



SWIPE LEFT!

HOW TO LOOSE RENTAL PROSPECTS IN THE **DIGITAL AGE**

- By Bart Walters -

So I was watching a friend of mine use an app for a dating site on his smart-phone. Pictures and profiles of candidates would pop up on his screen and he would scan down until he saw something he didn't like and "swipe left" to put them in the waste bin or "swipe right" to save them as possible future companions. Scan, scan, scan ... "has kids", swipe left. Scan, scan, scan ... "Vegetarian", swipe left. Scan, scan, scan ... "Has good job", swipe right. That's how I feel when I'm looking at apartments to rent.

Recently I've been looking for a new place in Bangkok and I must admit, I'm exactly the same as my friend who is looking for a reason to rule out date candidates rather than ticking a set of positive boxes. I scour rental profiles until I see something I can't stand and dismiss the property as "unlivable".

So, how can you make sure I never rent your condo? Following is a list of personal pet peeves some of you may relate to:

First of all, when I'm looking at profiles of rental units on-line, I always skip the ones that use the swimming pool as their lead picture.

It's not that I don't appreciate a nice pool, but it sends me a message that says, "the apartment is unimpressive and the pool is the best thing about this place". I also rule out any profile that doesn't show me a picture of the bathroom. If you divide up all the hours you spend in at home, a significant amount of time is dedicated to the bathroom. I need to see a picture that lets me know if there is anything there that rules your unit out right away.

If I see pink tiles, a crotch-high wash basin or a wall of glass doors on the shower I'm expected to keep clean, swipe left. If I see one of those pre-fabricated phone booth sized showers jammed in the corner ... swipe left. And, in my not-so-humble-opinion, the most insidious creation ever to be installed in a bathroom is the "shower-tub". I like a good hot shower and I occasionally enjoy a good tub soak. But to jam them together dilutes the pleasure and utility of both. What's more it necessitates the most horrific of all bathroom fixtures, the shower curtain. Shower tub? Swipe left!

For me, the room that tells you something about the character of the owner is the kitchen. When you see a microwave oven placed in an impossible to reach space like over the top of the fridge, or down under the counter I know the owner doesn't cook. When I see a 100 square meter unit fitted with a belt-high mini-fridge I know the owner only considers cooling beverages and not accommodating food. And when I see those arcane raised burners on the hob I know the owner doesn't cook and is cheap. But easily the best indicator your unit's owner is a cheap-Charlie is absence of a hot water heater at the kitchen sink. What kind of barbarian doesn't use hot water to clean their dishes? Unfortunately it is impossible to tell from an on-line profile gallery if there is hot water in the kitchen, but if you see those hideous raised burners on the hob it should be a red flag to look under the sink if and when you visit.

In the living room there are a whole bunch of things I might see that send your profile to the waste bin. Mostly it has to do with furniture. Some apartments look like a rummage sale with the owner's left over furniture crowding every corner. Others appear to be going overboard with the whole minimalist craze. But, I'd prefer no furniture to that cheap particleboard stuff. The one item that makes me reflexively swipe left is those awful armless sofa-like contraptions that fold out into a bed. They just scream out "don't sit on me, I am extremely uncomfortable". Tangles of wires dangling from the entertainment center, ugly pictures on the wall and Elizabethan era wallpaper are all immediate reasons for dismissal. And the item that always draws a chuckle and a swipe left is the antiquated big box TV. Come on now, is there a rotary dial phone as well?



Bedrooms I'm fairly ambivalent about. For me the most important thing in the boudoirs is the quality of the mattress and the space in the wardrobes, both factors that are hard to determine from profile pictures. The only visual cues that might elicit a left swipe in the bedroom is an overly feminine décor like a white princess bed with unicorn pillow cases. And owners, if you are going to take a picture of the bedroom, for the love of God, learn how to make a bed. Pulling up the bedcover over one of those long neck-roll pillows makes it look like you're covering a dead body.

My final pet peeve lies on the outside of the living space. I love a nice balcony or porch. But, if you are going to feature it in you unit's profile, how about some furniture? Why would you show me a nice place to sit with nothing to sit on? All I can think of when I see a picture of an empty balcony is, "Now I'll have to go invest in some outdoor furniture I won't need when I move". Swipe left!

Landlords, if you want to attract more prospective renters these days, I recommend you take some tips from the dating sites. Don't tell too much. Don't show so many pictures. Display your best features and leave a bit of mystery in the air. Renters might sort down the cavalcade of choices on the internet, but they don't make the final decision there. What you are hoping for is to slow down the prospects scanning process and make them say, "Hmmm ... swipe right".