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A Case Study of an RFID-based System for Pilgrims Identification and Tracking

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1. Introduction

RFID represents an ideal solution for crowd control and personal identification at Pilgrimage season (Hajj). It provides means to save lives and improve services at an affordable cost. This Chapter describes a developed prototype that uses a passive RFID wristband tag for identification of pilgrims in the holy areas during Hajj. Upon presentation of the tag to a handheld reader all information related to the pilgrim holding the tag will be displayed on the screen of the reader. This way if a pilgrim gets sick, lost, or dies he can be easily identified through the tag on the spot. Officers around the holy area will carry a light-weight handheld reader that can get all information from the tag without the need to burden the already overloaded communication network during the Hajj season.

Hajj (Pilgrimage) is undoubtedly the most crowded gathering of Muslims on earth. It has unique characteristics with regard to the people who attend it (pilgrims), the place they meet in, and the kind of rituals they perform. These characteristics result in a set of challenges to the authorities in controlling the crowd, and identifying the personalities. What makes it even more challenging is that the whole crowd makes the same movements at the same times doing essentially the same thing. Muslims are obliged to perform Hajj once in their lifetime. Many of them love to perform it more than once. It is performed on specific days of the year (8th- 13th of the 12th Hijri month) in designated boundaries around Makkah City in Saudi Arabia. The authorities for Hajj try their best to limit the crowd flooding to the area by assigning quotas for pilgrims from each country. Yet the number of pilgrims exceeds 2.5 millions every year and is in the rise. Additional 4 million visitors who come to the holy areas every year at other than Hajj times may benefit from developed RFID systems as well. It is expected that this number will reach 10 million visitors in the near future.

While it is a great spiritual experience for all the pilgrims, at the same time it poses great challenges of all sorts for the authorities responsible for facilitating the Hajj. Despite all that is done to facilitate the Hajj, the following are some of the common difficulties faced by the pilgrims and the authorities alike:

- Identification of pilgrims (lost, dead, or injured)
- Medical Emergencies
- Guiding lost pilgrims to their camps.
- Loss of identity documents and money
- Crowd control

Source: Sustainable Radio Frequency Identification Solutions, Book edited by: Cristina Turcu,
ISBN 978-953-7619-74-9, pp. 356, February 2010, INTECH, Croatia, downloaded from SCIYO.COM

In the last few years RFID systems have experienced a surge of deployment (due to the drop in cost). Inventory tracking is now necessary on an unprecedented scale to support growing consumer markets at low operating costs. Furthermore, the components used to build the tags and readers have become more sophisticated as they provide greater functionality, longer reading range, and higher speed of data transfer (Finkenzeller, 1999). As a result, a number of influential organizations such as Wal-Mart, GE, U.S. Department of Immigration, and the U.S. Department of Defense, recognized the capabilities of RFID to improve operational efficiencies (Roberti, 2004). Additionally, it has been used successfully during Beijing Olympic 2008, where 16 million RFID embedded tickets have been used for admission to the games (Chhabra, 2008).
The idea of utilizing RFID for Hajj services was introduced and passed through several implementations and discussions with Hajj officials that have been concluded with a prototype using passive RFID technology (Mohandes, 2009). The developed prototype was tested on 1000 pilgrims from the country of Ivory Coast in collaboration with officials from Hajj Ministry and Development Commission of the Holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. The results of the experiment have convinced Hajj authorities to utilize this technology for all pilgrims in the near future. Additionally, the possibility of tracking pilgrims using active RFID system has been explored. Due to the small number of working tags, experiment was performed only on 6 persons. Results of the latter experiment have shown that the system requires further development and needs to be validated with a larger number of tags.

2. Challenges during Hajj

While it is a great spiritual experience for all the pilgrims, at the same time it poses great challenges of all sorts for the authorities responsible for facilitating the Hajj. The following describes some of the unique characteristics about Hajj:

- **Large Number of Elderly Pilgrims**
  Many Muslims decide to perform Hajj when they are old. Moreover, many countries, in attempting to adhere to the quota, give preference to the elderly. Added to the crowd and exhaustion they face, a significant number of them are exposed to falling sick or even losing their lives.
- **Language Barrier**
  Pilgrims in Hajj season are, literally, coming from all countries on earth, with no exception. They speak different languages. It is a serious issue when it comes to helping the lost or treating the sick.
- **Dress Code**
  The dress of the pilgrim consists of two pieces of garments, one is rolled around the lower part of the body and the other is put on the shoulder. There are no pockets to carry the belongings. Although pilgrims are allowed to put on a belt with small pockets, most of them do not prefer to carry valuable documents because of the fear of losing them in the crowd.
- **Identification of pilgrims (dead or injured)**
  Due to the crowd, age factor and sometimes unfortunate accidents, the death toll in Hajj season is on the high side. Many of the dead are on their own, carrying no documents. Every year at the end of Hajj season, authority are confronted with tens of bodies of pilgrims that are never identified or claimed. This problem is not easy to solve as it is

not known when and if any of these bodies will be claimed in the future. Moreover, it puts a moral obligation on Hajj authorities to identify and inform the families of these pilgrims of the sad demise of their loved ones. Pilgrims are considered as guests of the Kingdom until their safe return home.

- **Knowing the medical record of patients**
  Tens of thousand of pilgrims are brought to hospitals and clinics for emergency treatment. Doctors always complain that would they knew the medical record of the patient they would be more efficient in treatment and utilization of the limited resources available during this period. Unfortunately, this is never the case. Even worse, due to the language barrier they may not be able to do basic investigations with the patient to find any information that may help them in the diagnosis.
- **Guiding Lost Pilgrims to their camps**
  Large numbers of pilgrims report on the hour to Help Kiosks to guide them to their camps. It is not always easy to find a speaker of the lost pilgrim's native language. Without papers showing their location and contact numbers, and sometimes without a common language to communicate, it becomes almost impossible to help them. This puts a tremendous pressure on the security officers who are taking care of pilgrims.
- **Loss of Important Documents**
  With the special cloth of Ihram, it is highly likely that the pilgrim may lose some of his identification papers, like Passport, Residence Permit, and national ID in addition to money or credit cards. With lost passports the return of pilgrims to their home countries is delayed which imposes additional burden not only on the pilgrims but also on the authorities.
- **Crowd Control**
  Crowd control has become a major problem with many pilgrims dying in accidents and stampedes in congested places during the Hajj, especially, in Mina. These accidents happen due to insufficient planning and management of available space as well as due to crowd behavior.

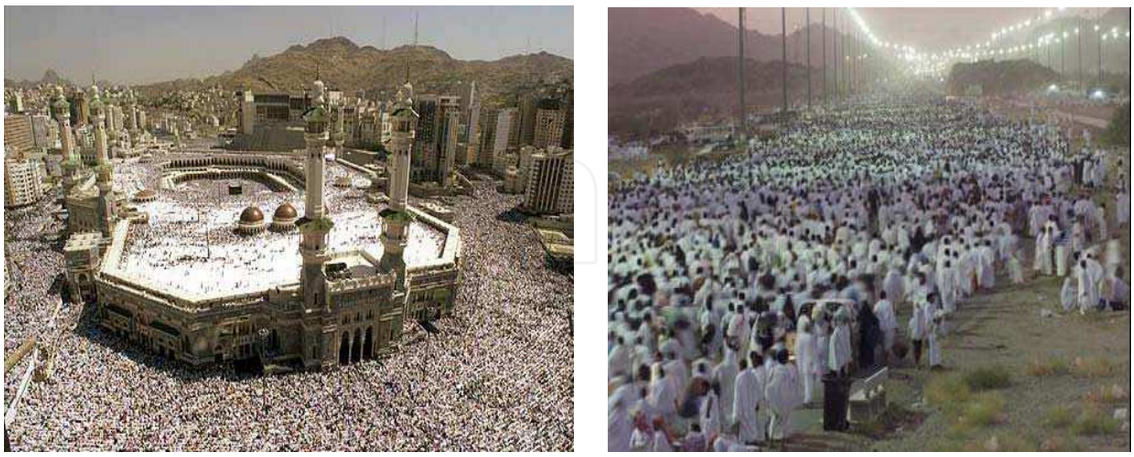

Fig. 1. Pilgrims in Makkah during Hajj

3. RFID technology

An RFID system consists of the following three components as shown in Figure 2:

- RFID tag or transponder
- RFID reader or transceiver with a scanning antenna

Data processing subsystem that can be embedded in a handheld reader.

An RFID reader consists of an antenna, transceiver and decoder, which sends periodic signals to inquire about any tag in its vicinity. On receiving any signal from a tag it passes on that information to its embedded data processor.

The scanning antenna puts out radio-frequency signals in a relatively short range. The RF radiation does two things; it provides a means of communication with the transponder tag (the RFID chip) and (in the case of passive RFID tags) it provides it with the necessary energy to function. This is an absolutely key part of the technology; RFID tags do not need to contain batteries, and can therefore be made simple, cheap and remain usable for very long periods of time. The scanning antennas can be permanently affixed to a surface; handheld antennas are also available. They can take whatever shape needed; as shown in Figure 3.

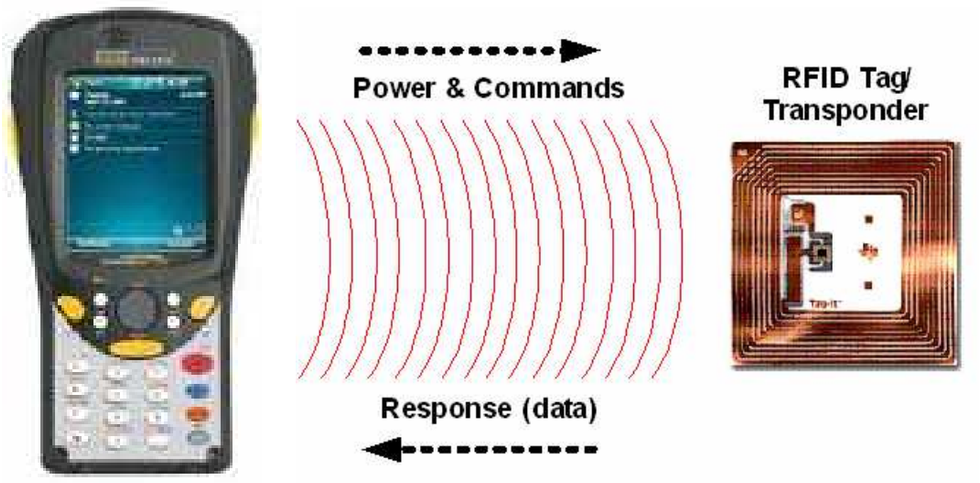

Fig. 2. A Typical RFID System with Handheld Reader

When an RFID tag passes through the field of the scanning antenna, it detects the activation signal from the antenna. That "wakes up" the RFID chip, and it transmits the information on its microchip to be picked up by the scanning antenna.

Fig. 3. Different forms of Handheld RFID readers

3.1 RFID tags

An RFID tag is composed of an antenna, a wireless transducer and an encapsulating material as shown in Figure 4. These tags can be either active or passive. While the active tags have on-chip power, passive tags use the power induced by the magnetic field of the RFID reader. Thus, passive tags are cheaper but with lower range (<10m) and more sensitive to regulatory and environmental constraints, as compared to active tags.

The vast majority of RFID tags or transponders use a silicon microchip to store a unique serial number and usually some additional information. Passive RFID tags do not have a transmitter; they simply reflect back energy (radio waves) coming from the reader antenna. Passive RFID tags do not require batteries, and can be much smaller and have a virtually unlimited life span.

Active tags have their own transmitter and power source, usually—but not always—a battery (active tags could draw energy from the sun or other sources). They broadcast a signal to transmit the information stored on the microchip. Wristband tags for human identification and access control as shown in Figure 5 have been used in this pilot implementation. Alternatively, it is possible to have very small tags implanted in the pilgrim's hand. The RFID chip used for this purpose is a glass capsule measuring 1.3mm by 1mm as shown in Figure 6 (VeriChip, 2009).

3.2 Types of RFID systems

Operating frequency is the determining factor for the type of application an RFID system is best suited for. These include high frequency (850-950 MHz and 2.4-5 GHz), intermediate frequency (10-15 MHz) and low frequency (100-500 kHz).

- High-frequency RFID systems are suitable for applications requiring a longer read range such as supply chain, inventory, assembly lines, toll-collection systems and railroad car and container tracking.
- Intermediate-frequency RFID systems are just now beginning to emerge in the financial transaction processing areas of smart card use.
- Low-frequency systems have short reading ranges and lower system costs. They are most commonly used in security access, asset tracking, and animal identification applications.

As you move up in frequency, tag and reader costs move up as well. Tags at 125 kHz operating frequency have ICs costing tens of cents as compared to 2.4 GHz tag ICs costing several dollars.

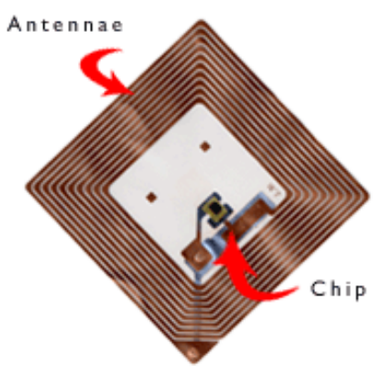

Fig. 4. Components of an RFID tag

Fig. 5. Wristband RFID tags

Fig. 6. RFID Chip for Implanting in Human Body

3.3 Applications for RFID

Applications fall into two principal categories: firstly, short range applications where the reader and tag must be in close proximity (such as in access control) and secondly, medium to long range applications, where the distance may be greater (such as reading across a distribution centre dock door). A sample of applications includes:

- Security, ticketing and access control
- Supply chain logistics & retail
- Asset tracking and traceability
- Lifetime item identification
- Medical applications
- Animal and specimen identification
- Airline baggage handling.
- Vehicle access control

4. RFID solution for Hajj

RFID offers an effective, convenient and economical solution to the Hajj problems described above. A wristband RFID tag that can be worn at all times can be provided to each pilgrim. This tag when presented to an RFID reader the information stored in the tag can be retrieved and displayed on a handheld portable unit. The following is some of the information that can be stored in a tag:

- Personal details - like name, address, blood type, nationality, etc.
- Medical condition
- Contact information of the pilgrim's Hajj group
- E-purse that can be loaded with optional amount of money

RFID may help in crowd control by allowing the authorities to estimate the number of people at specific locations where there is a risk of accidents taking place. Combined with the efforts of the security personnel it may be possible to ease the flow of pilgrims at key points resulting in proper utilization of space. RFID readers can be installed at key entry and exit points to ping wristband RFID tags and thus get fairly accurate estimate of people passing those points. This will help the security personnel in controlling the entry of pilgrims in high risk areas.

The utilization of the wristband can allow the pilgrims to leave their IDs on secured places like hotels safe deposit boxes. Moreover, if an ID is lost, it is possible to retrieve the information needed to produce a replacement of the lost ID with the presence of wristband tag. Information stored in the tag about the medical condition of the pilgrim can be very useful in case of a medical emergency. Having access to the medical condition of the patient in the emergency room from the tag he holds on his wrist may help safe the life of the patient and improve efficiency of the medical team. The tags will also help in guiding the pilgrims who get lost - besides helping in the immediate identification of pilgrims who die during Hajj.

With the new rules that each local or external pilgrim should obtain a permission to perform Hajj, the permission certificate can be the wristband itself. The presence of the tag can be detected at a distance and does not require visual reading by the security officers. For example, the officer can read tags from a distance and find out if all passengers of a car have permission to perform Hajj. This is because RFID tags do not require line of sight or contact with the reader for the information to be transferred. This would increase efficiency and deter violators in a way to achieve the objectives of Hajj authorities to control the number of pilgrims every year and make it easier for authorized pilgrims to perform their once in life time Hajj.

Some types of RFID wristbands can't be unlocked once fixed and requires cutting the band. This will guarantee that the wristband will not get lost or disposed. There is a possibility to collect the wristbands upon finishing Hajj activities. The collected RFID tags could be re-programmed and installed in new wristbands to be used for upcoming Hajj seasons. The wristband tag can be a real working watch; this should remove the fear and sensitivity of pilgrims and their reluctance to wear such tags. Other paper wristbands did not find the full cooperation from pilgrims in the past.

5. Development of the prototype system

The developed prototype system consists of the following:

5.1 WorkAbout Pro S Hand-Held computer

The WorkAbout Pro (Teklogix, 2009) is a flexible, programmable and expandable portable data collection terminal, designed for a range of data collection needs. It is available with either Windows Mobile 2003 SE or Windows CE .NET configurations. The WorkAbout Pro delivers the performance, ruggedness and durability required for mobile data collection in an ergonomic package.

The device used in this prototype is WorkAbout Pro S having Windows Mobile 2003 as the operating system and a built-in RFID reader that supports worldwide RFID standards in LF (125 - 134.2 KHz) or HF (13.56MHz) technologies. Based on industry standard Microsoft and Intel XScale architecture, the Workabout Pro ensures seamless application development and

integration capabilities. Compact flash and SD/MMC memory expansion slots combined with USB, and a 100-pin high speed expansion interface, to provide flexible radio and peripheral connectivity.

5.2 Psion Teklogix Mobile Devices SDK

The Psion Teklogix Mobile Devices SDK (Psion, 2009) for Windows Mobile 2003 SE, provides support for programming in .NET compact framework, C/C++ and Java. Developers are able to write flexible mobile applications to take advantage of a variety of scanners and drivers, all from the single platform. Once developed, an application can be deployed, without modification, on any Psion Teklogix mobile computer. The Mobile devices SDK provides a consistent set of APIs for all the Psion Teklogix Windows CE and Windows mobile based computers. Applications built using this release of the mobile devices SDK are expected to be fully compliant with future software releases for the Psion Teklogix handheld computers.

5.3 Development tools

- **Microsoft Visual Studio 2005**
  Microsoft Visual Studio (Microsoft, 2009), is the main Integrated Development Environment (IDE) from Microsoft. It can be used to develop console and GUI applications along with Windows forms applications, web sites, web applications, and web services in both native code as well as managed code for all platforms supported by Microsoft Windows, Windows mobile, .NET framework, and .NET compact framework.
- **SQL Compact Edition**
  SQL Server Compact (Microsoft, 2005) is a free and easy-to-use embedded database engine that lets developers build robust mobile applications that run on all Windows platforms including Windows XP, Vista, Pocket PC, and Smartphone.
- **Mughamrat Windows Mobile Arabic Layer**
  In the Middle East market, the Arabic language support is mandatory. Hence, building Arabic C# .NET applications, running on a Pocket PC or on Windows CE is a challenging task due to the many problems related to the Arabic language specifications that developers have to cope with. To avoid these problems, Mughamrat has developed a software development kit for developing application with an Arabic interface for mobile devices called WinCE Arabic Layer, WAL (Mughamrat, 2009)

5.4 Pilgrim information system

This software is designed to read and write pilgrims information from the data source using passive RFID tags. The purpose of this software requirement specification is to describe all the functional requirements, constraints, dependencies and the way the requirements be fulfilled. Through the use of this software the user will be able to save user information to data source, read user information using hand held device, and assign RFID tags to users. The following provide details about the application architecture and usage.

- **User Info Writer**

The application allows the user to input pilgrim information and assign them a tag ID. The application has been developed using C# and .NET framework. There is only one class in this application that takes care of the required functionality. The userInfo class provides all

the functions needed to store the pilgrim's information on the data source which is an SQL compact edition database. The class diagram is shown in Figure 7. The following functions are implemented for this class.

- *private void add_image_Click(object sender, EventArgs e)*
  This function is executed when the user wants to add the image for any pilgrim.
- *private void Btn_Save_Click(object sender, EventArgs e)*
  This function is called when the user saves the information of any pilgrim
- *private int SaveImage(byte[ ] userImage)*
  This function is called internally from the Btn_Save_Click function and creates the connection to the database and executes to the query required to create a new entry in the database.

Fig. 7. UserInfo Class Diagram

- **User Interface Screens**
  Figure 8 shows the main screen of the application. It allows the user to input all the required information for the pilgrim. User can search for the required image by clicking the Browse button. The screen shown in Figure 9 allows the user to search for the image of the pilgrim from the PC. Once all the information is filled in, the user clicks the Save button and all the information along with the image and RFID tag number are saved to the database.
- **Software for RFID Tag Reader**
  This application has been developed to be deployed on a Psion Teklogix Workabout Pro S that has a built in RFID reader and Windows Mobile 2003 as the operating system. The application will allow the user to scan any RFID tag to get the tag number and then retrieve the information related to the tag from the data source that is deployed along with the software. There is only one class in this application that takes care of the required functionality. The class diagram is shown in Figure 10. The functions that are developed for this class are:
  - *private void fTagSYSReader_Load(object sender,EventArgs e)*
    This function is excuted when the application is started and is responsible for connecting to and starting the RFID reader. The RFID reader is set to work on COM

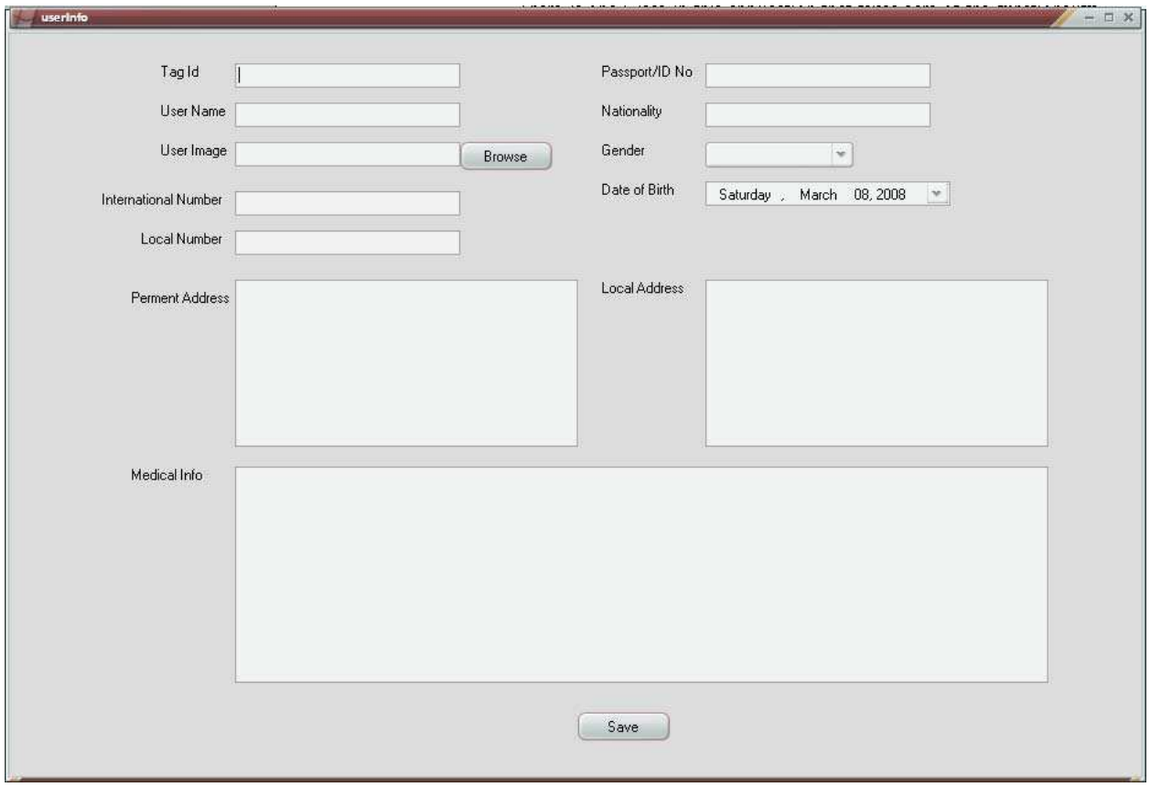

Fig. 8. Main Screen of the Application

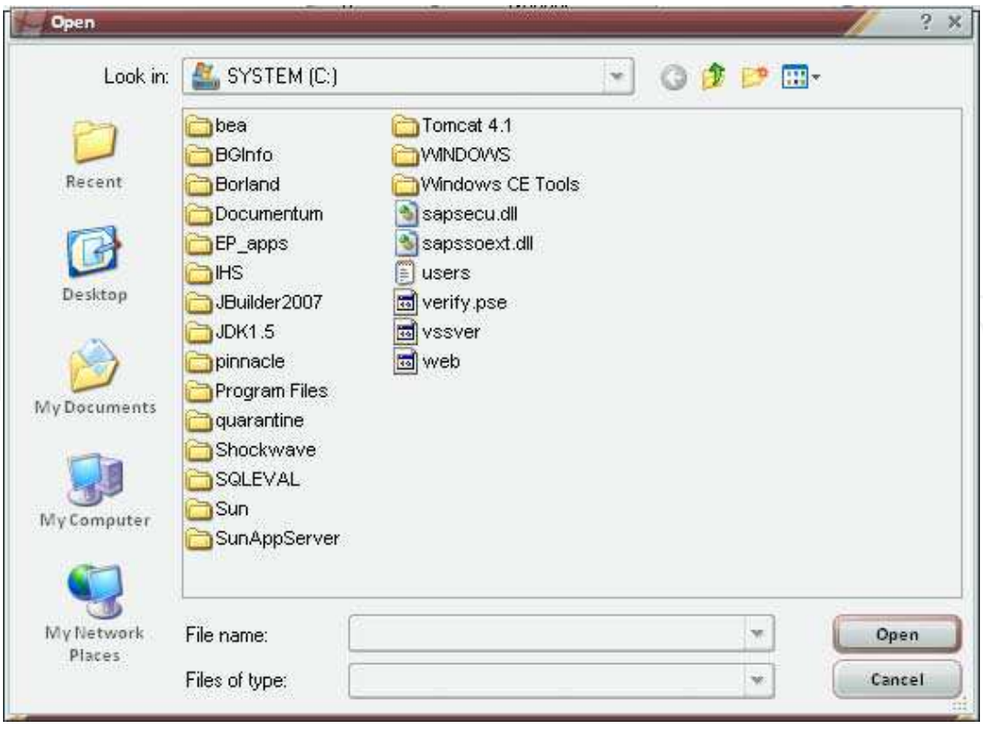

Fig. 9. Image Search Window

Port=1 and the baudRate = 9600. If there are any errors during this operation the appliction will highlight them by showing an error message. After the connection is made this function activates the timer which keeps the RFID reader in a continuous read mode.

- *private void fTagSYSReader_Closing(object sender,CancelEventArgs e)*
  This function is excuted when closing the application. This is like a clean up function and closes all the connections the appliction has setup.
- *private void timer_Tick(object sender, EventArgs e)*
  This function is executed when the timer is activated and everytime the timer expires. The timer is a very useful .Net control that allows the application to excute the same code based on a time interval. The time interval for our appliction is set to 10 milliseconds. So after every 10 milliseconds the code in this function is excuted. This function reads any data availbale on the tag reader, after getting the tag it connects to the database and queries the database to get all the required information for this tag ID and displays the information to the user.

Fig. 10. RfidTagReader Class Diagram

- **Database Design**
  There is only one database table so that the size remains small and the database doesn't have to store any relation information. tag_id is the primary key and is the tag number of the RFID. The fields used in the Database are given in Table 1.
- **Handheld Reader Screens**
  The first screen you see when you start the application is shown in Figure 11. It shows the tag ID when it is scanned. If the tag is assigned to a pilgrim in the database it will show the pilgrim's name and picture. At the bottom of the screen there are four tabs; each one shows different information regarding the pilgrim. The second screen is shown in Figure 12. You get this screen when you click on the General Info tab. This screen shows the pilgrim's gender, nationality, passport/ID number, local and international phone numbers and blood group. The third screen is shown in Figure 13. You get this screen by clicking the Address tab and it shows the Current and Permanent addresses. Figure 14 shows the last screen which you get by clicking the Medical tab and it shows the medical information of the pilgrim.

Fig. 11. Handheld Reader Screen 1

Fig. 12. Handheld Reader Screen 2

Fig. 13. Handheld Reader Screen 3

Fig. 14. Handheld Reader Screen 4

Column Name	Date Type	Length
user_name	nvarchar	200
tag_id (primary key)	nvarchar	100
user_pic	varbinary	8000
user_id_no	nvarchar	100
user_birth_date	datetime	8
user_gender	nvarchar	8
user_perm_address	ntext	16
user_local_address	ntext	16
user_med_info	ntext	16
user_nationality	nvarchar	100
user_inter_ph	nvarchar	20
user_local_ph	nvarchar	20

Table 1. The fields used in the Database

6. Pilot project for Pilgrim identification

A pilot project for the developed Pilgrim Identification is implemented to demonstrate the advantages of using RFID technology during the Hajj. There were 1,000 tags and a single reader. Pilgrims from the country of Ivory Coast volunteered for the pilot (see Figure 15 &16). However, the group consisted of about 4,000 pilgrims. The elderly 1,000 were selected to participate on the pilot implementation. An IT engineer accompanying the group had a complete database that includes picture, name, blood type, date of birth, and address in their home country. The medical team of the group had the medical condition of all pilgrims. Therefore, programming and distributing the tags was a simple process.

Fig. 15. Information of a pilgrim is displayed on the handheld reader as it is brought close to the tag.

Fig. 16. Some Participants of the pilot implementation

Due to the fact that only one reader is available and not all pilgrims in the group have wristband tags limited the potential of the applications. Nonetheless, scenarios were created to show some of the possible benefits of the system. In particular, the pilot study has shown that the RFID system would help identification of pilgrims at check points, as no need for officer to read Hajj permit to check its validity for every person. Checking the wristband tags by the reader takes a small fraction of the time it takes to authenticate the paper permit. At the entrance of the hotel, pilgrims with the blue wristband tags did not need to be stopped as it was clear from far that they belong to the group. The same was observed at the entrance of the camp in Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalipha. Queues for food and access to the busses for transportation through out the holy areas are other occasions where RFID wristband tags would improve efficiency in checking that only authorized pilgrims use these services. Automation is necessitated further by the fact that the rituals of Hajj are to be performed by pilgrims at the same instant of times. No manual system would perform this authorization process with ease and satisfaction. From the pilot, it was clear that participating pilgrims were identified from the unique blue wristband even without RFID reader. This indicated that on the full implementation, it is better if wristband with unique colour is used for every group. Even better if the wristband looks like the flag of the country from where the group of pilgrims came from. This will help drastically in guiding lost pilgrims to their camps. Moreover, if tags are programmed at the country of origin before departure then information may be verified from the tag and the computer of immigration centre, which improves efficiency and reduces long waiting queues at the airport.

7. Active RFID wristband tags for pilgrim tracking

Every year a significant number of violators pretend that they want to perform Hajj while their real intention is to find jobs and stay in the country illegally. The Hajj area is limited to few squared kilometers. Therefore, if a network of RFID readers is distributed in the holy area and an active RFID wristband is used for each pilgrim, then when a pretend pilgrim attempts to leave the area or cut the wristband an alarm is sent to security officers indicating a violator. Moreover, although short range tags proved useful for identification (Tuttle, 1997), a longer range would improve efficiency. At check points, officers need to check the Hajj permit of each pilgrim. Pilgrims enter the holy area on cars or busses. Short range RFID system would require officers to bring the reader close to the tags to be able to read it. A longer range would allow pilgrims permits to be checked while pilgrims are seated in their vehicles without the need for officers to come close to read the wristband tag. Additionally, statistics about distribution of pilgrims throughout the holy area help provide better services in future Hajj seasons. Long range RFID system would provide such statistics without creating bottlenecks in the area. Moreover, sometimes there is a need to locate a pilgrim among the crowd. Long range RFID system with a network of readers help locate a particular pilgrim when needed.

To develop a solution for these tasks, an off the shelf development kit is acquired from ActiveWave. Its specifications (ActiveWave, 2009) matched our requirements reasonably well. The wristband has a replaceable 3V battery that lasts from one to three years. It's read range for receiving is up to 30 meters while for transmission is up to 85 meters. Its user memory is up to 256 kbits, which is enough to store a pilgrim's information with his picture and a finger print if needed. Anti-collision capability is also available. It sends an alarm if removed or cut. The tag is shown in Figure 17.

The reader has three basic modes of operation: program, monitor, and call. When in programming mode, the reader configures the tags. When in monitoring mode, the reader listens to all tag activity and relays this information back to the host in real-time. When in call mode, the reader wakes up specific tags, specific groups of tags, or all tags within range. The reader is shown in Figure 18.

Experiment for Tracking System

A development kit has been acquired that includes a reader and about 24 wristband tags. Upon testing the system, 18 tags were found not functional. The remaining 6 were programmed to track 6 pilgrims. The reader is placed on the ground and pilgrims were asked to start moving from about 100 meters towards the reader. It was noticed that at about 30 meters the pilgrims were detected, however, if a pilgrim occludes another, both will not detected by the reader. The same process is observed when more pilgrims stand close to each others. The detection range is observed from all directions consistently. For the crowd in Hajj, the system as it was tested is not useful for the intended purpose of tracking. More refinement of the used frequencies, location of readers, and antennas design is needed.

Further experiment was performed to evaluate the system on detecting passengers with active wristband tags on moving vehicles. Therefore, 5 passengers with active wristband tags are asked to ride on a car. The car moved on different speeds while the reader is fixed on the side of the road. All 5 tags are detected only when the passengers raised their hands so the tags are seen from the window of the car. No tags were detected if passengers put their hands on normal positions. It is possible to ask pilgrims to raise their hands when

passing through a check point to improve efficiency and remove bottlenecks on the road. However, better system and further investigations are needed for tracking pilgrims.

Fig. 17. Active RFID Wristband Tag

Fig. 18. The ActiveWave RFID reader

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Hajj season poses many challenges for the authorities. The main challenges have been reviewed in this work based on official reports, interviews with key officials and the authors' personal experience. Using advanced technologies is very promising in tackling these challenges. In this project, we have demonstrated the use of RFID technology to ease some of these challenges

A pilot system was carried out to experiment the system during Hajj season. The prototype RFID-based Pilgrim Identification System was tested with a group of 1000 pilgrims from Ivory Coast. This experiment proved to be very successful in demonstrating the benefits of the system. In particular, it demonstrated the effectiveness of RFID system in removing bottlenecks of the traditional authentication system. This is due to the fact that checking a wristband tag by the reader takes a small fraction of the time it takes to authenticate the paper permit.

It must be noted that the cooperation of pilgrims is very vital for the success of the system. The experiment has shown that pilgrims happily participated after enough explanation was given about the objectives of such a system and the improved services it leads to for future pilgrims. Moreover, it was shown that collecting the wristband tags to use them in future seasons is not practical, as most pilgrims wanted to keep the tag as a souvenir from Hajj. Pilgrims should be educated in their own countries before coming for Hajj about the system and the importance of keeping the tags as a Hajj permit and its loss can cause them difficulties during their Hajj.

Distribution of pre-programmed tags in each pilgrim's home country makes the job of immigration officers in Jeddah easier and improves efficiency at the airport as information needs only be verified from the tags rather than inputting the information while pilgrim is waiting.

In the future, applications such as e-purse may be added to the tag, so that all what the pilgrim need to carry is his wristband tag. This saves pilgrims the worry that they may loose money or official documents.

Although 1000 pilgrims is a relatively large number for the current project, it only makes 0.04% from total pilgrims. Moreover, having only 1000 tags and one reader limited the full benefits of the RFID system for such application. Especially that the group of Ivory Coast consists of about 4000 pilgrims. Therefore, it is recommended that the experiment be performed on an entire contingent of pilgrims from a country such as Malaysia which has about 14,000 pilgrims coming every year. This will help in validating the system with a relatively good sample size before deploying the system for more than 2.5 million pilgrims.

The use of active RFID system to track pilgrims has been investigated using a developed prototype. The system has proved to be useful for detection of Hajj permits while pilgrims are on moving vehicles. More investigation is needed for this system. Improvement of antennas design, selection of readers' location, and communication frequency are also to be tackled in future work.

9. Acknowledgement

This work has been conducted under KFUPM Funded Project No. IN060340. The author is grateful to KFUPM for the support. The author acknowledges the help and support of Ahmed Abul Hussain, Maan Kousa, and Saad Al Shahrani. The author thanks the pilgrims of Ivory Coast for their participation on the pilot implementation, particularly, the help of the IT Engineer with the group is highly acknowledged.

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Sustainable Radio Frequency Identification Solutions

Edited by Cristina Turcu

ISBN 978-953-7619-74-9
Hard cover, 356 pages
Publisher InTech
Published online 01, February, 2010
Published in print edition February, 2010

Radio frequency identification (RFID) is a fascinating, fast developing and multidisciplinary domain with emerging technologies and applications. It is characterized by a variety of research topics, analytical methods, models, protocols, design principles and processing software. With a relatively large range of applications, RFID enjoys extensive investor confidence and is poised for growth. A number of RFID applications proposed or already used in technical and scientific fields are described in this book. Sustainable Radio Frequency Identification Solutions comprises 19 chapters written by RFID experts from all over the world. In investigating RFID solutions experts reveal some of the real-life issues and challenges in implementing RFID.

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