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Now, a mobile application to alert Muslims to prayer times ANI

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Washington, April 6 (ANI): Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology have developed a religious application that alerts Muslim mobile users when it's time to perform the five daily prayers called salat.

The application known as Sun Dial is currently being discussed this week at the human-computer interaction conference, CHI, in Boston.

"We have to understand religion because it's such a central part of peoples lives," said Susan Wyche, doctoral candidate in the College of Computing and GVU Center at Georgia Tech.

The researcher also highlighted the difference between designing technological devices for religious use and making devices for traditional use in office settings.

"Efficiency and productivity tend to be driving forces when designing technology for offices, but these are not as central when designing applications for the home or religious settings. Why would you design a device that makes someone pray faster?" said Susan.

She revealed that the reason why her team chose to focus on Islam for their study was partially because of the religion's popularity worldwide, and partially because Muslims have historically used technology like compasses and telescopes to help them determine the direction to face during prayer.

The researchers worked with seven focus groups, and determined that the greatest interest from the participants lay in prompting them when it was time to pray - not by

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using text, which some commercial applications use, but through imagery combined with audible alerts.

Susan revealed that the novel mobile application alerts its users to the time to pray by using an image of the sun lining up with a green circle.

When the sun lines up with the circle, it's time to pray.

"Unlike similar systems, ours relies on graphics rather than text and graphs to communicate prayer times. Users drove this choice by telling us that tracking the sun was the most religiously valued method to determine prayer times," she said.

Susan revealed that her team got favourable reactions when they tested their application with Muslims from Georgia Tech and the greater Atlanta area for two weeks.

The researcher further revealed that she and her colleagues were trying to implement a few design changes, such as a digital clock and a vibration alert.

The team's aim is to finally make the application available for download.

"Sun Dial provided more than functionality or a prompt to the prayer times; it also contributed to users' religious experience by reminding them they were part of a larger community. More broadly, carefully considering imagery is important when developing mobile phone applications, particularly ones that support personal and emotional activities, which may be sacred or secular," Susan said. (ANI)

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