Interview Transcript

Disclaimer: Both interviewees gave their opinion, but Fadlina (Interviewee B) is the one who usually makes all the travel planning

Interviewer (I): Shall we start?

Interviewee (A/B): Yes, we can.

I: Could you introduce yourselves briefly? You don't have to mention your name if you don't want to. Your age range. What you work as. And how often do you travel?

Interviewee A (Zul): My name is Muhammad Zulhilmi. You can call me Zul. I am from Gombak. I currently work as a trainer. Okay. I'm a trainer in chemistry, specifically in water quality. Apart from that, I'm also a student, same as Haziq.

Interviewee B (Fadlina): My name is Nur Fadlina. People call me Fad. I am 36 years old. I work as a Salesperson. My job focuses on the water business. I've been working for 12 years. Regarding travel, ee can say that we travel each quarter every year.

I: Do you usually travel with friends or alone? Or both? How is it?

B: We prefer to travel with friends. So, we have a close group of friends. Meaning, we travel with about four people. We don't take too many people. So, we travel in a small group.

A: Sometimes, they have additional trips. Because they have colleagues. A team where all the girls will travel too.

I: So, may I know why do you travel? Is it for fun? To bond with family? How is it?

A: This is my personal view. Because I am an employee. Because I am a person who works and studies. So, sometimes of course, I will feel stressed. So, I feel by travelling it can improve our mood again. It can give us motivation to have fun.

I: How about you?

B: Well. For me, I travel because I want to explore another culture.

I: So how do you plan a trip?

B: Actually, because every quarter we will have a short getaway with friends. So, we will plan early. So, that early might take two months in advance. Because first, we want to focus on getting cheaper flight tickets. Because right now, we really want to focus on the budget. At the same time, we want to feel enjoying the journey. On the trip. So, we want to book the accommodation and the tickets. That's what's important.

I: Which is more important? Budget or the destination itself?

B: Actually, both. But we will focus more on our budget. Yes, that's right. Usually, budget.

A: Budget and Time.

I: Okay, let's say you've planned this trip. Suddenly there's an emergency or family matter. How do you cope with that?

B: I think by using travel applications like Agoda or Booking.com, we have a cancellation feature. So, I think that platform is easier for you to manage your trip. That's why it's easy for you to cancel your booking. And also, you get your resolution. So, I think there's no problem. If there is an issue family matter, I don't feel pressure because that feature is very helpful for us to manage the trip.

I: So, what do you think about the feature that can cancel or can reschedule the trip. What about that feature?

B: This feature is actually very helpful. Because we cannot expect what will happen. Usually in the apps there are 2 options. It's either we can pay full payment on the spot, or we can pay half. So, with half payment maybe we have to pay 10%. And then maybe 2 days before that we must pay the full amount. But, at the same time it has an option that we can cancel Before a certain date. That is very useful. Because we also don't know what will happen in between that. So, that kind of app is very helpful to us.

I: Okay. Moving next. In the process you guys planning for travel, have you ever had difficulty finding information about that trip? Or places to go?

B: So, because usually we will refer to a few platforms. Usually now people will focus on TikTok and Instagram. Because that is very useful. Because there we can find many travel creators. They will give us like Top 10 Places we can go. Based on their reviews. So, sometimes we can trust them. Because there are too many places until to the point that we don't know where to go. So, when there are these kinds of travelers who have already had experience, they will help us in choosing the place we want to go. And we will arrange our timing properly. But, sometimes actually, there will is bias too. Content creators also sometimes highlight things that only look good. It looks interesting. Look beautiful, right? But there are certain things that they will have bias. Even though it's true. Besides that, different platform give different information. For example, when we look at the apps, their operating hours are 8AM to 5 PM. Okay. On the content creator or TikTok, they highlight a different time from 10 to 2 o'clock. So, there is too much information. Sometimes it's quite confusing too. So, to find the trusted one maybe you need to do extra research. You need to look at the information in detail.

A: For example, recently we went to Vietnam. Its operating hours are 6 PM to 10 PM. So, we thought until 10 PM it would be straight open. But it only went until 8 PM because the queue was long. It was already closed. So, we need to reschedule our visit. The next day we came again. So too much information also can make it confusing.

I: When you have searched for a lot of information about places to go, what makes you guys choose to go there? What's the motivation part? Is it its culture? Or cheap there? Is it family's choosing that place?

B: If possible, we want to choose a place that's less crowded. But it has hidden gems, we call them, right? Places where people don't want to go. Even if the place is far, we're willing to go. There are certain travelers, when they have small children, they don't prefer to go. But because we are very small group. So, we are willing to travel even if it's far. It's good. So, to avoid that kind of situation the less crowded one, normally we travel on weekdays and avoid during school holidays or public holidays.

I: Thanks. How do you usually balance saving money with wanting a comfortable trip?

A: Firstly, in terms of booking tickets, must plan early. It depends on your destination. If it's a European country, you might be able to book one year early. If in Asian country maybe, you can 6 months to 3 months before. So, that is to save our money. Then in terms of accommodation I think boutique hotel should be okay if you go through the review. For me the main point is cleanliness. If you see the hotel is clean and we look at its review at least 3 or 4 or 5 it should be okay. So, even there you have saved your money. And then it depends on the country. If the country provides public transport, then try to fully utilize all the facilities. For example, recently we went to Vietnam. There is public transport provided for tourists. So, we really used public transport. Public transport FOC. It's Free of Charge. But you need to plan your activity. So that you can catch the timing.

B: Usually when we travel, we really want to hunt for food. But at the same time, we know that if we travel people will highlight going to cafes. So instead of going to cafes why don't we go to the local eateries. Local shops. Because there it is cheaper compared to cafes. Because we know If we go to cafes, we usually buy coffee and cake. Which is the price being more expensive compared to eating local food.

I: Next. Okay. About the traveling application itself that you guys use. Is there an experience where using this app can help you identify which place is less crowded?

A: Less crowded, huh? Is it like Waze? Google Map? Can we say that's less crowded? Can it? Can we get information from there? I think Google Maps is the most useful tool. Because it can provide us with live updates. Real-time update. Even Offline, Google Maps can do that too. So, I think Google Maps is helpful. Especially when there is a traffic jam or an accident, so We can avoid it. We can plan our trip.

B: If it's specific to travel apps, about update Oh here is less crowded? Here it is not crowded. We look at TikTok or Instagram. If TikTok highlights this destination is really crowded. So, we won't go there.

I: So, what app do you always use for planning? Or during the trip, what do you always use?

B: Always use TikTok. TikTok is common. If we want to go in deep on that info we go to YouTube. Because YouTube has long videos. So, they will give one long video just to explain about that place. So TikTok will give a list of places. It gives a very short video. But if we go to YouTube, it will be more in-depth. When we go to YouTube, they will give a long video from its entrance until the person finishes playing. Because YouTube can make one long video. Compared to TikTok. TikTok is usually short, right? YouTube is long. So, on YouTube sometimes we see a little bit of its honesty which area we need to focus on. We prefer YouTube if we want to watch a long video.

I: Okay next. In terms of the apps itself, have you ever had any problems while travelling? And then the feature in the app helped solve the problem that you were experiencing. For example, the hotel was suddenly cancelled and then the app helped. Any examples?

A: So far everything has been smooth, right? So, there was no emergency. No sudden cancellation. So far, it's okay.

I: Previously mentioned that the app has a cancellation feature, right? Maybe another feature that helps. Or that doesn't help? In terms of hotel selection or something like that.

B: For example, we have a limited budget. We are to stay at this hotel with this budget. So, the app helps us to filter hotel within our budget. So, it will show hotels, or apartments or homestays that are within our budget. That is a good feature. Because we really have a limited budget. So, this kind of filter can help us in terms of selecting the place we want to go. In terms of the feature that is not helpful like for example Agoda or Booking.com. Even after we filter that kind of range of price, but then later when we want to pay, suddenly there is an additional cost. Which is not there at the beginning. We also don't know the hidden cost that appears when we are about to pay. Sometimes there are also cleaning fees. The promotion shows a different price. For example, the hotel price is RM132 per night. When we go to pay, suddenly it has increased to RM163.

A: Airbnb also the same. When we look at the price seems cheap. But when we have selected, we inserted the number of people, then there's a charge like cleaning fee. Then there's a charge tax too. One more thing is the location. It doesn't give the exact location. Only after you confirm your confirmation will you get the exact location. So, this makes us confused.

I: If possible, how do you want it to be?

B: If possible, number one is transparent. It needs to be more transparent. So, if the cost is really like this, tell us early. Include all the costs from the beginning. All additional fees. Second is the location. Because sometimes the location is not accurate. To know where its location is, we need to use another apps. If it is far from the next destination, there will be confusion. Because the location is very important for us to plan our next activity to do or the next day.

I: Next question, if there is rescheduling a flight or anything, are you confident to do it by yourself? Or usually let someone else do it? If we look at the apps now, there is chatbot. Or maybe you really must call customer support first before you're confident to do it. Or can you just do it yourself?

A: I think about hotel accommodation, I am confident. Because the features and interface are user friendly. And then in terms of the refund policy the information is accurate. And it's clear, understandable. However, to reschedule air tickets, I am not confident. Maybe we need additional support from the transport agent or maybe from customer service or Customer support. That's right. For accommodation, no problem. Air ticket, maybe not confident yet. Because it involves higher prices if it's an air ticket.

I: For example, there's a new app, will you guys immediately try to use it by yourself or wait for other people's reviews first before feeling like using it?

B: Hmm I think because now we mostly rely on the existing ones. If there's a new app trying it is not a problem. It's just the confidence to use it. For example, because we will put our personal data. So that part is what makes us feel not confident. It's like mix-feeling. I want to try something new but at the same time I want other people to try it too. That's right.

I: When you guys are planning to go to a place you must look at pictures first, right? So, is the review important? Like if this review is true, should have verified photo, right? So, is it important to have verified photos? Only then you guys believe the review.

A: Good idea actually. Didn't even think about that. Because all this while we just believe whatever review whatever photo he provided on that website we just believe. Because we assume that thing is real. It's transparent. So, it's good to have that kind of verification. Like you said just now. I don't know how the going to verify. So, can we confirm true picture? This is true. Really. Sometimes, maybe all the reviews are outdated. Sometimes on this website it's like this. Another platform is showing us different pictures. So maybe that verification is good for the future. We'll become more confident. Absolutely.

I: How confident are you when apps use real-time data? Does it feel more trustworthy?

A: I think it's very helpful for us. Because of their new reviews, right? For example, there are new reviews from new users, right? When there's a review there there's a rating there, we will trust that kind of app that we use. With real-time updates, if it can give us prediction or estimation that would be good too. For example. Okay, let's say, you go to a place. And then it has a long queue. So, if there's a real-time update on its portal or website, it tells you by 3.30 there will be fewer people. Or out of 100 people, 70 people have cleared. So at least we can plan our next activity.

I: So, you will prefer it if the app perhaps uses AI to predict, predict the current situation.

A: Yes, yes. That is actually very helpful because of the recent visit to Vietnam too. When we went there, there were many visitors. And then, a long queue. With a long queue, we thought of the timing they gave us 6PM-10PM. I was like oh, it's okay. No problem. Once you arrive, you can immediately get in, right? But no. So, there, we had to reschedule to come again the next day. So, it wasted our time. If there was a real-time update, we could view it. Certain timing, this is peak hour. We could avoid it. Maybe we could plan for the next update. So, we'd trust it more if the app could predict alongside.

A: Yes, at least prediction. With prediction, at least we can make our own decision, right?

I: Ok, so just now you guys mentioned that now apps ask for a lot of our personal information, right? So, how comfortable are you guys giving information to apps like these? For example, the recent Padu system, right? How do you guys feel?

B: Actually, with Padu, we are quite worried because of a lot of information we need to provide. Lots of family details, occupation, our property and everything. Too much information we must provide. So, we do feel worried. We feel insecure too. But because that platform is a government platform, we feel secure. But if that platform is handled by the private sector or something, then we feel a little hesitant. If it's linked to the government, I think it should be okay.

I: So, we all know there's PDPA, there's legal action. Does having this legal action make you guys feel confident to share personal data?

A: Fear is still there too. We still feel hesitant about the consent sometimes, right? So, we fill in the information, in the end there's consent, we must tick it or sign it, so there is that insecurity feeling. But based on my experience, so far, I've never been scammed, never been subjected to any fraud, so I think it's okay. Should be okay. Even though there is hesitation, maybe 80% you trust, 20% still feel secure.

I: So, what information are you guys not hesitant to share?

A: Email, I'm ok with email.

I: What about information that you feel is not okay to share?

B: What's not ok is Passport or IC, no way. Even with a full name we feel insecure to put our full name. Email is no problem. Phone number is a bit tricky, if you want to share or not. The phone number is the one we really don't like to share because suddenly there are calls from other people, right, from ads here and there, those ads are because of the phone number that causes a lot of disturbance from the phone number. That's the main one. Phone number. Others, I think email is ok, no problem. Even information if you want to know about our background, work or what, that is provided in the form of a

range. For example, salary, RM2,000 - RM3,000, RM4,000 - RM5,000. So, in the form of a range or age, right, usually in the form of a range. That non-specific information should be no problem. But if you provide a phone number, that would be a problem. What payment information we need to provide when booking, what number do you have to provide? Credit card. That one we really want not comfortable to share. But if it's a trusted app, no problem because we always use that thing. So, something like Agoda, every time we travel, we only use that app, right, and we can put the credit card number there. So far, there have been no problems. So, we trust that kind of app. So, the apps that we usually use, we have no problem putting them. But if it's a new app, maybe we have some doubts.

A: Why does banking information feel safe? It's like there's secondary verification. Just now it was the app's verification, but when we enter your banking details, we have the bank's verification. For example, when we have set our face, face recognition, or thumbprint, right. So, there is secondary verification from the bank. Okay, no problem.

I: Alright, so we come to the end. So, based on your frustration just now, like having confusion, too many platforms to open, if possible, what do you want the app to be like? If possible, do you want everything in one app only, no need to open many, and in one app there's everything, easy to book, easy to see, easy to go through, easy to navigate, how would you want it?

A: Okay, what we have in current practice, actually I think is already sufficient like now it's already combined in terms of air ticket, hotel, even what else, basically air ticket and hotel are what we usually use, so everything is already combined in one platform, it's just that if there are other platforms, it depends on the user, they have to do a little bit of extra research, why? because on this platform the price might be different or the review or the detailed location we want to go to might be slightly different, if the app itself already has a comparison feature, it's good if that kind of comparison gives us a few selection options, so we can be comfortable, easy to compare, otherwise, if we have to open here and there, it's a bit difficult, everything in one platform like you said earlier, air ticket comparison you can compare there, hotel or entrance fees for attraction places, they put it there, it's good to have a comparison rather than us comparing one by one,

we get confused tool. But normally booking is all handled by her, she should answer what he finds difficult?

B: It becomes difficult, for example, when we want to choose accommodation, because for accommodation we need transparency, for example, because when we open one app, the price is different, when we open another app, the price is different, so for example, we usually go to Agoda, Booking.com, Traveloka, so we will go to all three platforms to make a comparison in terms of price, at the same time, we also have to review travelers who have been to that place, for example, we want to choose that place, the hotel is called ABC hotel, ABC hotel on Traveloka has a different price, Booking.com has a different price, Agoda has a different price, and then sometimes reviews are also not very honest, some say, some comments say it's good, some comments say it's dirty or what, so we have difficulty, even though that kind of platform gives us everything, we're afraid that their reviews are not very honest, that's what we feel is not transparent, so we are really looking forward to something where we have transparency in the booking process, everything is honest, so we know we choose the best location where we want to go or maybe stay.

I: So, talking about reviews, do you always rely on reviews like the rating on the platform itself or reviews from social media?

B: We usually rely on the platform itself because that person has been there and they will review honestly about the location they chose, why not from social media because social media sometimes maybe those people are being sponsored, we can say they are being sponsored so sometimes it's honest or not honest, especially when we go to a restaurant, why does that person's food taste delicious but when we go it's just ordinary, so we worry that the person reviewed it because they were being sponsored, not because their review was honest, so we can say we read a lot of reviews on these apps, so the reviews have to be transparent.

I: So, the last question, have you ever heard about cognitive cities, or smart cities?

A: So far I'm not sure which township is smart, I'm not sure which city is already a smart city, it's a good initiative if a smart city can be connected to all platforms, even we as

users can control and monitor things, so it is a useful tool if you can connect everything to one system, one data center so that you can plan your activity or you can view the real-time data, at the same time it can be cost-saving, it can also be in terms of our mood, as humans we have moods too, so our mood is also important, it can ensure our well-being in terms of mood and then I think in terms of what else, more towards time management, time management planning, if everything is in one data cloud system, everything can be planned well, I hope so, so is it a smart city now,

I: I'm not sure if it's really a smart city, but maybe certain things are already smart. Cognitive city is more about prediction, for example, something like a cafe, if it's a smart city, it might give real-time updates like, okay, it's crowded now, but if it's cognitive, we plan to go at night, in the morning it can already give information that it will be crowded at night, so choose another one, it can predict, it's more on prediction because it involves machine learning.

B: Oh, okay, like ChatGPT, sometimes we actually use ChatGPT to give us information, for example, we want to go to one place or another, which is the best place we should go, for example, we want to make a comparison for 4 cafes, right, which of these 4 cafes should we go to and at what time it's less crowded, we choose what we want, so ChatGPT or AI will give us the explanation or information that we want actually, that's right, ChatGPT is actually a good center too because you can access everything, even if you want to know the forecast you can ask ChatGPT, you want to know what the attraction places are at this place, ask ChatGPT, you want to know the price of so on, everything can actually be looked up on ChatGPT, but you also have to verify it, because ChatGPT, all the information provided is correct, it also needs another verification, so we need something that is actually trustworthy, ChatGPT can be, but not 100%.

I: So, I think we're done, but anything you want to add, go ahead.

A: So, are you going to create new apps or are there existing apps that you just want to improve? How is it?

I: For now, the plan is to create new apps because we are divided into separate team and each team needs to tackle one specific feature for the travel app.

A: Yes, looking forward to your app.

I: The main subject is like, it's not focused on forcing humans to use the apps, it's focused on humanizing the apps.

A: Oh, okay, that's right, that's right. That's good too, because we already have apps that connect everything, hotel, air ticket, maybe we can add more focus, maybe add more comparison, just improve the existing ones we have. Just improve. So, I wish you all the best, hopefully the app will be helpful.