Development of Mobile Fatwa Application for the Selangor State of Mufti Department

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Abstract— Fatwa is an important reference of Muslims to seek of contemporary explanations regarding the Islamic law on new matters in their life affairs. It is the opinion of the scholars authoritative as mufti or related posts given mandate by the government to proclaim it as a guide to Muslims according to their waqi'. However, it is not widely accessed by the community to be guided in their lives. This e-fatwa application development initiative is intended to help facilitate information on fatwa disseminated to the public. It will be developed based on android mobile operating system since it is very popular and widely used in the current technology. The method of development of this apps is through comparison with other existing applications before provide a new and improve our own apps. Then it will assess the effectiveness of functionality of the apps from the perspective of the end user. The target user of this apps is for Muslims and specifically to Selangor state in Malaysia.

Index Terms—fatwa, e-fatwa, mobile, apps, android

I. Introduction

The Fatwa is a clarification given by the authority Islamic jurists about the law on vague things and is not clearly stated in the verses of the Koran or Hadith. This is explained based on the supporters of the Qur'an, Hadith, ijma' from the previous scholars and qias, and the ijtihad from the previous scholars. The authoritative person gives the fatwa is usually called mufti or a scholar who has extensive knowledge of Islam. The person who needs the fatwa is called as mustafti [6].

Until now, there are many fatwa that have been gazette by mufti especially in the state of Selangor Darul Ehsan. It is also the reference and response of Muslims especially in the state of Selangor Malaysia. However, there are still many Muslims who do not understand the gazetted fatwa.

The Fatwa Council of the State of Selangor has digitized all the fatwas that are collected on the official website of the State Mufti Department (www.muftiselangor.gov.my). However, when it comes to current trends, our society has been using internet access widely. Most of the peoples using mobile application either through Android OS or iPhone operating system (iOS). This is because the innovation of technology make it easy to use in smartphones, more user-friendly and effective compare to other gadget technology.

Current trends also make all activities and actions moving faster, easier and effective especially in getting information, make decision and so on. This is because of the tools that are always available and close to use make them immediately find the information needed. For example, when they facing problems requiring Islamic law and fatwa. They need accurate and undoubted decision regarding what they are dealing with. Currently, the requirement for fatwa application in mobile form is suitable for development by applying the current user preferences and trends either in the form of iOS or Android.

From the perceptions of academicians or educations who are deeply involved in the field of Islamic studies, especially in the field of sharia and Islamic law. Fatwa and fiqh are very important things for them to be clear in mind and to follow. All of this is indispensable to get information from authentic and persuasive sources. By the time they need it, maybe with them there is no computer to get the information. But usually smartphones are close to them to be accessed. This gadget will help them get information easily and effectively. However, in the absence of a mobile application for fatwa, it would be a bit of a problem for them to get information quickly and easily.

As previously stated, the state of Selangor has digitized its fatwa collections, whether it has been gazette or not. But it has not been made in the form of car applications as Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and Perlis Mufti Department have made. While Selangor is well known as a developed state and has many facilities and advantages over other states located in Malaysia, especially in the aspect of information and communications technology facilities.

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Therefore, an initiative should be made to disseminate the available fatwa to all parties and communities as their reference and guidance especially in Selangor. With the availability of information technology facilities that they have, a study to develop the state fatwa collection system and to test the user-friendly level of the system is intended to be implemented.

This research aims to analyze the level of communities accessible to the fatwas of the Selangor State Mufti Department. The continuity of this research will be used to develop e-fatwa systems that are targeted for easy to access by users, especially Muslims in the State of Selangor by using Android applications since it is widely used technology worldwide today. The product that has been developed will be tested on its user-friendly level through field studies to appropriate user targets.

II. LITERATURE STUDY

The constitution of fatwa are totally managed by the institution of mufti or authority Muslim scholar. It must always be consistent and relevant to the issues that occur in the population in the country or region. It cannot be biased or has an interest in certain parties. The act of issuing fatwas is only because of certain importance is illegal and sinful in Islam. Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever is given a fatwa that is not based on knowledge, his sin is borne by the one who gave the fatwa." [1].

Fatwa issued by the institution of mufti or authority Muslim scholar in Malaysia has not yet been confirmed until it is gazette as a law in each state in Malaysia. Since religious affairs are under the jurisdiction of the state and the sultan, the state must first gazette the fatwa into law. It is only by formulation of law to enforce the fatwa.

In Selangor state Malaysia, the fatwa upon being published in the gazette becomes binding on every Muslim in the State of Selangor. The Enactment states that it is a Muslims religious duty to abide by and uphold the fatwa. The Fatwa Committee will usually follow Syafie's school tenet. However, if the committee finds it is difficult to follow the Syafie School's tenet to the public interest, the Fatwa Committee may exchange the principles of other schools such as Hanafi, Maliki or Hambali [10]. If the Fatwa Committee opinion is none of the four schools can be followed without leading to a situation that is repugnant to public interests, then it can resort to ijtihad by refer to the maqasid syar'iyyah (the exercise of independent judgment) in making the fatwa.

In Malaysia, fatwa has not yet been enforced as long as it has not yet been gazetted. The procedure of gazette can only be made as a law at the state level since religious affairs are under the jurisdiction of the state. The sultan of the state is the only person can decides to take action of the fatwa because religious affairs are under the jurisdiction of the sultan.

It should be noted that not all fatwa decisions can be declare to public. In fact, some of them are classified as confidential or confidential material. It is only for information to certain parties who solicit fatwas or related parties only [14]. Lack of information on specific issues relating to current issues on religion will make it difficult for people to seek guidance or referrals from the authorities. This led to the difficulty of obtaining detailed information relating to gazetted religious laws [7].

i. Internet As Information Disclosures

The Internet is a communication tool like other medium such as radio, television and newspapers. Basically internet is used to deliver one-way information. But it continually grow up into media communication tools. Media and communication are the same as both are meant to convey and receive messages between two different parties [8]. Media is a continuation of human senses such as eyes and ears. Communication providers are anything that brings information between sources and recipients i.e. the purpose of the media is to facilitate communication.

The development of information technology makes the use of media more effective for use. Media communications are already entering into a phase that focuses on interactive communication characterized by internet-based and computing technologies which witness the new media or the second era of media is widely used in various ways [3]. As a result, communication becomes easier with the availability of new media that help improve the delivery of information to others thus becoming an effective communication medium within the community [11].

In this society, the mass media is accompanied or partly replaced by narrowcast interactive media that reaches select audiences until the birth of a virtual community or virtual group through various forms of new communication [13], primarily through online-communication or computer-mediated communication Internet-based -CMC) and graphic interface between their faces, which clearly have characteristics for a new media-hyper textuality, virtualization, interactivity, convergence, and digitalization. With this new media, the community is much easier to connect and receive information over a period of time and respond easily to information received easily.

In the aspect of access to reference sources for Muslims, Islamic institutions are also acting to develop internet access facilities to deliver their dakwah and fatwa messages to humans. JAKIM had previously set up a national e-Fatwa portal that brought together all the fatwa of the states in Malaysia. However the decision of the Rulers Council did not allow JAKIM to do so, because the fatwa administration was under the jurisdiction of each state in the country. But the data that has been collected still exists at http://www.data.gov.my/data/ms_MY/dataset/fatwa-kebangsaan.

State Islamic Religious Council also provides internet access facilities such as Selangor, Kelantan, Terengganu, Federal Territory and so on. Each state will maintain the respective fatwa repositories. For example the Selangor state fatwa is governed by MAIS (Selangor Islamic Religious Council). The list of fatwa or gazetted Selangor fatwa is here http://www.muftiselangor.gov.my/perkhidmatan/fatwa-

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selangor [5]. However, this portal does not provide search facilities. This makes it difficult for users to search fatwas based on keywords. Furthermore, the presentation of information in PDF form is less speedy to be displayed.

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) through its portals https://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/Fatwa/ has also provided important information while not providing the fatwa search facility. Users can read the fatwa listed in a faster text format for download. The web interface makes it easy to access via the mobile screen.

The development of communication media is becoming more dominant today with the emergence of internet technology and smartphones. These developments also change the social community gradually. With this development make the world of communication have no more boundary compare to limitation of geographical, and racial factors previously. The mass society era has begun to influence the mass media with the presence of a large number of smartphone users. According to the study, more than 74% of Malaysians use the Internet to communicate with 89.4% of them using the internet via mobile phones [4].

Mobile phones play an important role in human life as a means of communication and have been successful in attracting all levels of society [2]. Coupled with the existence of Android an open source operating software for the mobile operating system. Android is a software powered by Google Corporation, which is a very dominant search engine and widely used worldwide.

ii. Smartphone and Its Uses in Fatwa Applications

In addition to issuing and enacting a new fatwa for the benefit of the Muslims in Malaysia, the Mufti Department is also responsible for ensuring the issued fatwa reaches the community. Therefore, it is important for the Selangor Mufti Department to ensure that the fatwa delivery is effective and delivered to the people throughout the Selangor state.

In today's technological evolution, there is more information that can be accessed through new media such as websites, emails, YouTube and Facebook compared to existing media communications such as newspapers, radio and so on. Prior to the emergence of this new media, fatwa was presented to the public using two methods of print and electronic media [9]. Fatwa presentation using print media is done by making a book, leaflets and newspaper distributions while fatwa delivery through electronic media is made by radio and television. The two methods of presentation are unfortunately not enough to support the delivery of fatwa to the targeted community.

The molds usually take a long time to print and distribute while involving a considerable cost. Both the print and electronic media are one-way and one shot only. When an announcement and circulation has been made through these two media, the information disclosed will not be repeated. For anyone who does not get the information from the first announcement and circulation then cannot find out about the information. If the information provided involves fatwa, the fatwa cannot be conveyed to the society effectively [11].

This one-sided media also discourages interaction between the Mufti Department and the community. The people who received the fatwa through these two media could not respond immediately if they did not understand the fatwa issued. Unlike new, more user-friendly media and facilitates the interaction between providers and recipients of information.

Apart from using print and electronic media approaches in delivering of fatwa in Selangor, the Selangor Mufti Department has taken steps to use a new, more user-friendly media to deliver fatwa to the public. This new media provides a chance for the community to leave comments and interact online directly to the Mufti Department if there is any concern about the fatwa issued. The community can also relook at the latest fatwa for their reference. There have been several ways introduced by the Selangor Mufti Department to ensure the fatwa that has been released to the public and researchers will focus on using new media that have been used, namely website and mobile apps.

III. Research Methodology

This research project are divided into four phases of activity. It is begin with literature study to identify the scope of discussion and to understand the ideas of related research study. After that, the researcher will develop the product by following the development process in order to produce a complete 'apps' that can be test and publish to the public. The research activity will be based on the *apps* that will produced to get the response from the end user. A survey is part of the activity in this phase and the collection of result will be analyzed in order to identify the satisfaction of the user experience. The detail discussion will be explain in the following paragraph based on Figure 1.

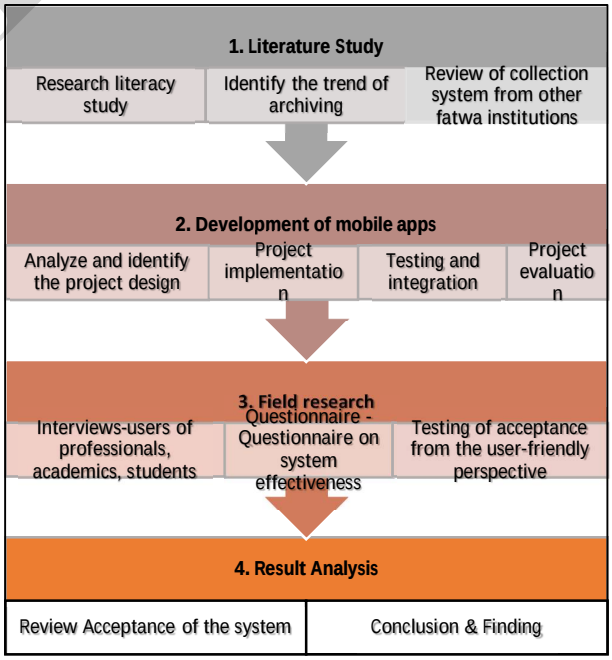


Figure 1: Research Methodology

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To begin the literature study this research was start by identify any related study that has been discussed in previous research. The scope of previous study are divided into the history of fatwa in Islam which discuss the original study of fatwa in Islam. It then followed by the concept study of how the fatwa is proposed. Then, we continue the study about the traditional method on archiving and distributing fatwa to the public and how their acceptance of the public to be implemented. Lastly is the method of archiving and distributing fatwa in the current trend before we focus the discussion into the distribution fatwa by using mobile technology. All the literature study are compare the Selangor Fatwa Board with other fatwa institution in Malaysia.

From the understanding of the literature discussed in the previous study, it is very useful to help us in developing the apps that can suite with the peoples need. The development are begin by following the common software development phase. The input from literature is use to analyze and identify the project requirement details before start with the system design. After that, we continue with implementation of the coding by using JAVA programming using eclipse tool. Once the coding activity is complete it will continue with the testing phase and integration phase following the evaluation process. The evaluation task will also conduct by related person in the Fatwa Board of Selangor together with the researcher and developer. When we satisfied with the apps, it will be publish to the end user by uploading to the google play store with the name as "E-Fatwa Selangor". We will inform to particular person to install and use the product then doing some survey.

The target user for this apps is from middle class people, students, and professional Muslim who normally urgently need to know the latest fatwa declared by the Mufti Board in Selangor. So, we inform them to install and test the functionality of the product as our filed research respondent. The research instrument use in this study is survey study and interview to the related and authority person to use the apps.

The objective of research is to look at the user acceptance in the user-friendly perspective. The target respondent is around three hundred and fifty users from the hundred thousand targeted people the will use this apps. We will review the user perception and acceptance to get the output for analysis. Lastly, the result and concussion will produce to get the findings about the usability of E-Fatwa Selangor.

IV. CONCLUSION

The research study is in collaboration with the Selangor State Mufti Department. The aim at consumers among Muslims, especially those who need to review, refer and guidance of the current laws and fatwa that are gazetted by the State Mufti Department. It is one of the initiatives to help people to access to the authority party and primary entity regarding the fatwa in Selangor Malaysia. It is also effective and accessible to implement since the mobile apps is a current technology that used widely.

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