never prosecuted for selling all the accessories or components of the vehicle and they were in high demand from the customers. On the other hand, the RTD confirmed that they had often conducted operations and issued summons against the use of prohibited accessories, but it is difficult to curb the issue because there is no effort to restrict their sale. The sale of those accessories is allowed to be sold as long as they are brought into this country legally and are not counterfeit goods, even though those accessories and components violate the RTD rules.

Based on this circumstance, the Road Transport Department (RTD) has to be authorised to take legal action against shop owners who sell illegal accessories and components in order to address the problems at their source. It is illegal to operate a vehicle that does not conform with the construction, weight, equipment, use, and age requirements that are applicable to the class or description of a vehicle to which it belongs, as stated in Section 6 (1) of the Road Transport Act. According to the Act, using equipment (refer to accessories and

components) that is not in accordance with the Gazette as a Trade Description Order is illegal. However, at the moment, only the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) has the authority to take legal action against companies that violate this rule.

## 2. Discussion on Conceptual Framework

These three theories can be utilised to evaluate the occurrence of non-compliance with the vehicle number plate standardisation, particularly in Kulim, Kedah, after examining pertinent ideas for standards and standardisation. This study evaluates the standardisation of vehicle number plates' noncompliance and attempts to provide answers to the questions regarding why fancy number plates were used on vehicles in lieu of conventional ones. Reviewing the literature and issuing questionnaires to car owners are the most practical and acceptable ways to address these topics. Figure 1 shows the suggested conceptual framework.

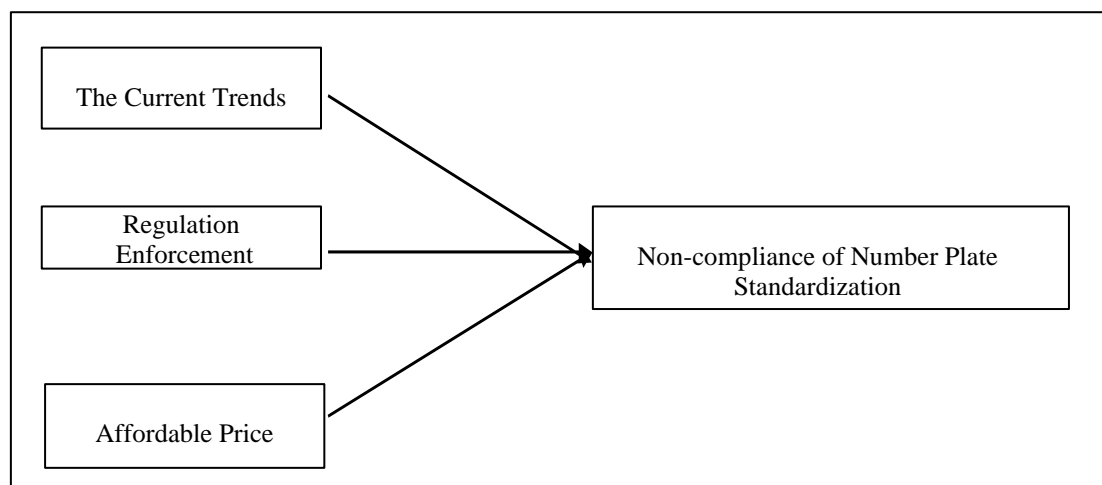


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 The Current Trend

A trend is nothing more than a reflection of what is, seemingly, popular right now. A trend can occur anywhere and is not just related to entertainment, pop culture, or the fashion industry. In addition, a political trend representing the state of a country might be bullish or bearish, depending on economic indications, in the stock market. The Road Traffic Department (RTD) is currently having trouble implementing the law due to the use of "fancy number plates" that do not adhere to uniformity. Beginning as a trend, it will eventually become the "Norm" in which everyone continues to act in the same way even when it is prohibited by law and regulation.

"Norms can have a significant effect in reinforcing noncompliance or strengthening adherence to conservation rules, depending on the specific rule and its outcomes for the person's reference group," write Cialdini and Trost (1998). This statement is supported by Thomson *et al.* (1994), which claimed that "employees become confident with their actions through similar activities of peers within an organization". This shows that when everybody is doing the same things, whether it is in the organization, society, or nation, this will become the current trend for those people. The same goes for the fancy number plates. Even though there was an offence for using them, many vehicle owners chose to put them on their vehicles in order to follow the current trend. Furthermore, according to Roy *et al.* (2011), since number plate guidelines are not strictly followed everywhere, it often becomes difficult to correctly identify the non-standard number plate characters.

## 2.2 Regulation Enforcement

The RTD needs to implement the law strictly among Malaysian vehicle users in order to address the issue of non-compliance with number plate uniformity. Oyanedel *et al.* (2020) state that "people following conservation norms is essential to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources." Rules, however, could be out of date or not necessarily be suitable or fair in how costs and benefits are allocated. This demonstrated that the rules themselves should be updated to reflect the present environment, and the authority should do so in order to find any loopholes that would encourage car owners to disregard the law. Because of this, compliance cannot and should not be assumed (Keane *et al.*, 2008). Higher legitimacy has been associated with greater compliance when rules and regulations are enforced, which makes governance simpler and more efficient (Jentoft, 1989). "One of the markers of good citizens are conscious of the law," according to Nurgiansah *et al.* (2020), "which is to know, comprehend, and obey the rule of law, one being traffic laws governed by law of Road Transport."

## 2.3 Affordable Price

Consumers frequently want to own the things they were interested in. Marketing professionals have shown a great deal of interest in the influence of affordability on customers' purchasing decisions (Hancock, 1993; Serafin and Johnson, 1995; Wernle, 1995), therefore when a product is affordable, consumers will be inclined to buy it. This might be connected to the cost of non-compliant number plate standardisation (fancy number plate), which ordinarily cost little and was simple to find on the market. Economic theory acknowledges that customers' ability to maximise utility is constrained by their financial situation. Consumer researchers, like psychologists, have attempted to predict behaviour solely on the basis of choice, ignoring the cost or sacrifice factor that practically every behaviour requires (Kirk and Rifkin, 2020). Katona (1951, 1975, and 1980), who asserted that a key factor influencing consumer spending is willingness to buy (consumer expectations, confidence, and attitude), in addition to the ability to buy (discretionary income). There is a good reason to think that consumers should be extremely concerned about pricing in the marketing setting, since the emphasis is on anticipating purchases.

## 3. Methodology

For this investigation, a quantitative survey has been carried out. Likert scale questions intended to elicit thorough responses from respondents on the research topic are referred to as quantitative survey questions. A research report is produced based on the analysis of the responses provided to these quantitative survey questions. A particular group of people will be chosen to participate in the quantitative survey, in this case the residents of the Kulim, Kedah area. A small sample of people's data was collected, analysed, and used to represent the complete group. In other words, even though only a portion of the population was examined, the results are still likely to apply to the entire population.

The study's intended target group was Malaysian car owners, but due to time constraints and other issues, the respondents were residents of Kulim Town. The residents of Kulim Town have served as a representative of Kedah's population. According to the report of new motor vehicles registered by the RTD system, Kulim has roughly 1200 drivers. Using simple random sampling as a result, 278 respondents participated in the research, with a tolerable margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95% (Aldebasi *et al.*, 2018).

In order to determine the association between the Current Trend, Regulation Enforcement, and Affordable price, a quantitative cross-sectional methodology is employed in this study. Studies using frequency analysis to describe the traits of respondents were conducted

(age, gender, race, education level, and etc.). All factors in this study were rated on an interval scale, generally known as the Likert scale, with 1 denoting "Strongly Disagree" and 5 denoting "Strongly Agree".

### 3.1 Validation of the Questionnaire

Before delivering the questionnaires to the intended respondents, the researchers emailed a copy to an academic specialist for expert validation. This was done to ensure that all the questions could address the study's goals. The questions were prepared in plain English and were bilingual (in Malay as well).

The Pilot Test was done to gauge the reliability of the study's questionnaire. 30 people were chosen to respond to this questionnaire before it could actually be distributed. The notion of reliability, according to Giordano *et al.* (2018), can be handled in three different ways. One is in terms of consistency, reliability, and predictability; whether the same or comparable results will be produced if the same collection of items is measured again with the same equipment. Another relates to accuracy; are the measurements made using the instrument the "real" measurements of the subject property. The third is in terms of measurement error; to what extent are variations in scores attributed to things like different ways of reading test questions or instructions, changes in the environment in which the instrument is used, and so forth.

In order to evaluate the concentration of each variable factor research and to test the internal consistency factors of vehicle owners' non-compliance with the standardisation of the number plate on their car, a reliability test (Cronbach's alpha) was undertaken (Ameen *et al.*, 2019). According to Table 1, the questionnaire for this study comprises 20 items that are related to three independent variables: current trends (five), regulation enforcement (five), affordable pricing (five), and non-compliance with number plate standardisation (five). The item has a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.74 overall. For three variables thought to exhibit excellent consistency and reliability, Cronbach's alpha values typically range from 0.65 to 0.86. The Cronbach's alpha value surpasses 0.6 ( $\alpha > 0.6$ ), which indicates that the developed instrument has good validity and reliability results. The more Cronbach's alpha is over a certain threshold, the more reliable the instrument is.

Table 1. Summary of Reliability Tests

Variable	Item Number	Cronbach's Alpha
The Current trends	5	0.86
The regulation enforcement	5	0.72
Affordable price	5	0.65
Non-compliance of number plate standardization	5	0.68
Total variables	20	0.74

## 4. Results and Discussion

There are around nine (9) profiles or demographic backgrounds of respondents in this study. The goal is to learn more about the respondent's background, including their gender, age, race, level of education, monthly income, ownership of a vehicle, how often they replace their licence plates, how much it costs to do so, and whether they are aware of any offences. However, this article focused on the frequency of car licence plates, the expense of changing the licence plate, and respondents' familiarity with beautiful licence plates.

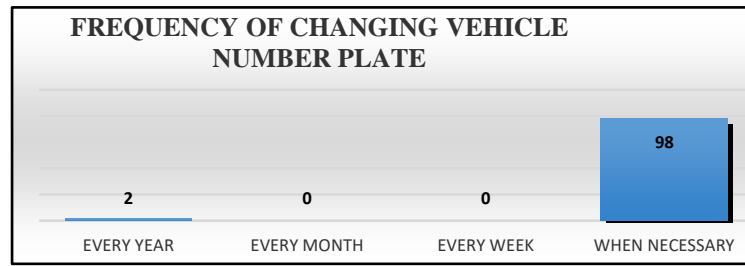


Figure 2. Frequency of changing vehicle plate

Figure 2 demonstrated that 98% of respondents only changed their licence plate when it was absolutely essential, whereas just 2% of respondents did so annually. There were no respondents for this survey who changed their licence plate every month or every week. Additionally, 42% of respondents say that changing their vehicle plate number would cost them and they are not willing to pay the cost, while 58% of respondents say that changing their licence plate won't cost them and that they are prepared to pay the price. As long as the plate number can still be used on their car, they will also use the same licence plate. In addition, 97% of respondents are aware that having a "fancy" number plate registered is illegal, and only 3% of respondents were unaware that this is a violation of the Road Transportation Act.

#### 4.1 Measuring the Critical Factor (s)

The degree and nature of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables are revealed by multiple regression analysis, and the regression coefficients show the relative weights of each independent variable in the prediction of the dependent variable (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Regression analysis was used by the researchers to quantify the degree to which independent variables influence the dependent variable through model summary analysis.

According to Table 2, the model summary's "R2" value is 0.185. This value shows that all three independent variables—current trends, enforcement of laws, and affordable price—explain as much as 18.5% of the variation in the dependent variable—noncompliance with number plate standardisation. These findings demonstrate that the independent variables have little bearing on the noncompliance with number plate standardisation, the dependent variable. The independent variables all have high standard errors of estimation. 81.5% of the parameters are not addressed in this study, although they may be further explored in other studies. The estimate from a multiple regression analysis on standardised variables is known as the standardise regression coefficient or beta coefficient (process whereby the variables are transformed into variables with the mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1). This makes it possible to examine the relative effects of independent variables when they are measured using various units of measurement (Sekaran and Bougie, 2012).

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.430 <sup>a</sup>	.185	.165	.69976

Table 3 displays all of the elements that have contributed to the non-compliance with number plate standardisation using a standardised regression coefficient (DV). Current Trend (IV1), Regulation Enforcement (IV2), and Affordable Price are the three (3) variables that have been employed to assess this issue (IV3). According to the analysis's findings, only the present trend—which is 0.048—was displaying a meaningful value (below than sig. 0.05). This

indicated that the vehicle owner would be strongly influenced by this reason to disregard the standardisation of number plates.

Table 3. Standard Regression Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.274	.307		7.407	.000
Current Trends	.161	.080	.204	1.999	.048
Regulation Enforcement	.160	.091	.152	1.763	.080
Affordable Price	.164	.087	.198	1.881	.062

The Beta displays how an independent variable contributes to comparisons. The current trend, which has a beta of 0.204, has the highest value. These indicate that, after adjusting for the variance explained by all other modal variables, Current Trends contributes most significantly to explaining the dependent variable. Place of Affordable Price has a larger beta (0.198) than Regulation Enforcement (0.152), which is the second-largest beta. According to the results of the beta analysis, the current trend, an affordable price, and then strict enforcement of the law are the three main factors that contribute to a significant non-compliance rate with number plate standardisation. Easy to obtain, less expensive, interested in the wording on the number plate, and pride are the Current Trends factors that, when compared to other factors, have the greatest impact on the non-compliance with number plate standardisation.

### 5. Conclusion

The current rules and regulations should be regularly amended, and any clauses that are not appropriate for the current circumstances should be rephrased in order to address the problem of non-compliance with number plate standardisation in Malaysia. To maintain the rules' applicability, they should be updated at least every three years. Additionally, this reduces any gaps in the rules and guarantees that the general people will abide by them. The researchers of this study would like to suggest that the Road Transport Officer (RTO) be given the authority to expressly enter and examine the premises that sell all the illegal accessories and parts to the general public.

Former RTD Director-General Datuk Seri Ismail Ahmad stated that "it could be easier if RTD could block at the source level which roughly 30,000 establishments were selling the accessories and vehicle equipment's that violate the Road Transport Act has been reported rather than RTD continue to take action against millions of customers."

In accordance with established procedure, Malaysia's accessory stores will be investigated by a combination of RTD, KPDNHEP, and enforcements. Considering that the KPDNHEP is not prepared to reduce the power to the RTD, the former Minister of KPDNHEP, Datuk Seri Hasan Malek, suggested that the KPDNKK and JPJ conduct joint operations because it is thought to be more effective in addressing the issue of selling accessories and vehicle spare parts that are not authorised for use. However, the researchers think the time has come for RTD to have the authority to enter and search any locations selling those illegal accessories and components.

According to Section 40 (1) (a) of the TRADE PROPERTY ACT 2011, "Any Assistant Controller may, at any reasonable time, exercise the following powers, including the right to inspect any goods and enter any premises other than those used solely as a place of residence for the purpose of determining whether any offence under this Act has been committed."

This study is unique and represents a significant contribution to knowledge since, in addition to the absence of research in this area, there is little information available on the causes of number plate number standardisation non-compliance among Malaysian vehicle users. It is essential to have knowledge of the reasons why vehicle users don't adhere to the uniformity of licence plate numbers as a foundation for enhancing the delivery of RTD services. Additionally, according to the study's conclusions, personal improvements would be extremely important on a national level as well. Therefore, the results of this study may lead to a better understanding of the causes of vehicle users' non-compliance with number plate standardisation, particularly in Kedah.

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### **Author Contribution**

Author1, Author3 and Author6 prepared the literature review and oversaw the article writing. Author2, Author4 and Author5 wrote the research methodology and performed fieldwork. Author1 and Author2 conducted the statistical analysis and interpreted the results. Author3 prepared and presented the paper at the conference, MILTC2022.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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