Making Muslim *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* via Android: Study on UMMA Mobile App

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Abstract. The UMMA mobile application was launched in April 2019 and by March 2020 around 5 million Android users had been downloaded. The Start-up targets digital Muslim communities in making Muslims mercy for the whole world or rahmatan lil 'alamin, and connected with YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The feature 'Community' in UMMA is projected to encourage communication between users to discuss online and offline on social-religious issues and forming Islamic communities. This paper aims to describe the history and development of UMMA as the digital religion practiced in Indonesia; the features in UMMA, and the responses of the users of this mobile app to its content and facilities. The research method in two-step qualitative: first, downloading the application, and observing features, content, user responses on the play store and inside the application; Second, analyze the datas by relevant conceptual and popular references. The study found that the UMMA as a start-up digital Islamic application since 2018 experienced a rapid development with strong financier and it has 21 applicative features, reinforced by artificial intelligence technology, and received positive response from its users. UMMA has become part of the Indonesian digital Muslim lifestyle and will be an mobile application that will continue to grow in the Indonesian application market.

Keywords: Umma, mobile app, muslim digital lifestyle.

1 Introduction

Before 'Digital Religion' existed, several terms had preceded it, such as 'Cyber Religion' and or 'Online Religion'[1]. In the mid-1990s until the end of the decade, the concept of 'Cyber Religion' was interpreted as the importation of religion into the latest cyber technology, but some interpreted it as a new religious practice or a new ritual of a religious community. Ten years later (2000s) the interpretation of 'Cyber Religion' is also still diverse. Some claim that Cyber Religion is a religious practice or religious organization that only exists in the cyber space[2], others consider it a derivative of cyberculture and opposition to traditional religion[3].

In 2000, Helland[4] offered two new differentiations in the relationship of religion to the development of communication information technology, namely what he referred to as "Online Religion" and "Religion Online". Religion online empowers its members to reform rituals and bypass the legitimacy of traditional systems or recognize the existence of "gatekeepers", and the opportunities provided to go beyond the normal limits of space, time and geography. While Online Religion represents the fluid and flexible world of the internet

that allows new forms of religion and religious practices that can be lived online. Online Religion also illustrates how the internet offers a new social landscape for contemporary new society. This differentiation developed until the beginning of the second decade of the new millennium when the concept of Digital Religion that portrays religious practices online emerged.

The concept of Digital Religion, as stated by Heidi[1], has been used as a scientific product such as book titles, seminar themes and conferences in 2012. As Stewart Hoover[5] also stated, Digital Religion does not only mean digitizing religious practices, but more than that, it becomes something that forces practitioners religion, religious authorities to adapt to 'digital making'. That is, Digital Religion is a new method that utilizes digital media and culture. Digital culture itself will form new religious authorities, new experiences and new spiritual reflections. Whereas the digital media that is used gives birth to new applications, new religious figures to new ways of finding convergence points between different religious groups.

This paper aims to describe the history and development of the Umma application as an start-up implementation of digital religion in Indonesia and the features it contains, and how the users of this application respond to the content and facilities provided by Umma.

1.1 Digital Religion in Indonesia

The integration of religious broadcasts with technology in Indonesia could be stated has begun since era before the internet. In the 1980s until the 1990s, the distribution of cassette tapes and radio signal transmission had given Zainuddin MZ a fame and later as a public figure. This preacher got the title of 'Dai Sejuta Ummat' or 'a Million Umma Dai'. He gained popularity and tried to gain electability by jumping into politics. Unfortunately, until he died he had to go through a hard political journey in the United Development Party (PPP), the Reform Star Party (PBR) and the Reform PPP.

After the Zainuddin era, a growing number of private television stations, providing new space for young preachers, gained similar fame and figure. Jefri al Bukhoriy, Yusuf Mansur, Solahuddin Mahmud or Solmed, became among religious leaders who gained fans and fame through television media. Color television also offers Islamic music from the Nasidaria era to the emergence of singers of pop song festivals such as Fatin Sidqia and Nisa Sabyan who identify as Muslimah singer. The decade of the 2010s, along with the development of the internet, young religious leaders grew in line with the rise and development of social media. The religious leaders of social media emerged since the beginning of the 2010s until now the Playstore also added space for religious applications with Ustadz who became the front-line application start-ups, such as Umma.

Besides Umma, several other applications have also thought and taken steps to win the market for Indonesian Muslim users. In 2017 alone some Islamic applications have been present by offering prayer schedule, Qibla direction, Al Quran, Prayer, Dhikr and question and answer about Islam. The application names are almost similar to their main function. Muslim Pro which is a widely used application combines several functions at once. But for premium Muslim pro users must pay a subscription fee, both monthly and daily. To date, Muslim Pro users have reached 75 million worldwide and have been well received by global users in 200 countries. This application is a product of the company Bits Media Pte Ltd, established in 2009 and based in Singapore[6]. Since 2010 they published Muslim Pro and continue to expand the network and make improvements to this application for all users, including KaiOS users who do not need internet signals. Until now the Muslim Pro feature has been linked to

the city's Muslim lifestyle, such as being able to provide information on mosques and halal restaurants nearby and this application was awarded as the winner of the Islamic Economy Award in Media in the 2019 Global Islamic Economy Summit.

In 2019, ahead of Ramadan another Islamic application made in Indonesia itself will enliven the application market and compete with Muslim Pro in the playstore. Islamic applications have become part of the Digital Culture of Muslim big cities in Indonesia, or at least the urban manifestations. In April 2019 the Umma application belonging to PT Khazanah Prima Sukses was released to users. May 2019 Muslimnesia application owned by PT Muslim Indonesia Barokah came along with features such as 'Halal Radar', 'Study Schedule' and 'Mosque Search'. In June 2019 the application 'Impression Aswaja' or Sovereignty of Santri Ahlussunnahwaljamaah was also released shortly after Umma was published. This 'Impression' application tends to support the religious practices of the Nahdatul Ulama pesantren students. It offers free downloads of the pesantren lessons yellow books as well as the Zikir and Salawat guides typical of Santri and Purna Santri Nahdiyyin.

The development of the Islamic application market continues to be dynamic and competitive along with the development of other Islamic products such as Islamic television shows, fashion, halal food, pharmaceuticals to Islamic tourism[3]. But the rise and the development of Umma applications involving large capital is interesting to be explored.

2 Methodology

The method used is through two stages, the first is to download the application and analyze its features, content, and user responses on the Google Play Store, and within the application. second, by analyzing data from relevant conceptions and popular references.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 The Umma and its Fitures

Umma was launched on April 25, 2019 as a continuation of the Muslim Umma application which has been a pioneering effort since 2017. After two years of running, at the time of this start up rebranding and launch, Umma has received 2.5 million downloads. Its founder is PT Khazanah Prima Sukses, owned by Indra Wiralaksmana. The majority share of the company is currently held by Garibaldi Thohir, owner of one of the mining companies as well as the 17th rich person in 2019 according to the Forbes magazine[7]. Branding Umma by this company is a form of implementation of digital religion and the strengthening of Islamic digital culture in Indonesia. Indra Wiralaksamana acknowledged that the establishment of the Muslim Umma and later to become the Umma was the encouragement of the Prophet's Sunnah Community on Facebook which had 1.8 million followers[8]. Therefore, what is done is giving features of strengthening daily worship to help users in daily religious activities. Even in the month of Ramadan *Mutabaah Yaumiyah* features or daily worship activities are recorded, recapitulated and used as donations by users.

There are 21 features currently available by this application which include three things: first, the features related to worship are Prayer and Recitation of the Qur'an as two figures follow:
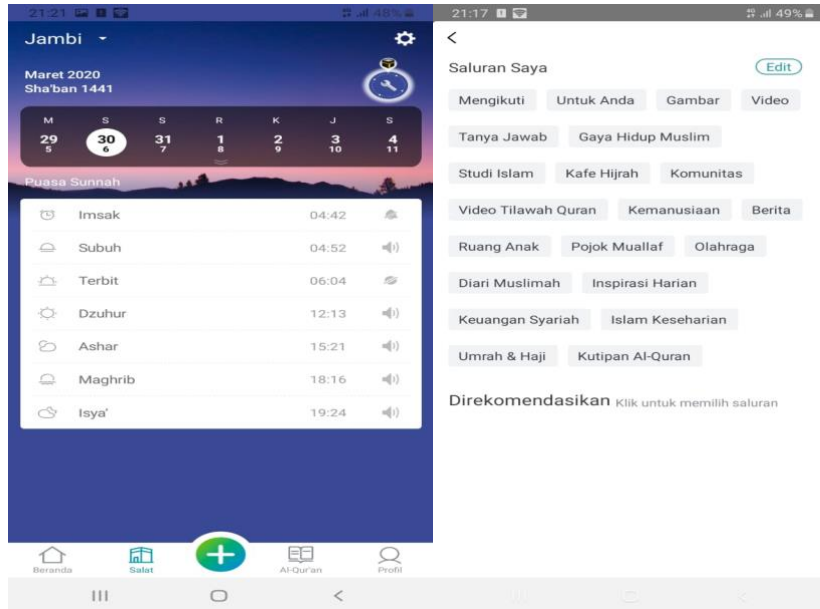
Fig. 1. Features in UMMA App.

Second, the content features are articles, music videos and videos from 80 religious teachers about Qur'anic Quotations, Islamic Studies, Muslim Lifestyle, Daily Inspirations, Sharia Finance, Humanity, News, Children's Spaces, Moslem Corner, Sports, Muslim Diaries, and Islamic consultation features in 'Question and Answer', Islamic Finance, Daily Islam, Umrah and Hajj, as picture follow:
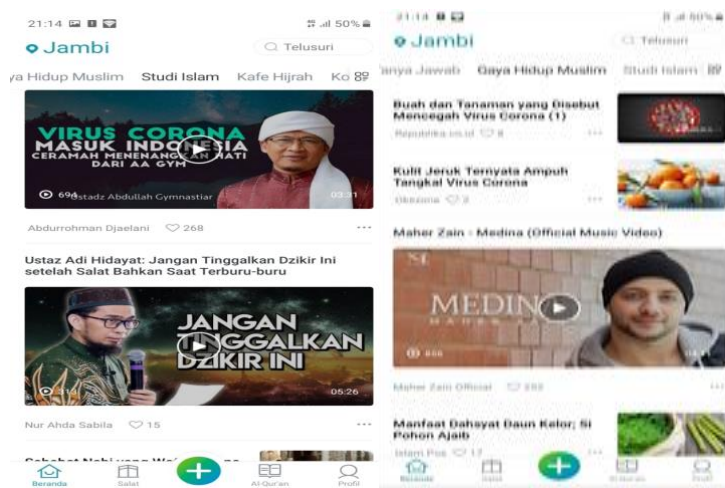

Fig. 2. UMMA Content.

Third, is the Community feature which is expected to form offline diversity communities and is projected to be a community of grace for nature, or Rahmatan lil 'Alamin.

At first glance, the existing features seem to only accommodate the interests of urban Muslims, especially the millennial generation who are involved in religious studies and the hijrah youth movement, but in fact there are also facilities in features the posts from and for Nahdatul Ulama members or communities and salawat teachings. The Islamic Study Community that featured videos of Gus Baha, Gus Muwafiq, Gus Mus Channel and discussions at PBNU was also published in Umma. These features have emphasized Umma's desire as a 'middle application' that meets the tastes of a new generation of urban Muslims as well as Muslims who are still engaged in the Nahdiyyin tradition. What is interesting about the existence of these features is the desire of the major shareholders of Umma and Co-Founders to temporarily not monetize until this application is stable and becomes a daily application for its users.

3.2 Response the users

Umma users, from the questions that arise in the consultation room, it seems that they are just started and still desire to learn religion. They hoped that elementary questions about religion such as *najis* or unclean, *hadas,* and some questions related to private relationship of husband and wife, which they raised, received answers from the clerics in this application. User response that appears, for example the sentence "This apps is great. But, it is still needed Hijriah calendar and dates when fasting to be recommended. When it is there it is more great, because it was needed by Muslim to be pious". Other positive comments and constructive suggestions also appear to come from users as two follows:
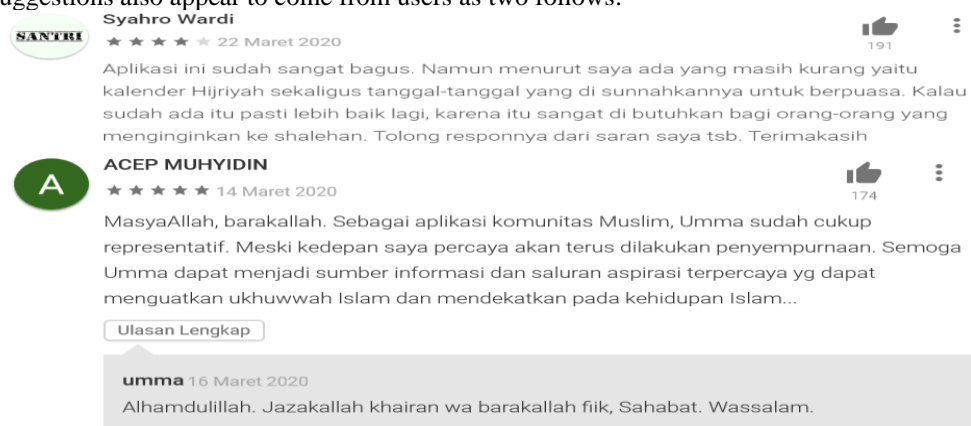

Fig. 3. User response to UMMA.

Unfortunately, there are also questions that are not answered, or there are other users who try to give answers to their knowledge. Regardless, what gets a lot of comments and criticism from users is that there are questions about the private problems of biological relations between husband and wife that seem unfiltered. These questions give birth to comments from users who feel uncomfortable reading the detailed questions about the jima law', but they feel helped by other features in this Umma application that does contain the interests of young

people in general. The majority of users appear satisfied, but also keep notes like the following responses from a user:
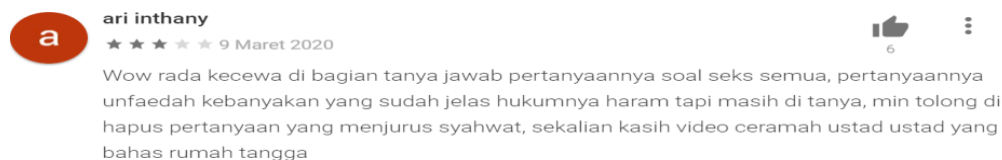

Fig. 4. Young user response to UMMA.

It seems that the development of the Umma application is continuing. At the time of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Umma gave useful information to users, such as official government data updates about the number of positive patients, patients recovered, patients died, and also to show false news and true news that appeared to the public about Covid-19. This application has the potential force to lead and compete at the regional level of Muslims countries.

4 Conclusion

The study found that the application of Umma as a start-up application of Islam is a model of Digital Religion practice in Indonesia. This application is experiencing rapid development with applicative features and received positive response from android users. As the majority shareholders wish, the Umma application not only captures the middle class segment of the urban youth, but also gives room to the religious community of the traditional village of Nahdiyyin and is expected to make Muslims *rahmatan lil 'alamin* Indonesia.

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