

USER PERSONA INTERVIEW: FARAH THE PRACTICAL PLANNER

Participant Information :

Name	Farah
Age	40's
Occupation	Higher Education Officer, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)
Location	Banting, Selangor (originally from Johor)
Travel Frequency (This Year)	Two trips : Langkawi and Hong Kong

Interview Questions :

Q1: Tell me briefly about yourself (age range, occupation) and how often do you travel for this year?

A: I am 44 years old and work as a Higher Education Officer at the Ministry of Higher Education (KPT). I live in Banting and am originally from Johor. This year, I have traveled twice. One family trip to Langkawi and another to Hong Kong, which was an amazing experience for our family.

Q2: What is the reason you want to travel?

A: For me, **traveling is the best way to balance work stress and family time**. It allows me **to experience new cultures, enjoy local food, and create meaningful memories with my children**.

Q3: How do you usually plan a holiday (steps, tools/apps you use)?

A: I usually start by **setting a budget and travel dates based on school holidays**. Then I use **Google Flights, Booking.com and Agoda** to find the **best deals**. I also refer to **TikTok Travel** and the **Facebook group Travel Bajet Malaysia** for destination ideas and user tips.

Q4: What frustrations or surprises have you experienced while traveling? (e.g unexpected festivals, traffic, sold out hotels, bad weather)

A: One of my experiences was during a **public holiday** trip to Langkawi, where the **roads were heavily congested** and the **ferries were full**. We had to change our travel plans at the last minute. In Hong Kong, we once received a **typhoon warning**, so we had to **stay alert and be prepared for any unexpected**.

Q5: What barriers or frustrations do you face when searching for reliable travel info online?

A: **Online information is sometimes outdated.** For example, some attractions may already be closed but still appear listed. In addition, **poor internet connection** at certain destinations makes it **difficult to access updated information.**

Q6: What motivates your choice of travel destination (budget, time, family, culture, etc.)?

A: The main factors **are budget, safety and family-friendly activities.** I prefer destinations that are **suitable for kids and have educational value, like theme parks, interactive museums, historical sites or local tourist attractions.**

Q7: When you travel, especially on a limited budget, how do you usually balance saving money with staying comfortable and safe?

A: **I plan ahead to book tickets** at an affordable cost and secure accommodation that is comfortable, safe and reasonably priced.

Q8: What does “off-peak” mean to you (weekdays, after school holidays, end of month)? Why choose that time?

A: For me, the **off-peak season refers to the period after school holidays or mid-month**. During this time, the atmosphere is calmer, hotel prices are lower and tourist attractions are less crowded.

Q9: Do you usually travel during school holidays or festive seasons?

A: I usually **travel during school holidays or festive seasons when we get a longer break**, as it allows me to spend time with my children without disrupting their school schedule.

Q10: Have you used any apps or tools that help identify less crowded destinations or off-peak travel periods?

A: Yes, I use **Google Trends** and **Klook** to understand peak visiting times. I also check **Twitter/X** for real-time traffic and weather updates.

Q11: Think about the most useful technology or app you used on your trip. Describe the single most difficult travel problem that app helped you solve.

A: **Google Maps** is the most useful app. During our trip to Hong Kong, it **helped us find metro routes and nearby halal restaurants**. It **saved time** and **reduced the risk of getting lost**.

Q12: Before this you have mention about your frustration, what feature or design element of a travel app made you feel confident and capable of solving that problem?

A: I really appreciate **photo reviews from real users** and **quick customer support**. When apps show recent reviews with real images. When an app shows recent and genuine pictures, I **feel more confident in making decisions**.

Q13: Do you feel capable and confident in managing and changing your own travel bookings online?

A: Yes, I feel **confident in using apps** like Skyscanner, Cheapflights, Agoda and Booking.com. Everything **can be managed easily**. The **rescheduling and refund processes are very user-friendly**.

Q14: Whose opinions influence your travel choices the most — friends, influencers, or online communities?

A: My travel choices are **influenced by online communities and friends** who **have visited the same destinations**. I **trust real experiences** more than advertisements.

Q15: How much do you rely on reviews, ratings, or local recommendations when planning a holiday?

A: I **rely heavily on reviews**, especially on **Booking.com and Google Reviews** because they are based on real experiences. I always **read at least five recent comments** to assess cleanliness, location, and customer service.

Q16: How important are verification features (like ‘verified visit’ or ‘real photos’) in building your confidence?

A: Very important. Features like **verified stays give me greater confidence**, especially when traveling with kids because I want **to ensure the place is truly safe and suitable**.

Q17: What would make you trust a smart travel system that uses real-time data (crowds, weather, reviews)

A: I would **trust it if the system is transparent, shows credible sources, and updates automatically using real-time data from multiple apps**.

Q18: How comfortable are you with AI-based suggestions that adapt to your preferences?

A: I'm **comfortable** as long as my privacy is maintained. If AI can recommend family-friendly activities, halal restaurants and budget-appropriate destinations, I would definitely use it. Still, I **would cross-check the suggestions before finalizing any plans.**



Interview session with Farah