There is No Need to Be Everywhere — So Stop Trying

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"Opportunities seem more valuable to us when their availability is limited."
-Robert B. Cialdini

How did Coco Chanel turn Chanel no 5 into the best-selling perfume of all time?

In Robert Greene's "The Laws of Human Nature," he wrote that Chanel would slip bottles of the perfume "into the bags of her wealthiest and best-connected clients."

Soon word of her fragrance spread like wildfire and women flocked to her store. She deliberately kept stock in short supply. This made it even more popular. Now it's the best-selling perfume in history.

Scarcity drove up demand.

Today this may work even better than in Chanel's time.

Just look around. Doesn't it feel as though everything is accessible? We're used to overnight shipping, food delivery in minutes, and movies on demand.

This has created a need for the inverse. There's opportunity for the contrarian.

Savvy marketers recognize this. As the saying goes, "one is an

example, two is a coincidence, and three is a trend."

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In the last few months:
1) Clubhouse exploded in popularity (it is invite only)
2) Luxury fashion brand Botega Veneta left social media
3) Travis Scott's McDonald's meal (available for a limited time) was a hit

What do they have in common?

They all leveraged scarcity. They all had cultural impact.

Clubhouse is the most buzzed about new app. They've never spent a dime on advertising. How'd they do it?

They manufactured scarcity by making it invite only. It became the ultimate humblebrag to share on Twitter that you were 'in' Clubhouse. It's become so sought after that people are paying for invites on ebay.

Luxury fashion brand Botega Veneta deleted their social media accounts. The outcome has been a wave of press and intrigue.

According to a McDonald's memo that was leaked, the Travis Scott collaboration was almost too successful. It stated:

"We've created a program that's so compelling to our customers that it's stretching our world-class supply chain; and if demand continues at these levels, more restaurants will break supply."

How is it that scarcity has so much influence over us?

Robert B. Cialdini, author of "Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion," noted that usually something harder to get is more valuable. As a result, we've internalized this as a mental shortcut.

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Scarcity = valuable

Ironically, a number of tools are emerging making it easy for anyone to create exclusivity. Discord and Onlyfans, in particular, stand out.

These communities are filling a void in the market. They're creating turnkey exclusivity in an era of ubiquity.

I see this as the beginning of a growing trend.

For brands, this will result in VIP services for specific clientele.

In China, it's a tactic that's already become popular. Many retailers provide a high touch approach with VIP customers directly over Wechat. They have sales associates develop more personal relationships with customers and provide 1:1 previews of products and address personalized inquiries.

For creators, influencers, and community builders, walled gardens will become increasingly important.

Many will transition to private communities with exclusive content offerings like Logan Paul's Maverick Club. If you're not familiar, Paul has a member's site where fans pay for access to exclusive content.

The site boasts that, "we're serious when we say this is one of the most intimate team experiences in the world. From exclusive, uncut content, to real-life hangouts, insane giveaways, limited edition Maverick Clothing."

The challenge today is we've been burned.

An advertiser, influencer, or any community builder can no longer feign scarcity. They need to commit to it.

As the pendulum swings away from ubiquity toward exclusivity, many will inevitably stumble. We've heard 'exclusive access' and 'limited time offer' enough times to know that it's very rarely true.

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