ADVERTORIAL



FIGHT OR FLIGHT IN OUR LIVES AND IN PHUKET

Overcoming adversity is what we humans are built for and have adapted for. However, our edges have softened from hunter-gatherers into social media keyboard warriors – sometimes wearing lycra and counting steps and levels as opposed to the number of mammoths killed in a particular day. We need to be tough to live in Phuket, but really relatively speaking – not '*that*' tough.

Living in Phuket and doing business in Thailand offers a fair share of adversity and challenges. It is perhaps easy with the onslaught of algorithmic news to become lost in a sea of negativity and unhelpful comments about the facts that apply to every country on this planet – there are some problems, some deep-seated and some superficial. This requires us to adapt into 'Fight' or 'survival' mode, something I have had a lot of fun learning about in my old man's visit to Muay Thai training to reinvigorate my fitness and stretch my inevitably disintegrating muscles.

The 'survivors' in Phuket are not just Thai Phuketians, Thai residents from other Provinces, old expatriates and the like. The 'survivors' include new arrivals who are quick to adapt and overcome the challenges in Phuket and Thailand.

Looking around Phuket these days results in a much more diverse demographic than 20 to 30 years ago. The island is no longer divided into foreigners drinking dens and enclaves and elite Thais and working Thais. There is a startling mix of Thais from other provinces working in all sorts of jobs and activities. The Thai elites have diversified what they invest in and develop to suit the demographic changes and to capitalise on unutilised assets.

Thai workers vary from those stuck in a system where debt and practical burdens are heavy, often with health impacted from sugary treats designed to distract the masses or – if you look at it another way – designed to feed the demands of the masses. Social media and doomscrolling on and off the work clock is also at an all time high with so many being brainwashed to think there is always a better job, a better husband/wife/partner, a better house, better car – out there at our fingertips – if we just start selling ourselves for likes and validation.

On the plus side, there is now a massive investment and uptick in wellness – also for the 'masses' in the form of accessible and affordable gyms and other facilities, and at the high end the exclusive recovery centres and membership oriented sports. Muay Thai and other serious action sports are not just reserved for the 20-somethings in Soi Ta-Ed; crusty seniors are now also able to improve themselves and recapture of a bit of the feeling of youthfulness to help push through their days and lives.

Amidst all of this, we have 'Nominee Crackdowns', increased scrutiny of tax arrangements, better (or worse?) compliance on hotel licensing and villa rental arrangements, more stringent application of rules for 'visa runs' (renewals on land, by air and sea) and a political backlash reacting in part to viral social media clips depicting insults to Thailand from foreign guests. We have misbehaving tourists on rented superbikes, committing lewd acts in public and ignoring even the most basic 'should-be-known' rules of etiquette and respect required to rub along well in Thai society.

This is a heady cocktail which can lead the faint hearted or worn-down resident to seriously consider a 'change' from Phuket's landscape. Some have ventured 'over the bridge' (Sarasin) to seek peace, solitude, waterfalls, golf, fishing parks and national park in Phang Nga. New schools are springing up in places never hitherto imagined as suitable.

But those with 'staying power', a calm head and an ability to regulate a nervous system sometimes under attack from all these goings on, are ideally positioned to capitalise and enjoy the gap left by those that take to 'flight' and not 'fight' and to reap the rewards of new opportunities created by the changing demographic.

From failed developments will rise new amenities like a Phoenix from the Ashes. From nominee structures that were not built to last will come new joint ventures with sincere business partnership and risk management designed to regulate, not circumvent. From 'Wellness Hubs' will rise more and more 'niche' products and integration with all that we do. Gone will be the days, at some point, when attending an event confines the attendee to eating fried food whilst the kids gorge on candy. Instead, healthy wraps and protein drinks will be the norm at almost all venues and the question will not be 'where is the salad' but 'what type of salad would you like with that'?

In each of these transformations, there will be business opportunities, new companies, new contracts, imaginative use of property rights – such as 'Sap Ing Sith' as an alternative to lease arrangements, and… disputes that need to be resolved, amicably if possible, as efficiently as possible – but if not, adapting into 'Fight' mode, for all out smart legal war to achieve some semblance of justice and compensation.


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We all have our fight and flight modes built in; Phuket is still a great place to try out and test our abilities in these areas. For now, I will continue fighting.

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