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การโปรโมทคอนเสิร์ตและอุตสาหกรรมดนตรีไทย

Communicating Scarcity Through Sold Out Messaging in Concert

Promotion and Thai Music Industry Contexts

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ปัณณิช สนิทนาทร¹* และ กฤษติศักดิ์ พูลสวัสดิ์¹

Abstract

This article examines the strategic role of sold-out messaging in concert promotion, framing it as more than logistical reporting but as a persuasive narrative with cultural and psychological impact. The objective is to investigate how sold-out announcements influence audience perception, construct symbolic capital, and shape artist branding, particularly in the Thai live music context. Positioned at the intersection of consumer psychology, social proof, and cultural identity, scarcity messaging stimulates urgency, reinforces credibility, and intensifies fan engagement. Drawing on marketing and cultural studies literature, the study analyzes the symbolic function of sold-out status in both Western and Asian markets, with a focus on Thailand, where artists like Bodyslam and Thongchai McIntyre frequently sell out large venues. The findings indicate that in Thailand, sold-out messaging serves as a marker of belonging, prestige, and emotional investment, operating as a form of social validation within fan communities. It also reveals potential downsides, including artificial scarcity and ethical concerns regarding ticketing transparency. Ultimately, the study contends that sold-out messaging is not merely an indicator of commercial success, but a communicative device that shapes meaning, memory, and shared identity in the cultural economy of live music. The paper calls for more ethical and transparent practices in using scarcity as a marketing tool.

¹ ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ คณบดี มหาวิทยาลัยอัสสัมชัญ

Assistant Professor, School of Music, Assumption University

*Corresponding Author; Email pannawitsnt@au.edu

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ศึกษาบทบาทเชิงกลยุทธ์ของข้อความ “จำหน่ายบัตรหมด” ในการโปรโมทคอนเสิร์ต โดยมองว่าข้อความดังกล่าวไม่ใช่เพียงการรายงานข้อมูลเชิงปฏิบัติการ แต่เป็นการเล่าเรื่องในเชิงโน้มน้าวที่ส่งผลกระทบทั้งทางวัฒนธรรมและจิตวิทยา จุดมุ่งหมายของงานวิจัยนี้คือเพื่อวิเคราะห์ว่าการประกาศบัตรหมดมีอิทธิพลต่อการรับรู้ของผู้ชม การสร้างทุนเชิงสัญลักษณ์ และการกำหนดภาพลักษณ์ของศิลปินอย่างไร โดยเฉพาะในบริบทของดนตรีสดในประเทศไทย ข้อความที่สะท้อนถึงความขาดแคลนนี้ ตั้งอยู่บนจุดตัดของจิตวิทยาผู้บริโภค การยอมรับทางสังคม และอัตลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรม ซึ่งช่วยกระตุ้นความรู้สึกเร่งรีบ เสริมสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือ และเพิ่มความผูกพันของแฟนคลับต่อศิลปิน บทความนี้อ้างอิงวรรณกรรมด้านการตลาดและวัฒนธรรมศึกษา เพื่อวิเคราะห์บทบาทเชิงสัญลักษณ์ของสถานะบัตรหมดทั้งในตลาดตะวันตกและเอเชีย โดยเน้นกรณีศึกษาประเทศไทยที่ศิลปินอย่างบอดี้สแลมและวงไชย แมคอินไถยมักแสดงคอนเสิร์ตที่บัตรหมดอย่างรวดเร็ว ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่าการสื่อสารเช่นนี้ทำหน้าที่เป็นสัญลักษณ์ของการมีส่วนร่วม ความมีสถานะ และการลงทุนทางอารมณ์ของแฟนคลับ อีกทั้งยังสะท้อนข้อกังวลเรื่องผลกระทบเชิงลบ เช่น การสร้างภาวะขาดแคลนเทียมและปัญหาจราจรสัมภาระ เกี่ยวกับความโปร่งใสของระบบจำหน่ายบัตร บทความเสนอว่าการใช้ข้อความที่สะท้อนถึงขาดแคลนในเชิงการตลาด ควรคำนึงถึงจริยธรรมและความโปร่งใส เพื่อรักษาความไว้วางใจในระยะยาว โดยสรุปข้อความ “จำหน่ายบัตรหมด” จึงไม่ใช่แค่เครื่องบ่งชี้ความสำเร็จทางยอดขาย แต่เป็นกลไกการสื่อสารที่มีพลังในการสร้างความหมาย ความทรงจำ และอัตลักษณ์ร่วมในระบบเศรษฐกิจวัฒนธรรมของดนตรีสดรวมสมัย

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสารความขาดแคลน, การจำหน่ายบัตรหมด, การโปรโมทคอนเสิร์ต, พฤติกรรมผู้บริโภค, อุตสาหกรรมดนตรีไทย

1. Introduction

In contemporary concert promotion, the phrase “sold out” has transcended its literal meaning to become a powerful symbol of success, urgency, and exclusivity. Rather than serving as a neutral operational update, it functions as a semiotic signal, framing the artist and event as culturally valuable and highly sought after. This evolution aligns with broader shifts in marketing communication, particularly the rise of experience-driven consumption, digital amplification, and

emotional branding strategies that emphasize symbolic and affective value. At the heart of this phenomenon lies the concept of scarcity, one of the most consistently influential drivers of consumer behavior. As Cialdini (2009) outlines in his theory of persuasion, when people perceive that access to a product or service is limited, its attractiveness increases. In a media-saturated environment, scarcity cuts through the noise. It leverages the psychological principle that people desire what is rare, exclusive, or at risk of disappearing. In this way, sold-out messaging is no longer merely informative, it is affective. It taps into the consumer psyche, triggering feelings of FOMO (fear of missing out), competition, and urgency.

This trend is particularly pronounced in Asia, where countries such as Thailand, South Korea, and Japan have developed highly engaged and digitally fluent fan cultures. These fans are not merely consumers but active participants in promotional ecologies, often co-producing meaning through social media and collective rituals (Jenkins, 2006; Choi & Maliangkay, 2014). In Thailand, for instance, the intense anticipation surrounding ticket releases for artists like Bodyslam, Thongchai “Bird” McIntyre, or global superstars such as BTS goes beyond the desire to attend a concert, it reflects processes of identity formation, community belonging, and emotional investment. Tickets frequently sell out within minutes, and the “sold out” announcement itself becomes a culturally significant moment. Fans who secure tickets often share their success online as a badge of honor, while those who miss out express disappointment publicly, reinforcing a shared sense of value and emotional connection. In this context, the “sold out” label operates as a symbolic site of social discourse and affective intensity.

Social media plays a pivotal role in amplifying the symbolic power of sold-out messaging. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok enable fans to express anticipation, success, or disappointment in real-time, turning individual experiences into collective narratives (Baym, 2018; Bennett, 2014). Hashtags like #SoldOutInSeconds or #ตั๋วหมดแล้ว ("tickets sold out already") often trend within minutes of ticket announcements, reinforcing the perceived value and exclusivity of the event. These digital expressions transcend national borders, allowing transnational fan communities to participate in shared rituals of consumption and emotional investment. In this digital ecology, sold-out status is no longer merely an economic indicator, it becomes symbolic capital that signifies

cultural legitimacy and social prestige (Bourdieu, 1986). Participation in such events, even symbolically through social media, serves to validate one's belonging within fan hierarchies and global cultural flows.

The implications for branding and marketing are significant. In a competitive entertainment landscape where products and services are easily substitutable, experiences become key differentiators (Kotler & Keller, 2016). A concert is not just a musical event; it is an emotionally rich, communal experience that offers fans the chance to connect, both with the artist and with fellow attendees. Sold-out messaging intensifies this sense of occasion, adding an emotional and symbolic dimension that elevates the brand value of everyone involved: the artist, the promoter, and even the venue.

Moreover, sold-out communication reflects the changing dynamics of media and fandom. As Duffett (2012) notes, fans no longer simply consume media; they co-create meaning through their engagement. A sold-out concert becomes a platform for fan expression, where ticket acquisition, attendance, and online interaction are all imbued with emotional and symbolic value. These expressions are not isolated, they feed into a feedback loop where demand creates attention, which in turn creates more demand.

This article seeks to examine the multilayered functions of sold-out messaging within contemporary fan and media cultures. While previous research has recognized the influence of scarcity and symbolic communication on consumer behavior (Cialdini, 2009; Belk et al., 2003), this study positions sold-out announcements within a broader ecology of cultural meaning-making. It contends that such messaging is not simply a transactional update, but rather a form of social performance, affirming group identity, validating fan commitment, and nurturing emotional attachment over time (Couldry, 2004). By analyzing sold-out messaging through this cultural lens, the study highlights how emotionally charged language and ritualized fan engagement contribute to the construction of symbolic capital and collective belonging.

To investigate these dimensions, the article proceeds in five main sections. First, it explores the psychological underpinnings of scarcity and how it drives consumer urgency and perceived value. Second, it examines the influence of social proof in amplifying scarcity messaging, particularly through digital media

ecosystems. Third, it considers the cultural and emotional significance of sold-out communication within the Thai music industry, where fandom practices add layers of symbolic meaning. Fourth, it reflects on the commercial motivations and ethical considerations behind these strategies, including risks of artificial scarcity and issues of trust in the ticketing process. Finally, before discussion and conclusion, this section provides a multi-dimensional analysis of how sold-out messaging functions as both a marketing technique and a cultural phenomenon in contemporary concert promotion.

2. Scarcity and Consumer Psychology

Scarcity is one of the most consistent drivers of consumer urgency. Cialdini (2009) categorizes it as one of the principles of persuasion: when access to a product is limited, its desirability increases. In the concert context, a sold-out message implies missed opportunity, which provokes emotional reactions ranging from anxiety to regret, or even greater eagerness for future access.

Although scarcity and social proof offer clear, short-term marketing advantages, there is another crucial dimension to the story: brand image. When a concert sells out, it often elevates the brand identity of the artist and the promoters, helping them position themselves as in-demand, high-value entities. Brand image is the set of associations a consumer holds about a product or entity. For an artist, a sold-out show can symbolize legitimacy, popularity, and crucially, quality. For promoters, it can signify reliability, the ability to deliver a high-demand event, and strong connections within the industry. Cialdini (2009) categorizes it as a principle of persuasion: when access to a product is limited, its desirability increases. In the concert context, a sold-out message implies missed opportunity, which provokes emotional reactions ranging from anxiety to regret, or even greater eagerness for future access.

Research by Lynn (1991) found that perceived scarcity increases product value across various domains, including experiences. This aligns with recent findings that consumers who feel they are part of an exclusive group (such as attendees of a sold-out concert) report higher levels of satisfaction and willingness to share their experience publicly (Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010). In Thailand, such

behaviors are visible in the immediate posting of ticket confirmations and fan-generated content celebrating their successful acquisition.

Real-world examples from the music industry in Asia vividly illustrate how scarcity messaging is deployed as both a marketing and cultural tool. In Thailand, the “Bodyslam นั่งเล่น” concert series, produced by GMM Grammy, sold out within minutes upon release, creating a sense of urgency that was amplified through fan posts, hashtags, and countdowns (Chanon, 2019). The immediate sellout was interpreted not only as a marker of popularity but as proof of the band’s enduring emotional connection with its audience. Similarly, the “Bird Thongchai 2022 Encore” concert added extra shows only after the first round sold out, reinforcing the notion of overwhelming demand and rewarding fan loyalty (Chutikarn, 2022). In K-pop, groups like BTS and BLACKPINK use tiered ticket releases and time-sensitive presales, deliberately crafting scarcity moments that trigger digital fan frenzies across platforms (Abidin & Lee 2023). These cases show how sold-out communication is actively engineered to generate anticipation, validate social belonging, and transform ticket acquisition into a symbolic accomplishment. The message of “sold out” is not merely a report, it becomes a ritualized announcement of cultural relevance.

Moreover, as marketing studies have shown, scarcity communications function best when paired with authenticity (Aggarwal, Jun, & Huh, 2011). False scarcity, such as holding back tickets to manufacture hype, can backfire. Fans may grow skeptical, especially when secondary ticket markets inflate prices. Transparency, therefore, is not just ethical but strategic. Marketers must weigh the short-term gains of manipulated scarcity against the long-term reputational damage such tactics may cause. This tension between effectiveness and ethics represents one of the most critical considerations in scarcity-based concert communication today.

Additionally, the psychological impact of scarcity is often magnified when it triggers FOMO (fear of missing out). Fans who perceive that others have secured a scarce resource, especially through time-limited sales or presales, may experience both urgency and regret. In digital spaces, this can translate into reactive behavior such as panic buying, hoarding, or even public expressions of frustration.

Understanding the emotional aftermath of scarcity communication is key to managing fan satisfaction and loyalty beyond the sale itself.

Beyond individual emotional responses, scarcity also interacts powerfully with the concept of social influence, particularly the phenomenon known as social proof. While scarcity drives urgency from within, social proof adds external validation to that urgency by showing what others are doing, choosing, or endorsing. When fans witness a concert selling out rapidly, not only do they experience personal FOMO, but they also interpret the situation as evidence that the event holds collective value. This convergence of inner emotional tension and outer social validation creates a potent cocktail of motivation, one that extends beyond the initial moment of purchase and shapes broader consumer behavior. In highly social and digitally interconnected fan environments like Thailand, where communal identity and online interaction are central to music culture, the line between scarcity and social proof becomes increasingly blurred. To fully understand how scarcity messaging exerts its persuasive power, we must now turn to its close companion, social proof, and examine how the behavior and decisions of others serve to validate, amplify, and perpetuate the symbolic value of sold-out events.

3. Social Proof and Collective Endorsement

Social proof plays an integral role in validating consumer decisions. When people observe others acting on a product or event, they are more likely to follow (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008). A concert that sells out quickly is not just a marker of logistical success; it is often interpreted as a testament to the cultural relevance of the artist and the quality of the experience. In this way, the sold-out message becomes a narrative device, constructing meaning beyond the transaction.

In markets like Thailand, where community, peer influence, and collectivist values remain deeply rooted, social proof operates with particular intensity. Group behavior often carries more weight than individual evaluation. Decisions are not merely based on personal taste but are filtered through communal norms and group consensus. As a result, when a concert is perceived to be in high demand,

individuals may feel a stronger compulsion to attend, not just to enjoy the music but to be part of something socially validated.

This dynamic is amplified by the pervasive role of digital culture. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), and TikTok have transformed how fans interact with each other and with promotional content. Hashtags, reposts, fan-made art, and real-time countdowns to ticket releases create a communal atmosphere of anticipation. When an event is labeled as “sold out,” it becomes a focal point of online discussion, triggering waves of engagement ranging from memes and reaction videos to “ticket war” stories and celebratory posts. In this environment, the sold-out message functions as a tipping point in public discourse. It not only confirms the desirability of the event but also confers symbolic social legitimacy upon those who attend.

While Duffett (2012) discusses symbolic capital within the music industry, where prestige is earned through affiliation with meaningful cultural artifacts, the same concept applies at the fan level. Fans accrue cultural capital by participating in sold-out events and sharing that participation publicly. Screenshots of ticket confirmations, selfies in line at venues, or photos with merchandise serve as visual proof of cultural involvement. In this context, to be physically present at a sold-out concert is to gain social status, particularly within tightly-knit fan communities. Attending a sold-out event is more than just an act of consumption, it is an expression of loyalty, identity, and distinction.

Moreover, the influence of social proof is further intensified by algorithmic recommendation systems. Ticketing platforms, such as Thai Ticket Major or Live Nation’s regional sites, often highlight sold-out shows in banner promotions or email alerts, presenting them as events of significance. Social media algorithms similarly privilege trending topics and viral content, often driven by the same sold-out messages. As a result, sold-out events gain more digital visibility, feeding into a feedback loop of desirability. The event’s popularity makes it more visible, which increases its perceived cultural value, which in turn generates even more demand.

In essence, scarcity becomes more than a sales strategy, it becomes a meme, a piece of cultural currency that circulates in digital spaces and gains meaning through repetition and reinterpretation. Fans share their emotional journeys, whether of joy from getting a ticket or frustration from missing out,

creating a collective narrative that reinforces the event's symbolic value. The more emotionally charged the content, the more likely it is to be amplified across platforms (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

However, this powerful mechanism of social proof is not without risks. The very platforms that amplify enthusiasm can also intensify discontent. If the event fails to meet expectations, due to poor logistics, technical issues, or underwhelming performances, the same fan networks that generated excitement can rapidly turn into sites of critique. In Thailand, platforms like Pantip, Twitter threads, and Facebook fan groups often serve as post-event review boards. Dissatisfied attendees are quick to share negative experiences, and these critiques can spread just as quickly as pre-event hype. What makes these dynamics particularly impactful in the Thai context is the cultural depth of fandom and the emotional weight attached to participation. Here, concertgoing is often imbued with layers of social identity, ritual expression, and even spiritual meaning. To understand why sold-out messaging resonates so profoundly, and at times controversially, within this environment, it is essential to explore how cultural values, fan rituals, and digital behaviors shape the unique concert landscape in Thailand.

4. Thai Perspectives and Cultural Resonance

Thailand presents a compelling case for understanding the local dynamics of sold-out communication. The country has seen a rapid rise in music festivals, stadium tours, and arena concerts, alongside the emergence of digital-native fanbases. Platforms like Thai Ticket Major and Live Nation Tero actively publicize sold-out statuses, not only as operational updates but as promotional tools to elevate artist credibility. The framing of “sold out” as a badge of honor is especially prominent in Thailand’s promotional ecosystem, where scarcity messaging blends with emotional storytelling and visual culture.

What makes the Thai context unique is the ritualistic and emotional nature of fandom. Fan clubs are not simply casual collectives; they function more like coordinated grassroots organizations, complete with roles, hierarchies, and missions. Mobilizing around ticket drops is treated with military-like precision, fans synchronize alarms for online sales, create step-by-step ticketing guides, and even pool funds to ensure group participation. The process of acquiring tickets itself

becomes part of the experience, generating stories of stress, joy, and triumph that are later shared and remembered.

These rituals often extend far beyond the concert hall. Fan clubs arrange mass transportation for provincial fans, organize pre-show banner displays, and distribute fan-made merchandise or light sticks to enhance the visual spectacle during performances. The social energy generated through these collective efforts transforms concert attendance into a communal rite, one that reflects not only devotion to the artist but solidarity within the fan community.

In this environment, sold-out messaging carries meaning beyond access, it signals belonging. Securing a ticket is not merely a transaction, but a moment of personal and collective validation. Many fans post images of their tickets or queue wristbands with captions like “โชคดีที่ได้ไป” (“Lucky to be going”) or “บุญพาไป” (“Merit brought me there”), blending spiritual language with social affirmation. Studies on Southeast Asian youth culture, such as those by Siriyuvasak and Shin (2007), note that participation in pop culture often reflects deeper aspirations for recognition, self-worth, and social identity. In such cases, a sold-out concert becomes a stage not only for the artist but also for the fan's identity. It is a moment to demonstrate loyalty, status, and embeddedness in a social tribe that extends far beyond the venue.

Live music in Thailand is not purely transactional; it is deeply experiential. Fans attend concerts to connect emotionally with their favorite artist, to share communal energy with fellow fans, and to co-create an atmosphere of emotional resonance. Selling out a venue suggests that the artist has touched a cultural nerve, that their message, performance, and persona have galvanized a collective spirit. Fans often interpret large, enthusiastic audiences as proof of authenticity, credibility, or karmic success. This belief strengthens their emotional bond with the artist and validates their support. The artist gains cultural capital, while fans gain personal affirmation through their inclusion in what feels like a rare and meaningful moment.

Additionally, cultural beliefs about merit (บุญ), luck (โชค), and fate (กรรม) often shape how Thai audiences interpret scarcity. Acquiring a ticket may be seen not just as a stroke of fortune, but as a reward for loyalty, effort, or moral worth. This perspective can amplify emotional attachment, creating a sense of destiny or

personal connection with the artist. However, it also increases emotional stakes, fans may feel disproportionately disappointed or betrayed when expectations are unmet. In such cases, logistical failures or misleading promotional tactics do not merely result in dissatisfaction, they may be experienced as violations of trust or spiritual imbalance.

Given the deep emotional investments involved, the stakes for promoters and artists operating in Thailand are uniquely high. While scarcity can powerfully reinforce loyalty and excitement, it must be deployed with cultural sensitivity and strategic care. In the Thai context, where emotions, identity, and group affiliation are deeply entwined with concertgoing, even a single misstep can lead to widespread backlash and erosion of brand equity.

This brings us to a broader industry question: how should artists, promoters, and ticketing agencies ethically navigate the commercial imperatives of live music promotion while respecting the emotional and cultural expectations of the audience? The next section explores this delicate balance, between leveraging scarcity for financial success and preserving fan trust through transparency, fairness, and ethical boundaries.

5. Commercial Imperatives and Ethical Boundaries

Live music now constitutes a primary revenue source for artists, especially as income from recorded music continues to decline in the digital age (Krueger, 2005). With the rise of streaming platforms, physical album sales have become less significant, prompting both artists and promoters to turn toward touring and live events as a critical stream of income. In response, promotional strategies have adapted to this economic shift, with scarcity-based messaging becoming one of the most effective tools to stimulate rapid ticket sales.

Promoters, facing high costs associated with venue rental, artist fees, technical production, and promotional overhead, often use scarcity to drive quicker purchasing decisions. Strategically timed announcements, such as “only 10% of tickets remaining” or “all VIP passes sold out within minutes”, generate not just urgency, but the perception that demand is overwhelming. In this sense, scarcity becomes a commercial instrument designed to optimize cash flow and reduce financial risk.

However, while scarcity can be effective in creating momentum, it also introduces ethical tensions. The boundary between genuine scarcity and manufactured urgency is thin and easily crossed. Artificial scarcity, where tickets are deliberately held back or slowly released in waves to simulate demand, can provoke feelings of manipulation among consumers, especially if fans later discover that more tickets are quietly re-released or redirected to secondary markets at inflated prices. When this happens, the integrity of the “sold out” label is compromised.

In Thailand, such practices have come under increased scrutiny. Fans regularly voice concerns on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Pantip, and Facebook about ticket scalping, presale privileges for certain groups, and lack of transparency in the ticketing process. A recurring complaint involves the sudden appearance of previously “sold-out” tickets on unofficial resale platforms at exorbitant prices, suggesting that the initial scarcity may have been strategic rather than authentic.

The damage from such perceptions extends beyond individual concerts. When fans begin to view promoters or artists as complicit in price inflation or exclusivity schemes, brand loyalty can erode. This is especially critical in Thailand’s tightly connected fan communities, where word-of-mouth reputation carries significant weight. A single incident of perceived exploitation can lead to long-term distrust, online backlash, and diminished turnout at future events, even for the same artist.

To navigate these challenges, industry players must embrace greater transparency. Clear communication about ticket allocations, presale criteria, and price structures is essential. Promoters who partner with verified resale platforms, limit bot activity, and publish transparent ticket availability updates are more likely to maintain consumer trust. In this context, ethical practice is not just a moral imperative, it becomes a competitive advantage.

Technological innovations have begun to offer potential solutions. Blockchain-based ticketing systems promise to reduce fraud by ensuring that each ticket has a unique, verifiable identity. Dynamic pricing models, similar to those used by airlines, can adjust ticket prices based on real-time demand, but only when applied transparently and fairly. While these technologies are still in early phases

of adoption in Southeast Asia, they reflect a growing recognition that the future of concert promotion must balance profitability with fairness.

Another frequent source of tension lies in last-minute changes or inconsistent ticketing logistics. Sudden changes in venue, failure to honor fan club presales, or surprise releases of “secret” tickets can undermine even the most successful campaigns. Fans may feel misled or excluded, especially if they invested time, emotional energy, or financial resources to secure access. These issues are particularly acute in Thailand, where fans often travel long distances for shows, organize transportation collectively, and make elaborate plans around concert attendance.

The core of the problem is trust. The credibility of the “sold out” label depends entirely on the audience’s belief that it reflects genuine, transparent demand. If fans begin to perceive it as a manipulative marketing gimmick, the emotional value it once held may diminish or even reverse. Scarcity, in this case, ceases to motivate, it begins to alienate.

Ultimately, ethical boundaries are not fixed rules but contextual judgments. What works in one market may be inappropriate in another. In Thailand, where emotional engagement, cultural rituals, and communal identity are deeply woven into the concert experience, ethical missteps can carry disproportionate consequences. Promoters, marketers, and artists alike must recognize that every communication about availability, access, or exclusivity is interpreted not only through economic logic but also through cultural expectations and emotional investments.

As the industry continues to grow and professionalize, a rebalancing is needed, one where scarcity remains a useful communication tool, but is deployed with honesty, fairness, and cultural sensitivity. In the next and final section, we reflect on the broader implications of these practices, and offer directions for sustainable, inclusive, and ethically sound concert communication strategies.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Sold-out messaging is far more than a simple reflection of limited supply; it is a deliberate and impactful form of strategic communication that operates at the intersection of psychology, social behavior, marketing, and cultural identity

(Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the context of live music, where emotional energy, communal participation, and experiential consumption converge, scarcity has evolved from being a passive byproduct of demand to an active narrative device (Dahlke 2002). It shapes how events are perceived, shared, and remembered. Rather than merely indicating popularity, sold-out announcements signal something deeper: cultural relevance, artistic legitimacy, and shared social value (Bourdieu, 1986; Jenkins, 2013). When used thoughtfully and sincerely, such messaging affirms the status of artists as important cultural figures and highlights the competence of promoters as curators of high-value experiences. For audiences, attending a sold-out concert is not only a matter of entertainment, it represents entry into a symbolic space of belonging, a demonstration of loyalty, and an affirmation of identity (Couldry, 2004).

These dynamics are particularly pronounced in Thailand, where music fandom is characterized by emotional investment, ritualized engagement, and strong communal bonds. As demonstrated throughout this article, the meanings attached to sold-out status in this context are multi-layered. They are tied not only to economic scarcity, but also to culturally embedded beliefs about merit, luck, and destiny, concepts deeply rooted in Thai social and religious life (Mulder, 2000). Fans may interpret the acquisition of a concert ticket as a sign of personal fortune or moral worth, and public participation in such events is often amplified through digital platforms, where the experience extends into virtual community spaces (Cavalcanti, 2021). In this environment, sold-out status becomes a symbol not only of demand, but of personal and collective validation.

In this sense, sold-out communication becomes a language of prestige, devotion, and symbolic capital, used not only to convey success but to actively construct meaning and social value (Bourdieu, 1986). However, with this symbolic power comes significant ethical responsibility. When scarcity messaging is employed manipulatively, such as by intentionally withholding ticket batches to fabricate demand, concealing true availability, or enabling exploitative resale practices, it risks undermining fan trust and damaging the artist's or promoter's credibility (Driscoll & Gregg, 2010). In the digital era, where fans act as both consumers and communicators, perceived insincerity can quickly lead to public backlash, viral criticism, and long-term reputational harm (Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

Thus, the ethical use of scarcity in concert promotion is not only a marketing consideration, but a cultural and relational one.

Thus, the real challenge for artists, marketers, and concert organizers lies in balancing urgency with authenticity, and exclusivity with inclusiveness. Scarcity can be a powerful motivator, but only when it is aligned with ethical practices and supported by genuine value delivery. A sold-out concert that fails to meet expectations may achieve short-term visibility but risks long-term disengagement. At its most constructive, sold-out messaging represents a convergence of commerce and culture. It underscores the importance of experience over possession, perception over product. In an era where audiences increasingly value authenticity, connection, and story, scarcity, when communicated with integrity, can become a tool for building deep emotional bonds and cultural longevity.

As Thailand's live music sector continues to develop, the ethical use of scarcity communication will play a crucial role in sustaining industry growth. This includes adopting transparent ticketing systems, using technology to ensure fairness, and maintaining honest dialogue with fans. Ultimately, the goal is not just to fill venues, but to foster lasting trust, cultivate a sense of community, and deliver experiences that resonate well beyond the final performance.

In conclusion, sold-out status today conveys more than the absence of available tickets, it communicates belief, commitment, and shared value. When used with care, it transforms promotion into participation and consumption into meaning-making in the cultural marketplace.

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