



Design Principles

Last Updated: 5 June 2026, 13:38

Prepared for TravAI Solutions
Project TravAI App

© We Are Affective Ltd 2026. All rights reserved.
Private and Confidential.

Contents

How to Use These Principles	3
Design Principle 1	3
Design Principle 2	4
Design Principle 3	6

How to Use These Principles

Design principles exist because every digital choice carries weight. When you place a button, write a heading, or structure an interaction, you are making a claim about what matters most to the person using your product. These principles emerged from conversations with the TravAI team about what those claims should be, and why.

Each principle in this document came from workshop exercises that revealed patterns in how users currently experience travel planning, and where those experiences break down. The Identity Shift exercise showed us the emotional journey from overwhelmed to relieved. The Anti-Principles forced us to define what we would never want to build. The Voice Sort revealed the language that builds trust versus the words that destroy it. These principles are not aspirations we invented. They are truths that surfaced when we asked the right questions about who TravAI serves and how.

Every principle here functions as a decision-making tool, not a suggestion. When you encounter a design choice, copy decision, or product direction that feels unclear, return to these principles. They will tell you which direction serves the user and which serves something else entirely. When two principles appear to conflict, the tension itself is informative. Discuss it rather than ignoring it. The conflict usually reveals an assumption that needs examining or a user need that requires more careful consideration.

The principles that follow should become second nature to anyone building TravAI. They are the lens through which every screen, every interaction, and every word should be evaluated. They carry the memory of why this product exists and for whom.

Design Principle 1

Users arrive at TravAI carrying the weight of previous disappointments. They have been shown endless options by platforms that never asked what they actually wanted. They have been promised personalisation by systems that delivered generic results with their name attached. The act of listening first, suggesting second, is not just good manners. It is the foundation of trust in a category where trust has been systematically eroded.

Why this matters more here than anywhere else

Travel planning sits at the intersection of money, time, and anticipation. When someone shares their budget, their fears about travelling with children, or their need to properly switch off, they are making themselves vulnerable. Generic suggestions at this moment signal that the vulnerability was wasted. The AI must demonstrate understanding before it asks for anything more. The conversation is not a data collection exercise. It is the moment trust gets built or destroyed.

The business case

Users who complete the guided conversation are significantly more likely to book than those who abandon it early. But the deeper commercial value lies in retention. Someone who feels genuinely heard during their first interaction becomes an advocate for the product. They return for future trips. They recommend it to friends. They trust the AI with bigger budgets and more complex requirements. The conversation is an investment that compounds over time.

The tension worth acknowledging

Listening takes longer than assuming. There will always be pressure to reduce the onboarding time, to get users to results faster, to skip the questions that feel like friction. The tension is real because some users do want to dive straight into options. The principle holds because the users who need genuine understanding outnumber those who don't, and because serving the overwhelmed user well also serves the confident user adequately.

What good looks like

The AI asks one meaningful question at a time. It builds on previous answers rather than starting fresh with each screen. When a user mentions they need somewhere the children can safely explore, that insight shapes every subsequent suggestion. Budget questions come only after the AI has demonstrated it understands the trip. Recommendations include visible reasoning that references the user's own words. The experience feels like a conversation with someone who remembers what you said and cares about getting it right.

What success looks like in measurable terms, Conversation completion rate of 70% or higher from first question to first recommendation, User confidence score of 4+ out of 5 at the point of booking, Visible engagement with "why this suits you" reasoning annotations, Return usage rate of 40%+ within 12 months for users who complete initial conversation, Recommendation acceptance rate of 60%+ from first suggested set without requesting alternatives

What this looks like in practice, Every recommendation includes a specific "why this suits you" note written in plain language, Budget questions never appear before the AI has demonstrated understanding of travel style and needs, Open text input fields are prioritised over dropdown menus in the guided conversation, Deviation from suggested paths triggers adaptive questions, not nudges back to the original route, User answers are reflected back verbatim in reasoning explanations, not translated into categories

Design Principle 2

People download TravAI because they are already carrying too much. They have tabs open they cannot make sense of. They have been comparing prices across platforms for hours without getting closer to a decision. They have been promised simple booking experiences by every site that still made them work like a part-time travel agent. When someone arrives at TravAI already saturated, more information is not the answer. Clarity is.

Why this matters more here than anywhere else

The travel industry has trained users to expect abundance as a proxy for value. Hundreds of hotels, dozens of flight options, comprehensive comparison tables. TravAI exists to serve the person for whom that abundance has become paralysing rather than empowering. These users do not want more choices. They want better choices. They do not want to see everything available. They want to see the three things that genuinely suit what they described. The principle recognises that for overwhelmed users, reduction is relief.

The business case

Cognitive overload kills conversion more reliably than limited options. Users who are presented with thirty destinations abandon at higher rates than those shown three. The business case for restraint is straightforward: overwhelmed users do not buy things. They bookmark them, intending to return when they feel capable of deciding. They rarely return. Conversion happens when the decision feels manageable, not when the selection feels comprehensive. Trust is built by showing the right options, not all the options.

The tension worth acknowledging

There will always be users who want to browse extensively, who find comfort in seeing the full range of possibilities. Some will interpret curated results as limited options rather than thoughtful selection. The tension is between serving the confident browser and the overwhelmed planner. The principle holds because TravAI's core user is the latter, and because confident browsers have countless platforms already built for them. The overwhelmed user has nowhere else to go.

What good looks like

Each screen presents one clear decision rather than multiple competing ones. After the guided conversation, users see three destination options with large, clear imagery and single headline benefits. Flight and hotel details remain hidden until the destination is confirmed. At no point can a user see the full scope of available inventory. Progressive disclosure ensures that complexity emerges only as decisions are made, never all at once. The experience feels like being guided through a conversation, not navigating a directory.

What success looks like in measurable terms, 60%+ of users select from the first set of three destination options without requesting more, Session abandonment rate under 25% at any single decision point, Average time per screen under 45 seconds, indicating comfortable decision-making pace, 80%+ of users complete destination selection within first sitting, User feedback scores of 4+ out of 5 for feeling "supported not overwhelmed" during the process

What this looks like in practice, Maximum three options presented at any decision point, never more, Progressive disclosure hides complexity until previous decisions are confirmed, No "view all results" or "see more options" links on primary user paths, Search functionality available but not prominently featured on guided journey screens, Single-scroll screens with clear visual hierarchy and

generous white space, Filter options appear only after explicit user request, never as default interface elements

Design Principle 3

The relationship between user and AI in TravAI begins with a fundamental acknowledgment: the person opening this app may not yet know what kind of trip would actually serve them. They might think they want a beach holiday when what they need is proper rest. They might say they want adventure when they mean they want to feel excited about something again. The AI's job is not to execute the first thing someone says they want. It is to understand what they actually need, which emerges only through careful conversation.

Why this matters more here than anywhere else

Travel planning happens when people are already depleted. The Identity Shift exercise revealed that users arrive burnt out, seeking relief from both work and the burden of planning itself. In this state, initial requests are often incomplete or contradictory. Someone might say they want a "relaxing beach holiday" and then mention they get bored easily. Another might request "cultural experiences" while emphasising their need to completely switch off. These aren't user errors. They're signs that the conversation needs to go deeper before any suggestions become useful. TravAI succeeds when it helps people discover what they really want, not when it efficiently delivers what they think they want.

The business case

Bookings that follow deeper conversations show higher satisfaction rates and lower cancellation rates than those made quickly. Users who discover their true preferences through dialogue become advocates for the product. They tell friends about the AI that "really understood what I needed before I did." More significantly, these users return for future trips with higher trust and larger budgets. The conversation is an investment that compounds across every interaction. Quick execution of surface requests creates one-time transactions. Understanding creates relationships.

The tension worth acknowledging

Some users arrive knowing exactly what they want and become frustrated by questions that feel unnecessary. Others want to browse immediately rather than talk. The pressure will always exist to make the conversation optional or minimal. The principle holds because the users who most need TravAI are those for whom browsing and quick decisions have already failed. Serving them well requires accepting that confident, decisive users might occasionally feel over-served by the conversation. The trade-off is worth making because the alternative serves no one distinctively.

What good looks like

The AI asks follow-up questions when initial answers seem incomplete or contradictory. If someone requests "somewhere exciting" for a trip described as needing "proper rest," it explores what exciting means to them and how that fits with needing to switch off. The conversation adapts based on what

emerges. A user who initially wanted city breaks but responds enthusiastically to questions about nature gets recommendations that reflect the fuller picture. The AI demonstrates that it heard not just the words but the person behind them.

What success looks like in measurable terms, Post-trip satisfaction scores of 4.5+ out of 5 for users who completed extended conversations versus 3.8+ for shorter interactions, 75%+ of users report the final recommendation felt "more suited to me than what I originally asked for", Return booking rate of 40%+ within 18 months for conversation completers versus 15% for quick browsers, User testimonials specifically mentioning the AI "understood what I needed" or similar language about deeper insight, Conversation completion rate remains above 65% even when optional quick-browse paths are offered

What this looks like in practice, Contradictory answers trigger clarifying questions rather than default suggestions, The AI acknowledges when requests seem at odds with stated needs and asks which matters more, Conversation branches adapt based on enthusiasm levels in responses, not just content, Initial requests are treated as starting points for exploration, never final requirements, Success metrics track alignment between final bookings and discovered preferences, not just completion speed, User feedback specifically asks whether final recommendations matched their true needs versus original requests