

## **There's a religious app for that!: A framework for studying religious mobile applications**

In our study of religious mobile applications we investigated 450 religious mobile apps in iTunes that fall into 11 different categories. Through this analysis we provide insights into common types, purpose and use of religious apps. We found that while iTunes is a leading repository for religious mobile applications, its App store does not offer a specific “religion” category. Finding religious apps and identifying their intended spiritual purpose can be difficult.

Some of the most common categories include Religious Utilities that offer information to help users perform specific religious practices, Sacred Texts providing interaction with digitized versions of sacred texts, and Prayer apps that allow mobile devices to become a conduit for prayer.

We also found that the 11 categories could be further divided into two groups. Apps oriented around religious practice are those that help to facilitate religious practices such as praying, meditating, and reading sacred texts. Examples include the Lulav Wizard app, which creates a digital replica of a palm tree's frond, teaching the users how to swing it during the Jewish festival of Sukkot, and The Lord's Prayer app that offers users simple text guides through a recitation of the well-known Christian prayer.

Apps embedded with religious content are those that insert religion into secular practices, rather than recreate traditional religious practices. For example, the Islamic Free Quiz app uses a game show format to teach users about basic tenets of Islam. Other religious content apps help users remember important dates and times for religious holidays, such as the Hebrew Calendar Converter. What this means is that developers tend to concentrate their app design around reminding users when to practice their religion, or helping users practice their religion whenever, wherever they are.

Overall the study suggests these 11 categories provide a starting point for evaluating the intentions and motivations behind the design of religious apps. It gives scholars a unique and useful methodological framework for studying religious apps.

The full study “There's a religious app for that!: A framework for studying religious mobile applications” is authored by Heidi A Campbell, Brian Altenhofen, Wendi Bellar, and Kyong James Cho and appears in the May issue of *Mobile Media & Communication* (<http://mmc.sagepub.com/content/2/2/154.short>).