

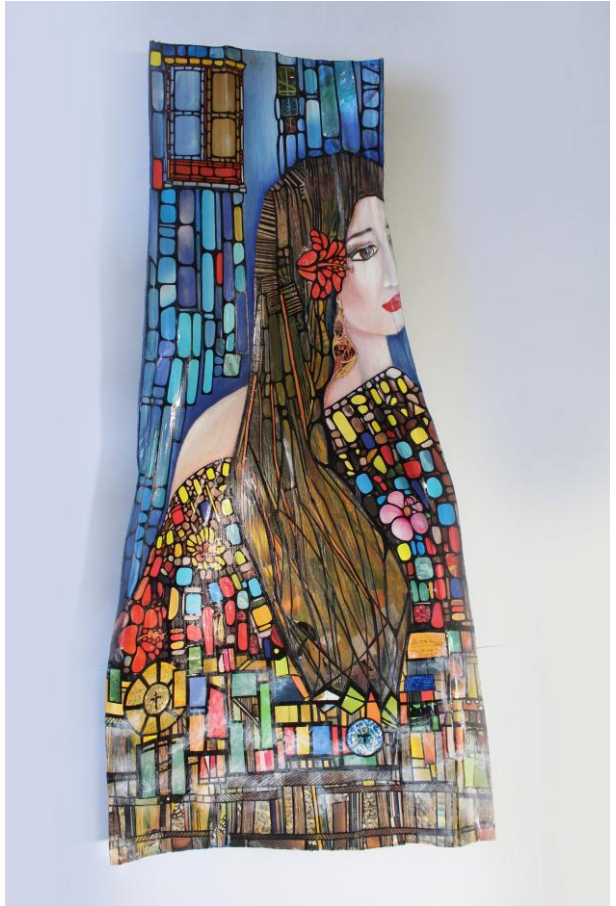
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Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

A preliminary investigation towards development of Islamic mobile application

Ariffin Abdul Mutalib¹

¹School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia
arifah840@perlis.uitm.edu.my

Siti Mahfuzah Sarif²

²School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia
am.ariffin@uum.edu.my

Arifah Fasha Rosmani³

³Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia
ctmahfuzah@uum.edu.my

Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate a preliminary analysis towards development of Islamic mobile application. A semi-structured interview and a survey have been performed for the preliminary investigation as a method. As a result, the new ways of learning have evolved from traditional method to modern method via the Internet such as YouTube and Facebook, and other multimedia presentations assuming from videos, PowerPoint presentation, and mobile application. In conclusion, it is clearly revealed that the level of awareness and knowledge about Asmaul Husna among Muslim is still scarce.

Keywords: Mobile Learning, Asmaul Husna, Knowledge.

Una investigación preliminar hacia el desarrollo de la aplicación móvil islámica

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es investigar un análisis preliminar hacia el desarrollo de la aplicación móvil islámica. Se han realizado una entrevista semiestructurada y una encuesta para la investigación preliminar como método. Como resultado, las nuevas formas de aprendizaje han evolucionado del método tradicional al método moderno a través de Internet, como YouTube y Facebook, y otras presentaciones multimedia a partir de videos, presentaciones de PowerPoint y aplicaciones móviles. En conclusión, se revela claramente que el nivel de conciencia y conocimiento sobre Asmaul Husna entre los musulmanes sigue siendo escaso.

Palabras clave: Mobile Learning, Asmaul Husna, Conocimiento.

1. INTRODUCTION

The shift from old media of information dissemination and attainment to mobile technology has been a whirlwind, as previously people need to own various devices to communicate and perform different tasks but now a smartphone is adequate. With it, we can make calls, watch videos, engage in group conversations, access information and current events and many others (Lorenzo, 2012). Wireless technology especially mobile phones or smartphones have changed the way people communicate and manage their personal and social lives. This can be seen through exponential growth in mobile

phone penetration rates throughout Asia including Malaysia. The penetration rate exceeds 100 percent due to many subscriptions, as the number of subscriptions surpasses the population, with nearly 150 mobile subscriptions per 100 persons. As Muslims in Malaysia is accounted for 60 percent of the overall population, thus, informal learning in the context of Islam for Muslims, especially for children is an important part of Islamic development. However, the platform for obtaining informal learning in the Islamic context is rarely found. In addition, most guides for reading and memorizing Islamic content are limited to certain sources that are mostly offline and in static books, Therefore, an effective way to make them more attractive and interesting is to attract users with interactive mobile apps that enable them to experience differences between the traditional way of reading and the use of mobile technologies that exceeds other technologies in the world.

The most important Islamic content that should be addressed is the 99 names of Allah or known as *Asmaul Husna*. It is important as this is the crucial knowledge of God's character or we called it as *tauhid* in Islamic term. A hadith narrated by Abu Huraira in Bukhari, Book 8, Volume 75, Hadith 419, and Allah has ninety-nine Names; one hundred minus one, and whoever believes in their meanings and acts accordingly, will enter Paradise. Moreover, knowledge and awareness on *Asmaul Husna* are still deemed lightly by the Muslim society as stated by (Rosmani and Zakaria, 2018). The 99 names could be uttered during studying, praying, cooking, washing and many other activities as to stay in connection with Allah the whole time, which has

been stated in Surah Ali Imran verse 190 - 191, Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remembers Allah while standing or sitting or lying on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth? The method of making du'a by mentioning Asmaul Husna is definitely required by Allah that motivates and recommends the believers to recite (mention) His name when pleading Him in their request for something good.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mobile Learning

Compared to a computer where the nature of usage majorly revolved around job and home environment, the mobile technology involved human-technology interaction in diverse and dispersed contexts Karim et al. (2009) that are not bound by place and time. In the context of education, the shift of paradigm is necessary for this mobile technology to succeed. Some point out that parents and teachers need to encourage children to learn through cell phones under their supervision and monitoring, others are concerned about how this learning may be inappropriate and can lead to additional work for teachers (Ariffin et al., 2012). Yet, mobile phones, tablets, laptops and many other technological devices have had a huge impact on public education (Dollah et al., 2017). This suggests that the use of mobile devices is easier to make learning happen at any time and anywhere

compared to the use of worn-out and perishable notebooks. Hence, this situation indicates that mobile devices such as smartphones, Pocket PCs, and others have the advantage of conventional materials (Aliff & Surina, 2014). Mobile learning apps can be developed for different purposes. One is to help students in their studies, as most mobile learning can have less-skilled audiences or users who may not be interested in participating in traditional education and training (Kamarudin & Salam, 2012).

However, these benefits require new pedagogics and a new approach to convey and facilitate instructions. If properly facilitated, mobile learning can benefit students by providing teaching materials and interactions through their mobile devices anywhere and whenever they need them. Nevertheless, Malaysia's mobile content is still limited and much more needs to be done, and other content from Malaysia such as information on food, natural resources, rituals and beliefs, stories, dance, martial arts, Malay, and history should also be expanded through the mobile content application.

2.2. Islamic Mobile Application

Often, Islamic applications are based on scriptures; that refer to the Qur'an, and are associated with writing from previous religious leaders, and they are developed as a tool to support Muslim in daily religious practice as well as to access and learn Qur'an in their course of time (Campbell & Campbell, 2014; Elobaid et al., 2014). The scope

of Islamic content on mobile is far from anticipated compared to entertainment and game applications, and analyses of criteria, usage, content, interface layout and research on user awareness and usage of Islamic mobile content could not be found and are seldom observed. Therefore, rarely used Islamic content should implement a multimedia element approach to attract consumers as an entertainment app as the pattern of cell phone usage indicates that Muslim consumers are interested in entertainment applications that are mostly related to multimedia elements (Ismail et al., 2014). Moreover, the development of Islamic-based mobile applications in Malaysia alone or in other Muslim countries is still scarce and should be explored (Kamarudin & Salam, 2012). Mobile devices highlight the reputation and availability of the Internet and have altered the way people access information. Therefore, there is a need to capitalize on this rapidly expanding technology in spreading the teachings of Quran, providing users with Islamic advice, teaching and learning of Islamic education, and essentially serving the religion (Elobaid et al., 2014; Huraimel et al., 2007).

2.3. Asmaul Husna

Asmaul Husna is the excellent attributes and beautiful names of Allah, asma is the plural form of the word ism, which means name, and husna means good or beautiful. Therefore, the combination of Asmaul Husna means the most beautiful name of Allah SWT. According to Murtadho (2012), from 99 names of Allah, there are 69

names found in the Holy Qur'an with different frequencies, ranging from 1 to 138 times. The other 30 names are to be found in the Hadith of the Prophet. Unfortunately, the public is not aware that Asmaul Husna contains beautiful meanings that can be used in everyday life either as a supplication or dhikr (Abraham, 2016; Alqurtubi, 2017; Nikmat, 2016). This has been supported by Surah Al-A'raaf verse 180, and to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing.

2.4. Asmaul Husna Mobile Application

Referring to Table 1, there are quite a few existing Asmaul Husna mobile applications in Play Store and App Store; however, there are none of the mobile apps that really incorporates the usage of the 99 names for daily life as envisioned for this study. All these applications are only focusing on the meaning and singing part. Unfortunately, many only know how to sing but do not understand each of the meaning and how to apply it in daily life. These apps are basically only introducing the names and the meaning with only several that includes the benefits of each name. Some with interesting interfaces for children and most of the others are simple and uninteresting for adults. The deficiency in most of these applications is the absence of Signalling principle that could ease learning processes. The open issues that are found in these applications are, no embedded principles or guidelines acknowledged in the documentation, no

adequate multimedia elements integrated, no dhikr and prayer (du'a) appointed using Asmaul Husna for daily usage, no specific Asmaul Husna mentioned to confront different life problems, and mostly tailored for children.

Table 1: Asmaul Husna Mobile Applications

No.	Name of Mobile Applications	Target Audience	Content
1	99 Names of Allah - Asma Ul Husna and Asma Ul Nabi	Adult	99 names, meaning, and benefits and names of the Prophets.
2	99 Names Allah (Asma ul Husna)	Adult	99 names and meaning.
3	Asmaul Husna	Children	99 names, meaning, and Islamic stories.
4	Asmaul Husna Audio	Adult	99 names, meaning, and benefits in audio.
5	Asmaul Husna – Let's Sing Together	Children and Adult	99 names in the form of nasyid.
6	Belajar Asmaul Husna + Suara	Children	99 names and meaning in audio.
7	Benefits of Asma Ul Husna	Adult	99 names, meaning, and benefits.
8	Cerita Asmaul Husna untuk Anak	Children	99 names, meaning, and explanation.
9	Dzikir 99 Asmaul Husna	Children	99 names and meaning and nasyid.
1	Keutamaan Asmaul Husna	Adult	99 names and meaning.
1	Marbel Asmaul Husna + Suara dan Terjemahan	Children	99 names and meaning in audio.
1	Memory Asmaul Husna	Children	99 names and meaning.
1	Names of Allah	Adult	99 names and meaning.
1	Nyanyian Asmaul Husna Bersama Diva	Children	Nasyid and Asmaul Husna meaning.
1	Remember Asma' Ul Husna	Children	99 names and meaning.
1	Zikir Asmaul Husna	Adult	99 names and meaning.

In accordance, a Preliminary Investigation (PI) has been carried out to investigate a means to develop an Islamic Mobile Application and the level of knowledge and awareness of Asmaul Husna in the Muslim community as to reflect the Muslims' need in practicing Asmaul Husna as a way of life.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Preliminary Investigation (PI) has been conducted to investigate the current issues in the context of knowledge and awareness of Asmaul Husna among Muslims and the readiness of having a mobile application in this context. Three content experts have been interviewed during the PI, comprising former lecturers and Islamic Education teacher. Also, 55 participants between below 20 years of age to more than 50 years of age were surveyed. A semi-structured interview and a survey have been performed for the preliminary investigation. In this type of interview, this study was able to recognize specific information that can be compared to the information obtained in other interviews and may keep the interview flexible and comfortable so that other important information can still be enquired (Chua, 2012; Dawson, 2002). For the survey, this study was able to gain information on the context, from the random Muslim community. The following subsections will describe the in-depth understanding regarding the issue.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Interview with Content Experts

The researcher interviewed a former lecturer from a public university who is also an expert in Asmaul Husna. The former professor has published more than 20 books related to Asmaul Husna and has made public lectures for more than 11 years for public agencies, universities, banks and other Islamic communities inside and outside the country. According to this content expert, knowledge and awareness about Asmaul Husna among Muslim in this country is still at a low level. Only 1 percent from the 60 percent of Muslim society in the country is aware of the practice of appreciating Asmaul Husna in life. About 70 percent of them only learn Asmaul Husna in regular nasyid singing. Another 10 percent of them know the meaning of Asmaul Husna but are not practicing the techniques. Meanwhile, only 1 percent know Asmaul Husna and practice the technique through a program named as the Intensive Course of 99 Asmaul Husna held all over Malaysia initiated by the expert. During the course, every meaning of 99 Asmaul Husna is described in detail and how these names can be used in everyday life. This course is one of the best choices in learning and appreciating the use of Asmaul Husna techniques in everyday life. The expert agreed if a mobile app is developed to introduce Asmaul Husna to Muslim.

However, the application needs to be interactive and incorporate the Signalling principle that can highlight the important

content and intelligent. Other suggestions are made by the expert to raise the awareness and knowledge of the public about Asmaul Husna, its advantages, and benefits, with spreading across all levels through education curriculum either as counseling, a motivational and religious module in mosques. The ideal age to be introduced to Asmaul Husna is as early as 4 months old. This knowledge is important to a Muslim because by knowing the Name and the Attributes of God, a servant can praise, achieve *khushoo'* in solat with His Names, purify the heart (forgiveness and repentance), understand the essence of the Quran, enjoy nature while praising God and contemplate the hereafter. The second expert was another former lecturer at a public university with the experience of 5 years. This content expert has been giving lectures to various agencies and as well as the public, local and abroad. From her experience and point of view, the general awareness of Asmaul Husna is very low, most people know what Asmaul Husna is, which are the 99 Names of Allah but lack of awareness of the application of the 99 names for the excellence in this life and hereafter. The level of knowledge of the public so far is only focusing on singing the Asmaul Husna through *nasyid*. For her, the ideal age to introduce the application of Asmaul Husna is since birth because this is the crucial knowledge of God's character or we called it as *tauhid* in Islamic term. Therefore, Muslim needs to get to know Allah since birth and by knowing Allah, we can live entirely dependent on Him in any matter of life whether for worship or daily life activities. Various techniques can be used to teach people the benefits of Asmaul Husna, for example through the events of life that they have gone through and they may practice Asmaul Husna in the form of *dhikr* and *du'a* to establish a

relationship with God. This content expert also agrees that the development of Asmaul Husna mobile app and mentioned that the mobile app is very convenient as it can be carried anywhere.

4.2. Interview with Islamic Education Teacher

The researcher has also had the opportunity to interview a school teacher who teaches Islamic Education. She claims that the public awareness of Allah's name is very low, many who only knows Asmaul Husna is only by singing nasyid. Religious school students may memorize Asmaul Husna through nasyid, but she is convinced that only 5 percent from the 60 percent of Muslim in Malaysia's population recognize the meaning. Even the level of knowledge of the society is limited to only sifat 20. She agreed with any means if it meets the requirements of Islam, including mobile application as a learning method that could bring and create awareness and give understanding to Asmaul Husna. She suggested that Islamic lectures are a must to continue in providing understanding and to finally nurture the consciousness of the importance of Asmaul Husna. It may be possible to embed it as syllabus in all subjects in the nursery to the university by education experts. She suggests that an individual should start learning Asmaul Husna from the time they are in the mother's womb. Knowledge of Asmaul Husna is important because it includes a compulsory understanding and practiced as a believing Muslim. It is impossible for a person to know God without knowing the attributes contained in His name.

4.3. Survey

A survey has been conducted to investigate the knowledge and awareness about Asmaul Husna among randomly selected Muslim. Altogether, 55 respondents involved in answering the survey. The respondents consist of 24 males and 31 females below 20 to more than 50 years old. Their education level varies between primary school and Ph.D. From the survey, four questions have been asked to gain some information on the participants' knowledge and awareness about Asmaul Husna. Majority of 78.10 percent agree that they have a fair knowledge of the 99 names of Allah and 74.55 percent on their benefits. However, they are unsuccessful to memorize all the 99 names and the meanings where an immense of 83.64 percent are not confident that they can memorize and understand all the names. Most of them can only memorize some names that are usually practiced in everyday prayer (solat).

Table 2: Respondents' Feedbacks on Knowledge and Awareness

Questions	Percent (%)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have a fair knowledge about Asmaul Husna and their meanings	0.00	1.80	20.00	63.60	14.50
I have a fair knowledge about Asmaul Husna and their benefit	0.00	1.82	23.64	52.73	21.82
I am confident that I can provide correct meaning for each Asmaul Husna	3.64	12.73	67.27	10.91	5.45
I am interested to learn Asmaul Husna via a multimedia application	1.82	1.82	3.64	45.45	47.27

Referring to Table 2, it is also seen that 92.7 percent of the respondents were interested to learn more about Asmaul Husna via a multimedia application. This can be associated as most of the Islamic application were not highlighted or focused on Multimedia principles, and the Asmaul Husna application is not incorporated with the benefits and techniques in applying them for daily life activities as stated in the literature review.

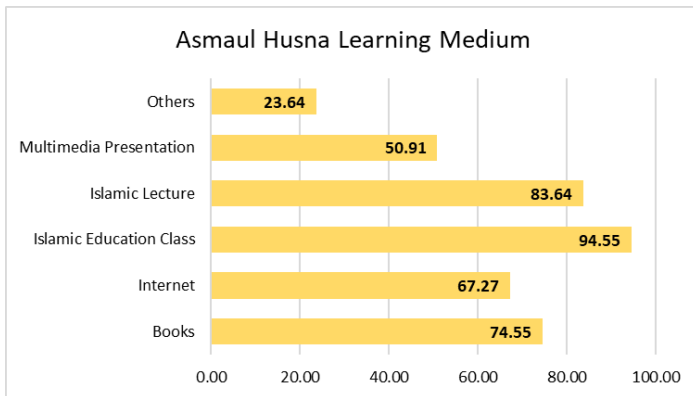


Figure 1: Asmaul Husna Learning Medium

As shown in Figure 1 there are six ways of learning that have been experienced by respondents. The highest method is learning through Islamic Education Classes (it either be during school days or some during university). This time has long gone, and people may forget all the knowledge gained from this class especially for those who do not update their learning. The second and third highest are from Islamic lecture and books, as those are the most common and traditional way of learning Islamic knowledge. The new ways of

learning have evolved from traditional method to modern method via the Internet such as YouTube and Facebook, and other multimedia presentations assuming from videos, PowerPoint presentation, and mobile application. Finally, the respondents were asked about the importance of understanding and practicing Asmaul Husna as a Muslim, and it can be summarized that all of them agree that learning the names is very significant and beneficial in life. The answers are as follows:

- i. To gain benefit in the daily life of a Muslim.
- ii. To form humble, obeyed and devoted Muslim.
- iii. To be acquainted, faithful and closer to the Creator.
- iv. To take the obligation in getting to know Allah.
- v. To handle problems and to act as guidance in life.
- vi. To get a reward on the practice.
- vii. To be conscious/mindful (khushoo') with Allah during prayer.
- viii. To profoundly understand the teachings of Islam.
- ix. To understand the foundation of being a Muslim

5. CONCLUSION

This preliminary investigation is indeed important as the early intervention in developing a better Islamic mobile application. It would be the basis in the design and development of Asmaul Husna mobile application to assist Muslims in learning the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah, and as a result, an individual's faith to Allah will be increased. Based on the interviews and survey that has been conducted, it is clearly revealed that the level of awareness and knowledge about Asmaul Husna among Muslim is still scarce. Therefore, there is a necessity to proceed with a research on Islamic mobile application. The purpose of this research endeavor is; to overcome the weaknesses found in the current apps, to increase the availability of beneficial Islamic contents to the public, to engage the audience by incorporating the Signalling principle, and to attract users by integrating multimedia elements such as video, audio, and graphics into the mobile application.

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