



The Acceptance of Islamic Applications Founded by Social Media Influencers

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Received: September 01, 2022

Accepted: September 04, 2022

Online Published: September 15, 2022

Abstract

The mushrooming growth of Islamic applications have given rise for social media influencers to keep up with technological advancement. Since most studies of Islamic applications involve international social podiums, the study will focus more Islamic applications created by local Malaysian social media influencers. Hence, the aim of the study is to establish the acceptance of Islamic applications founded by the social media influencers. The objectives of study are to discover the most popular characteristics of Islamic applications, identify the influencers' applications' features, and recommend creative methods to enhance the applications. Employing Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as the theoretical framework and qualitative method of interview, 15 Muslim participants were involved to elicit data for the study. The participants of the study are made of males (47%) and females (53%). The participants use 50% Android and 50% IOS as their mobile operating systems, respectively. According to the findings, the majority of participants which is 53% frequently used the mobile application, followed by 20% who did so occasionally and 7% who did so infrequently. The results also showed that 43.03% of consumers avoided using Islamic mobile applications because they were difficult to use, followed by 18.64% because of issues with the user interface, 17.59% because they weren't useful, and 3.94% because of issues with outside variables. The research found that user responses to Muslim's mobile application neglecting to use features on ease of use such as technical problem, taking up a lot of memory, unattractive user interface and designs, too much advertisement, too much storage space, too complicated to use, time-consuming, not user-friendly, and slow response. The study recommends improvement of Islamic applications of better user interface, technicality aspects and engagement with users.

Keywords: Technology Acceptance Model, Social Media Influencers, Muslim Applications, Innovative Design

1.0 Introduction

The introduction of the most recent technological developments in today's globalized society has pushed for the introduction of unique Islamic applications to enhance traditional Islamic practices. The use of digital devices such as the internet, computers, tablets, smartphones and smartwatches have increased the demand for innovative Islamic applications that could suit current Muslims' lifestyles. Islamic applications are known to have three main features (Hameed et al. 2015). The three main features are communication applications with trusted Islamic scholars, multilingual Islamic applications, authenticating hadiths and Quran verse translation service. These include interactive characteristics such as Quran recitation, Qiblat, hadith, prayer time, zakat and supplications which managed to attract Muslim's interest especially among the youths to download the Muslim applications (Al-Qaysi et al, 2020). However, most of the Islamic applications studies are centering on international Islamic applications (Hameed et al, 2019; Al-Qaysi et al, 2020; Purwanto et al, 2021). The study would take a different approach by focusing on local Islamic applications founded by Malaysian social media influencers. To understand one's roots is to realize one's strength. Hence, the study aims to identify the features of the influencers' applications, to determine the most preferred features of the Islamic applications and to suggest innovative ways of improving the applications.

Meanwhile, Freberg et al (2011) define social media influencers as a new class of independent third-party endorsers who use blogs, tweets, and other forms of social media to influence audience sentiments. There is a huge potential for



forming partnerships with social media influencers in order to advance an idea such as Islamic applications. The social media influencers shape the audience's perception about them by optimizing their social responsibility. Local social media influencers refer to Malaysia local celebrities who have embarked on a journey to create Islamic applications. Noor Neelofa Mohd Noor, Shazrina Ahmad and Nur Fazura Sharifuddin were chosen to be analyzed for the purpose of the study.

2.0 Literature Review

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory will be applied in this study. Theoretical approaches around TAM is the development of perspective is intended to know how consumers choose and use products related to technology (Pinho et al,2011; Latipa et al, 2015) . The TAM model reflects a person's attitude and behaviour will be determined by their reaction and perception. The attitude of these activities determines the behavior's goal. Therefore, responses will have an impact on how a user perceives the technology. Additionally, the motivation and beliefs influence their current conduct towards technology. Multiple studies had been carried out based on TAM such as in medical field (Latipa et al, 2015; Ketikidis et al, 2014), mobile gaming learning (Ghani et al, 2015; Gong et al, 2004), social networks and youth behaviours (Rauniar et al, 2014; Pinho et al, 2011) and online shopping (Ha et al, 2009; Lim, W. M., & Ting, D. H. (2012). Renaud et al (2008) and Ports et al (2019) even employed qualitative study to predict technology acceptance of the elderly.

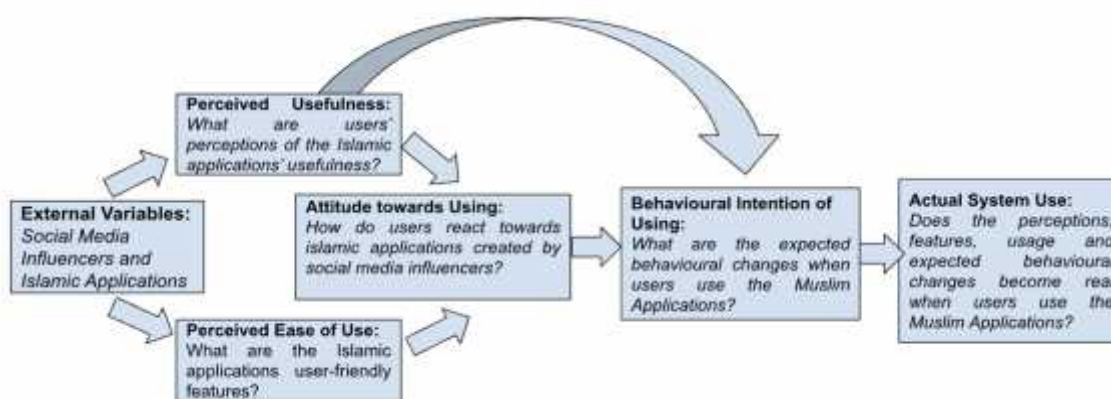


Figure 1.0: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Theoretical Framework

The construct, operational definition and measured items of the TAM are explained in Table 1.0.

Construct	Operational Definition	Measured Items
External variables	Social media Influencers	(1) No of followers on social media (2) No of Posts on social media (engagement with audience)
	Islamic Applications	(1) No of downloadable Muslim applications (2) Features of Muslim applications
Perceived usefulness	Perceptions of the Islamic applications	(1) User's views, opinions, and ideas about useful Muslim applications (2) Expectation of Muslim applications usage



Perceived ease of use	Islamic applications features	(1) Define the criteria of user-friendly features that would attract the users
Attitude toward using	Reactions toward Islamic applications	(1) Users' reactions (positive/negative) towards Muslim applications (2) Reasons of users' reactions
Behavioural intention of using	User's behaviour towards Islamic applications	(1) Expected changes (if any) in behaviour after using Muslim applications (2) Reasons of users' intended behavioural changes
Actual system use	Changes that occur after using the Islamic applications	(1) Any changes that occur after using the Muslim applications (2) Reasons of the users' changes

Table 1.0: Construct, Operational Definition and Measured Items

3.0 Research Method

Qualitative research that applies a naturalistic approach seeks to understand phenomena in specific conditions. A comparison of Islamic applications founded by social media influencers has been under-studied by randomly selected Islamic participants that have experience of using the applications. This study was not organised, and no attempt was made to control the phenomenon under study in order to obtain results that came about naturally in the context of real-world situations (Pratt, Soneshin, Feldman, 2022).

In a qualitative study, it requires a minimum sample size of at least 12 to reach data saturation (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Fugard & Potts, 2014; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Therefore, a sample of 15 was deemed sufficient for the qualitative analysis and scale of this study. The researchers used a purposive sampling approach to select 15 random Muslim participants who had experience using Islamic applications founded by a social media influencer and were given code names from R1 until R15. The qualitative study design allowed for exploration of how Islamic user applications perceive the use of Muslim applications founded by social media influencers.

3.1 The Islamic Applications

The Noor application is also known as "the divine light." In Arabic, the word for light is an-Nur. Noor is an application that claims to be handy and accessible at any point of time, with the core founders being Noor Neelofa Mohd Noor as the CEO and Ahmad Tahuddin Idris as its Chairman. The website address is <https://www.thenoor.co/my/>. Qalby application, meaning "My heart" in Arabic, is a free application that aims to provide trust and updated content on Islamic education and lifestyle. The main highlight of the application is to allow user tagging of Quran and Du'a, E-journaling with 'Ilm class finder, Global outreach in Qalby community program, and other notable features such as prayer time, whose core founders are Shazrina Azman, also known as Miss Nina. <https://www.qalby.io/> is the website address for Qalby application. Mukmin Pro is another application with an Islamic focus on daily Islamic lifestyle. It was started by social media influencers Nur Fazura and Fattah Amin, with Syed Huzaifah Syed Omar as a co-founder. The goal of the Mukmin Pro app is to provide a wide range of daily Islamic life content online. It is accessible via <https://www.mukmin.pro/>

4.0 Analysis and Discussion

Table 2.0 provides participants' demographics consisting of 15 random Muslims who had experience using Islamic applications founded by a social media influencer. Among 15 participants who are between 18 to 25 years old, 47% (7) were male and 53% (8) were female. In terms of mobile operating systems, 50% of participants are Android users and the other 50% are IOS users. The results indicate the majority of the participants, 53% often used the mobile application, followed by 20% for both sometimes and always, and only 7% rarely used the mobile application.



Items		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	7	47
	Female	8	53
Mobile Operating System	Android	6	50
	IOS	6	50
Mobile Application Usage	Never	-	-
	Rarely	1	7
	Sometimes	3	20
	Always	3	20
	Often	8	53

Table 2.0: Demographics of Respondents

Table 3.0 presents the level of acceptance reasons by the participants on Muslim's application by discover the number of occurrence (yes/no) measuring the factors influencing Islamic application and exploring the element offered by the application that can attract user to use the Islamic apps based on ranking (1-10). With the highest number of occurrence (7), most of the participants agreed that "*Popularity of the founder/developer*" had influenced their decision to use Muslim application. On the other side, the result shows "*accessibility*" of the Muslim's application has become the less important element to attract user to use Islamic application with the Lowest ranking at number 10. The results supported by the construct, operational definition, and measured items of TAMc which indicate external variables (social media influencers) had an impact on participants' reaction to use Muslims mobile application.

Interview Questions	What influences users' decisions to take Islamic application into use? <i>Number of Occurrences (Yes/No)</i>	Which element is offered by the application that can attract users to use the Islamic application? <i>Ranking (1[Less] – 10[Most Important])</i>
Founder/Developer	7	1
Word of mouth (Apps Reviews)	5	5
Accessibility	4	10
Usability that offered by the application	4	2
Attractiveness	4	4
User friendly interface	5	6
Ease of use	5	3
Valuable insights	4	7
Timely information	4	9
On trend	6	8



Table 3.0: Acceptance Reasons

The findings also revealed that 43.03% of users rejected the use of Islamic mobile applications due to unease of use, followed by 18.64% on factors of user interface, 17.59% due to usefulness, and the remaining 3.94% due to external factors (reliable). The findings discovered that features on ease of use (technical problem, taking up a lot of memory, unattractive user interface and designs, too much advertisement, too much storage space, too complicated to use, time-consuming, not user-friendly, and slow response) has become a crucial factor resulted to user response to neglect on using Muslim applications.

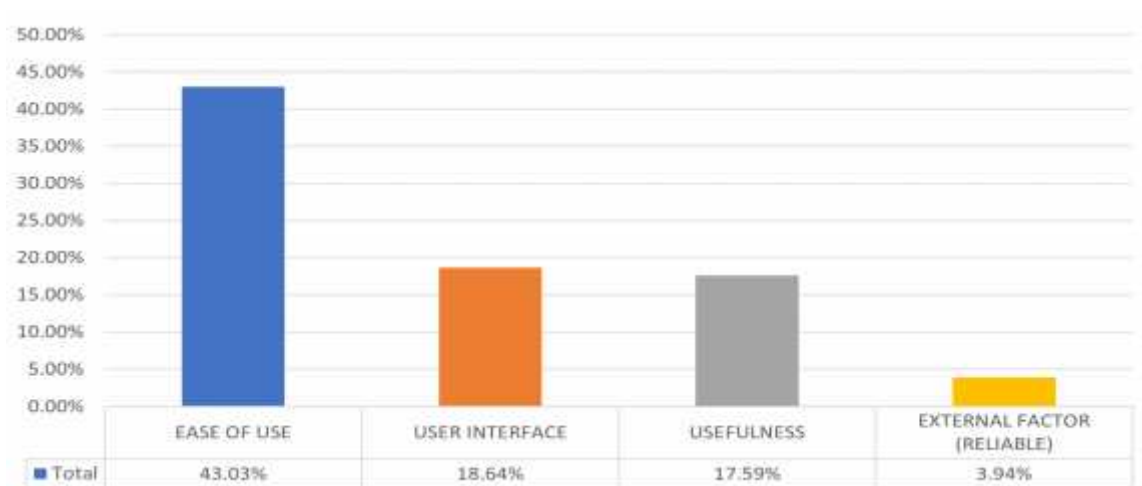


Figure 2.0 Feedback on Reasons for Neglecting the Use of Islamic Applications

The study has also identified three main recommendations to improve the Islamic applications which are better user interface, technicality aspects and engagement with users. The Islamic applications creator should review the interactions between consumers at each application's touch-points. They should develop strategies with the stakeholders for those touch points to relate to customers on an emotional level and enhance their experience. The technicality aspects should be tackled by providing better in-depth servers that coils handle heavy internet traffic.

5.0 Conclusion

In a nutshell, there is a mountainous potential for local social media influencers to develop and to enhance their Muslim applications. Undeniably, there are hiccups in producing and implementing the Muslim applications. The users' perceptions should be taken into consideration as it could lead to better improvement of the Muslim applications. Consequently, it would attract more local and international users to employ the Muslim applications and hopefully become better Muslims.

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