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Conceptual Framework on the Adoption of Online Media for Fatwa Information among Malaysian Muslims

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Abstract

Online media is one of the best platforms for disseminating information to the public quickly and effectively. Despite many initiatives taken by the Fatwa Institution to enhance the dissemination and explanation of Fatwa, including using online media, it is undeniable that the level of fatwa acceptance among Malaysian Muslims is still low. Thus, this study aims to discuss the plausible factors that influence the adoption of online media as a platform for fatwa information among Malaysian Muslims. A conceptual framework of UTAUT2 behavioural factors with three additional factors: the Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity is proposed. This article contributes to the body of knowledge and practice by offering insights into the factors that may influence the adoption of online media as a platform for fatwa information. That can assist the Fatwa Institutions in enhancing the efficiency of Fatwa's dissemination and explanation in a more quality and successful way for Fatwa to be accepted by the community.

Keywords: Online Media, Adoption, Fatwa, Conceptual Framework, UTAUT2

Introduction

A fatwa is a formal ruling or interpretation of Islamic law on a subject of current interest in daily life, such as faith, worship, and ethics. Generally, a fatwa is a legal opinion that is not obligated to follow. However, in Malaysia, an officially gazetted fatwa is not just an expression of a Mufti's personal statement on a particular subject; it is legally obligatory and forms part of the state's Islamic law (Rosidi et al., 2021a). Based on specific provisions in Malaysia's legal system, it can be implemented and recognised in a Syariah court (Nasohah et al., 2012). The Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 states that violating, disobeying, and disavowing fatwas are criminal offences. For example, Section 9 of the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 stated that;

"Any person who acts in contempt of religious authority or defies disobeys or disputes the orders or directions of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the Head of the religion of Islam, the Majlis or the Mufti, expressed or given by way of the fatwa, shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding

three thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both”.

Similarly, Section 12 of the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 makes it illegal to express an opinion or point of view that contradicts the Fatwa that has been published.

“Any person who gives, propagates or disseminates any opinion concerning Islamic teachings, Islamic Law or any issue, contrary to any fatwa for the time being in force in the Federal Territories shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding three thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both”.

In addition, the Act makes it illegal to distribute or hold any viewpoint that is antithetical to Islamic law. As a result, the Act implies that any disagreement (oral or written) with a fatwa issued in Malaysia is prohibited and assists or abetting anything that will lead to the distribution of material contrary to the Fatwa (Chiroma et al., 2014). The fatwa decision should be disseminated to the Muslim community so that they may follow and comply with its provisions. Among the issue faced by the fatwa institutions today is inefficiency in fatwa dissemination (Kasan, 2008; Rahman et al., 2016; Buang & Rosli, 2017; Rosidi et al., 2021a). Weak and ineffective fatwa dissemination mechanisms contributed to the failure of the fatwa announcement, which resulted in the general public being unaware of the Fatwa’s existence (Rosidi et al., 2021b).

But the advancements in Internet technology have resulted in significant developments in how humans interact, communicate, learn, and develop knowledge. Fatwa institutions in Malaysia also benefit from developing this technology by using online media such as websites, Facebook, and YouTube to disseminate and explain the Fatwa. Introducing new technologies such as online media could become an advantage for Fatwa institution. However, the technology innovation in a Fatwa institution could be new to some people, making them resist changing in adopting online media. For example, the younger generation with experience with mobile technology would be more eloquent in adopting online media than the old generation, who had less adaptability due to poor experience in technology usage. Therefore, this study aims to identify, determine, and analyse the factors affecting Malaysian Muslims’ behaviour in adopting online media for efficient fatwa dissemination and explanation.

Research Background

Islam is a state matter in Malaysia, led by The Sultan as the state’s head of religion. Meanwhile, The Yang di-Pertuan Agong will head the Islamic faith of his state, Federal Territories and other States without a Sultan, such as Penang, Malacca, Sabah and Sarawak. Because religion is a state matter, each state in Malaysia has its fatwa institution, totalling 14 fatwa institutions across the nation, each led by a Mufti, as shown in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Name of State Fatwa Committee

The State Fatwa Committee	State
The Fatwa Committee (<i>Jawatankuasa Fatwa</i>)	Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor and Terengganu
The Hukum Syarak Consultative Committee (<i>Jawatankuasa Perunding Hukum Syarak</i>)	Pahang and Wilayah Persekutuan
Islamic Religious Council (<i>Jemaah Ulama</i>)	Kelantan
The State Fatwa Council (<i>Majlis Fatwa Negeri</i>)	Sabah
Lembaga Fatwa	Sarawak

Source: e-smaf (2020)

Handling Islamic religious affairs by issuing fatwas and disseminating fatwas to the entire Muslim population in each state is no easy task for a small organisation. Furthermore, Malaysia's population in 2020 is expected to be 32.7 million, with 69.3 per cent Bumiputera (indigenous locals, the majority of who are Malay-Muslims), 22.6 per cent Chinese, 6.8 per cent Indians, and 1.0 per cent others (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 25 October 2020). The Department of Statistics Malaysia only published the most recent statistics on Malaysia's Muslim population in 2010, as shown in tables 1.2 and 1.3. Of course, due to the growth in Malaysia's population in 2020, the overall Muslim population in Malaysia will increase in ten years.

Table 1.2: Total Population of Muslims in Malaysia 2010

Gender	Total Muslim Population on 2010	Malaysian Muslim citizen					Non-Malaysian Muslim citizen
		Bumiputera Muslim		Non-Bumiputera Muslim			
		Malay Muslim	Other Bumiputera Muslim	Chinese Muslim	Indian Muslim	Other Muslim	
Male Muslim	8,892,853	7,145,985	679,221	25,108	42,475	52,776	947,288
Female Muslim	8,482,941	7,045,735	667,987	16,940	36,227	49,558	666,494
Nationwide	17,375,794	14,191,720	1,347,208	42,048	78,702	102,334	1,613,782

Source: DOSM (2010)

Table 1.3: Population of Muslims by States in Malaysia 2010

State	Total Muslim Population on 2010	Malaysian Muslim citizen					Non-Malaysia n Muslim citizen
		Bumiputera Muslim		Non-Bumiputera Muslim			
		Malay Muslim	Other Bumiputera Muslim	Chinese Muslim	Indian Muslim	Other Muslim	
Nationwide	17,375,794	14,191,720	1,347,208	42,048	78,702	102,334	1,613,782
Johor	1,949,393	1,759,537	13,068	4,074	8,318	5,896	158,500
Kedah	1,504,100	1,460,746	1,119	1,003	3,345	1,673	36,214
Kelantan	1,465,388	1,426,373	6,406	1,525	445	1,448	29,191
Kuala Lumpur	776,958	679,236	5,466	3,838	7,688	4,886	75,844
Labuan	66,065	30,001	24,083	522	195	1,235	10,029
Malacca	542,433	517,441	2,202	868	1,678	963	19,281
Negeri Sembilan	615,235	572,006	3,651	1,848	4,626	1,529	31,575
Pahang	1,124,909	1,052,774	8,651	1,002	2,244	4,313	55,925
Penang	696,846	636,146	1,251	1,290	12,335	1,628	44,196
Perak	1,301,931	1,238,357	15,387	1,367	7,537	1,764	37,519
Perlis	203,476	198,710	202	369	260	499	3,436
Putrajaya	70,522	68,475	406	104	68	50	1,419
Sabah	2,096,153	184,197	1,106,042	9,591	3,164	40,216	752,943
Sarawak	796,239	568,113	134,340	4,037	1,892	2,433	85,424
Selangor	3,161,994	2,814,597	23,804	10,241	24,472	32,829	256,051
Terengganu	1,004,152	985,011	1,130	369	435	972	16,235

Source: DOSM (2010)

Dissemination and explanation of the latest Fatwa to all Muslims across the state without the help of technology is a rather tricky task. Since time immemorial, religions, including Islam, have embraced and adopted various technologies since using parchment, printing, and, more recently, digital communication (El Shamsy, 2020). For example, online media can be used to spread Islamic preaching (Hew, 2018; Al-Zaman, 2022; Whyte, 2022). Islamic videos on YouTube grew steadily without any decline, from 6.04% in 2011 to 13.11% in 2019, more than doubling in eight years (Al-Zaman, 2022). At the same time, Nisa (2018) argues that social media has become the leading platform for Indonesian Muslim teenagers to educate each other to be virtuous Muslims. As a result, Whyte (2022) suggests Muslims value the benefits of accessing knowledge and communicating ideas via digital platforms.

In 2020, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) reported that 88.7% of the Malaysian population used the internet. According to YouGov's latest research (2019), Malaysians spend an average of five hours and 47 minutes a day on

social networking sites. In Malaysia, WhatsApp is the most used network, with nearly nine out of ten people (88%) using it at least once a week. Facebook (81%) is the most popular social media platform, followed by YouTube (74%), Instagram (64%), and Facebook Messenger (40%). As of January 2020, approximately 81 per cent of Malaysia's population was using social media. Facebook was the most popular social media site out of all the available ones (Statista Research Department, 13 July 2020). The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) released comprehensive information about how Malaysians use the internet and for what purposes (Table 1.4 & Table 1.5).

Table 1.4: Statistic Social networking and communication apps account ownership (2020)

Social networking users (24.6 million)	Per centage (%)	Per centage (%)	Communication apps users (27.8 million)
Facebook	91.7	98.7	WhatsApp
Youtube	80.6	53.9	Facebook Mesenger
Instagram	63.1	40.1	Telegram
Twitter	37.1	27.7	Wechat
Google+	24.1	14.5	Skype
Linkedin	10.8	8.2	Line
Others	0.2	6.3	KakaoTalk
		0.2	Others

Source: MCMC (2020)

Table 1.5: Statistic of online activities by Malaysian (2020)

Online activities	Percentage (%)
Communication by text	98.1
Visit social networking platform	93.3
Watch or download video / online tv	87.3
Communicate by voice/video	81.1
To get information	74.3
Read online publication	68.3
Online banking and financial activities	63.8
Online shopping/booking	64.2
Listen / download music / online radio	64.4
Work-related	45.0
Government services	41.4
Online games	42.8
Cloud storage	37.1
Maintain blogs/homepage	32.3
Study	29.7
Online job application	25.7
Selling goods/services	12.0

Source: MCMC (2020)

The continuous spread of information and communication technology (ICT) has affected people's lives worldwide (Luyten, 2022). Social media has generated a massive amount of voluntary data and new relationships such as instant messaging and forwarding, photo uploads and connections between users. Social media also have promoted real-time information dissemination and opened up new communication channels, participation and networking (Lin, 2022). Social media can quickly reach large groups of individuals (Jeanis, 2020). Not surprisingly, the use of social media is one of the most popular activities among youth, adolescents, and emerging adults (Lin, 2022; Othman et al., 2022). Worldwide reports indicate that the largest Facebook and Instagram users group is 25 to 34 years (Chaffey, 2020). It gives young people today a gateway to entertainment and communication, and it is fast becoming one of the essential platforms for accessing information and news.

With the growing popularity of online media among Malaysians, this platform has become the best medium for disseminating fatwas more easily and quickly. However, online media's dissemination and explanation of fatwas in Malaysia have yet to be fully explored. Hence, there is a need to understand and study the factor that could impact the intention and the actual behaviour of using online media for fatwa dissemination purposes among Malaysian Muslims. For the reasons mentioned above, this study investigates Malaysian Muslim's acceptance of online media as a platform for disseminating and explaining fatwas.

Problem Statement

Online media offers numerous benefits to the user, such as providing wide-area coverage, enabling virtual learning at home, promoting real-time information dissemination and opening up new communication channels. Many organisations and institutions utilise online media to communicate and provide information. Recognising the benefits of online media in delivering information to a massive number of people more quickly and conveniently, most fatwa departments in Malaysia nowadays build their websites and social media profiles to disseminate fatwas and clarify current fatwas (Suratem et al., 2015; Khairuldin et al., 2018; Ashaari et al., 2020).

Not to be outdone, the muftis and members of the fatwa committees of the states also created online media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram and Youtube Channel to deliver fatwa information and answer current issues more efficiently. For example, the former Federal State Mufti, Datuk Dr Zulkifli al-Bakri and Datuk Dr Mohd Asri Zainal Abidin, the Mufti of Perlis, have personal Facebook and Instagram accounts that cover their lectures and are broadcast live by other parties (Ashaari et al., 2020). That issue had been stressed by Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah (2020) in the Muzakarah Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI). He suggested the mechanism of dissemination and explanation must be implemented via an effective communication plan so that the Fatwa can be understood, accepted and appreciated. This is because usage of this platform facilitates the dissemination of fatwas more quickly. Still, it also promotes the community's understanding of fatwas and leads the community to accept the fatwas that have been issued (Rosidi et al., 2021c).

Nevertheless, the adoption of online media as a platform for fatwa dissemination and explanation among Malaysian Muslims is still questionable due to the low acceptance of Fatwa (Shamsudin et al., 2018; Ashaari et al., 2019; Rosidi et al., 2021b). According to Irwan et al (2017), only 30% out of 1200 respondents knew the Fatwa delivered by the Selangor Mufti Department, and 70% of the respondents did not know and were not sure about the Fatwa. Similarly, most respondents of Rahman et al.'s (2016) study do not know or are not

interested in knowing about the implementation of fatwas once state fatwa institutions have gazetted them. These studies indicated a poor level of fatwa acceptance in Malaysia and a lack of fatwa awareness among Malaysian Muslims. In technology acceptance, awareness significantly increases the adoption level (Mohamad & Kassim, 2019; Malik & Ayop, 2020).

At the same time, the use of online media in raising awareness and knowledge of the current Fatwa is one of the essential elements in Maqasid al-Shariah, which is to protect the religion (Rosidi et al., 2022). Online media, if used correctly, may assist a person in preserving the Five Essentials of Maqasid al-Shariah, namely religion (al-Din), life (al-Nafs), intellect (al-'Aql), progeny (al-Nasl) and wealth (al-mal)(Rosidi et al., 2022). Besides, religion significantly influences human life because it affects people's behaviours and attitudes. Religion or religiosity also indirectly affects social media use and technology acceptance (Baazeem, 2020). Thus, acceptance of online media for fatwa dissemination decreases due to a lack of fatwa awareness, Maqasid al-Shariah and religiosity.

In this study, Malaysian Muslims will be the sample study, and this study will focus on online media for fatwa purposes. Therefore, it is relevant and appropriate to study the relationship between Fatwa awareness, Maqasid al-Shariah and religiosity on online media acceptance for fatwa dissemination and explanation. Moreover, there is a scarcity of research that has analysed the difference between gender, age and level of education. Only a few researchers have looked at the factors influencing people's acceptance of online media, with gender, age, and educational level acting as moderating variables. Additionally, research on online media among Malaysian Muslims for fatwa knowledge is still minimal.

Rahman et al (2016); Buang & Che Rosli (2017); Shamsudin (2018) investigated fatwa perception and acceptance through the media. Using the reception model established by Hans Robert Jous in the late 1960s, Rahman et al (2016) discovered that most Muslims in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor agreed to every Fatwa released by the Council published in Malaysian newspapers. Meanwhile, Buang and Rosli (2017) discovered that most university students in Selangor are comfortable with fatwa management and decision-making due to technology's ease of access to fatwa materials. The respondents were 100 students from The National University of Malaysia and The University of Malaya, but they tested no acceptance or reception model or hypothesis. Shamsudin (2018) adopted the Technology Approval Model (TAM) to assess the degree of acceptance of fatwa dissemination by online media among Muslims. The respondents were 232 Muslims residing in Selangor state only.

Hence, whether Malaysian Muslims from 14 countries would readily accept and use online media as a fatwa dissemination platform remains unanswered. More study of specific theories is required to examine Malaysian Muslims' acceptance of fatwa dissemination and explanation through social media. If there is no hypothesis or model involved, it is just the researcher's theoretical viewpoint. Thus, The expanded Unified Theory of Acceptance and Usage of Technology (UTAUT2) will be used as a baseline theory since it has been identified as one of the most often used models to analyse the use and adoption of social media across a large number of studies (Al-Qaysi et al., 2020). For this reason, comprehensive research on Fatwa awareness, Maqasid al-Shariah, religiosity, and UTAUT2 variables that influence the adoption of online media for fatwa dissemination among Malaysian Muslims was needed.

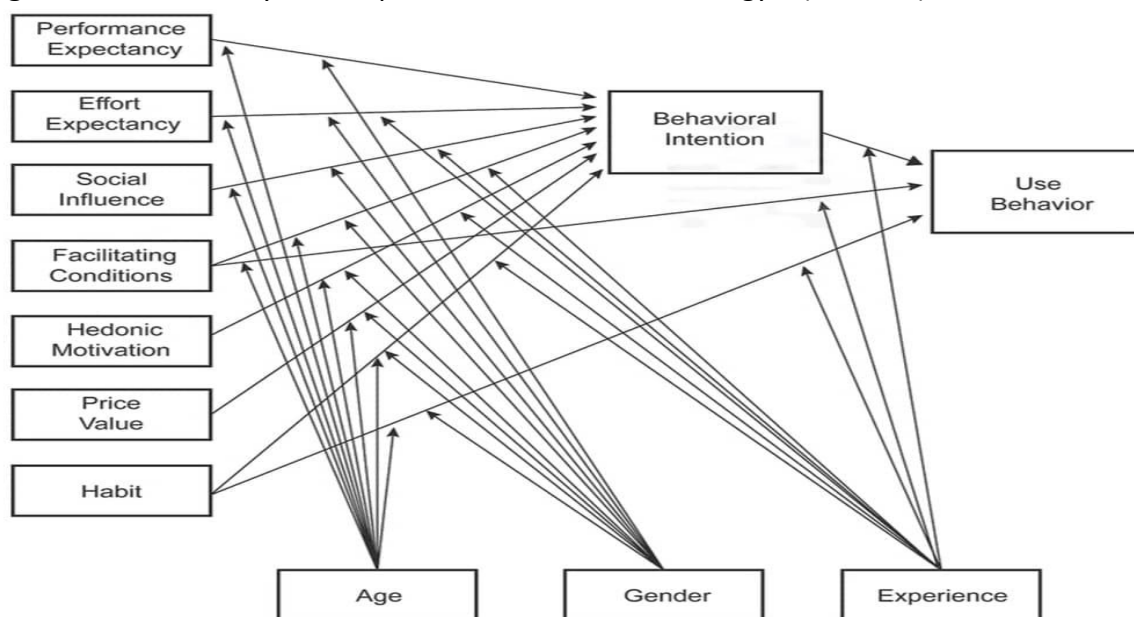
Research Framework

UTAUT2

According to Venkatesh et al (2012), UTAUT2's primary purpose is to consider general adoption, use of technology and consumer adaptation to identify three key constructs.

Furthermore, they adjusted some of the UTAUT relationships and introduced new ones. The UTAUT2 contains seven constructs that influence behavioural intention and use. These constructs include facilitating condition, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit. The UTAUT 2 model explains 70 per cent of the intention to use variance, which is, by far, a significant improvement over any of the original models (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Anderson, Schwager & Kerns, 2006; Wu, Tao & Yang, 2007; Venkatesh et al., 2012, 2016; Williams et al., 2013).

Figure: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2)



Source: Venkatesh et al. (2012)

The Proposed Framework

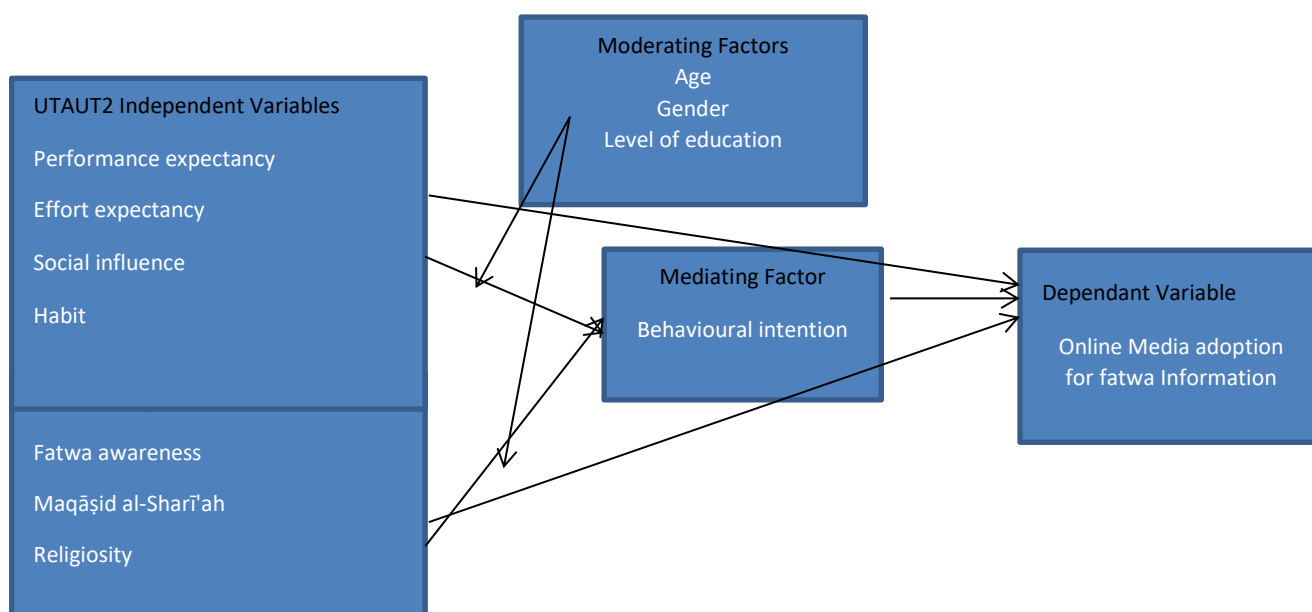
The theoretical framework guided the present study in developing its research framework. Several modifications have been made to the original model of UTAUT2 to ensure the current model applies to social media for fatwa dissemination and explanation setting. Firstly, the model is based on UTAUT2 behavioural factors and considers the inclusion of independent variables such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating condition, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit. However, after a thorough review of the literature, the researchers will include three new factors: Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity.

The present study will exclude facilitating conditions, price value and hedonic motivation. According to Venkatesh et al (2003), to include facilitating conditions as a variable in any technology usage study, factors such as training and support must be provided consistently and publicly within an organisation and reasonably consistent among customers. Besides, using social media does not require customers to have a high level of facilities and support that could be important for other technologies like Mobile banking and Internet banking (Dwivedi et al., 2016; Alalwan et al., 2018). As a result, Shaffril (2017); Alalwan (2018) excluded facilitating conditions from their study. Then, several studies have excluded using hedonic motivation as a variable in their research. Hajli and Lin (2016) examined the topic of social networking service (SNS) information sharing and did not include hedonic motivations.

Koohikamali et al (2017) do not include hedonic motivations in their study of information sharing via social networking services (SNS).

Similarly, in a study on the community of practice (CoP) online help-seeking, Nistor et al (2012) also excluded hedonic motivation. This study will exclude the Hedonic motivation because it is irrelevant to fatwa dissemination and explanation. On the other hand, Fatwa dissemination and explanation are holy things not performed for fun and entertainment. As for price value, users use social media free of charge, which does not bear any cost (Raman & Don, 2013; Alalwan, 2018; Kim & Chung, 2019; Baazem, 2020). Therefore, users could not be concerned regarding price issues for online media usage, and accordingly, price value is not considered in the current study model.

The current study will keep behavioural intention as the mediating factor. It adds education as a new moderating factor while keeping the other two moderating factors, age and gender. The study, however, does not include experience as a moderator of UTAUT2. Because of the early stages of social media's development as a platform for fatwa dissemination and explanation, there is a lack of a compelling argument for integrating social media user experience with fatwa dissemination. Past researchers have also excluded experience because its moderating effect on behavioural intentions is insignificant (Kimball, 2015; Rahman et al., 2011; Moorthy et al., 2019).



Based on the purpose research conceptual framework, the hypotheses can be constructed as follows:

H1: Performance expectancy will positively affect online media adoption for fatwa information.

H2: Effort expectancy will positively affect the online media adoption for fatwa information.

H3: Social influence will positively affect the online media usage adoption for fatwa information.

H4: Habit will positively affect the online media adoption for fatwa information.

H5: Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah will positively affect the online media adoption of fatwa information.

H6: Fatwa awareness will positively affect the online media adoption for fatwa information.

H7: Religiosity will positively affect the online media adoption for fatwa information.

H8: Behavioural intention has a significant effect in mediating performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, habit, Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity toward the online media adoption for fatwa information.

H9: Age has a significant effect in moderating mediating performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, habit, Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity toward the online media adoption for fatwa information.

H10: Gender has a significant effect in moderating mediating performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, habit, Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity toward the online media adoption for fatwa information.

H11: Level of education has a significant effect in moderating mediating performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, habit, Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity toward the online media adoption for fatwa information.

Conclusion

In this study, the Expanded Unified Theory of Acceptance and Usage of Technology (UTAUT2) will be used as a foundation for the conceptual framework. The model then will be extended with the integration of Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity to develop and produce a more robust predictive model. This modified model will better explain the relationship between the constructs that impact Malaysian Muslims to adopt online media for fatwa information. Thus, the three additional variables can be verified in this study. This study also opens the way for more research in the future relating to the effects of awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity on online users, social media and technology acceptance.

This study developed a conceptual framework that explains the factors that affect online media adoption as a platform for fatwa information in Malaysia. With the emphasis on the vital role of Fatwa awareness, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and religiosity can enhance the effect of online media adoption for fatwa information. Therefore, the Fatwa Institution must consider the factors that influence the usage of online media that can assist the organisation in enhancing the efficiency of Fatwa's dissemination and explanation in a more quality and successful way for Fatwa to be accepted by the community. Furthermore, for Fatwa Institutions in Malaysia, the study findings will play a critical role in outlining how to influence Malaysian Muslims to adopt online media for fatwa information.

Additionally, this article enriches the literature on online media usage for fatwa dissemination. It could fill a gap in the literature by investigating Malaysian Muslims' acceptance and use of online media to obtain fatwas information. It will be a good reference point for related parties, researchers, and students who aim to ascertain further and explore the factors that might affect technology usage among Malaysian Muslims relating to fatwa dissemination and explanation. The study's findings may also be helpful to the concerned researchers, consultants, independent organisations and practitioners that could play a critically significant role in increasing the fatwa acceptance among the community. Future researchers should continue exploring other factors influencing Muslim intention and empirically test the proposed conceptual paper to strengthen the literature.

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