

When New York Sneezes, the World Catches Labubu

What Celebrity Influence and Global Cool Tell Us About IP Power

When people think about Pop Mart's Labubu, they assume it was a **China-first** success story.

After all, the brand is Chinese, the figure was launched domestically, and Pop Mart has a massive local fanbase.

But here's the twist:

Labubu didn't go viral in China — until it first went viral abroad.

And at the center of this tipping point?

🌟 **Celebrities.**

🗽 **New York.**

🎮 **The Global Cool Machine.**

1. A single post, a million echoes

The moment a Kardashian or Rihanna is spotted holding something — it's no longer a niche item.

It's culture.

Somewhere in 2024, Labubu started casually appearing in social media photos from Western influencers. Not sponsored posts. Not brand campaigns.

Just... there.

This organic signal from celebrities flipped a switch:

From "Chinese collectible" → to "status object" → to "must-have identity piece."

In Southeast Asia, fans rushed to buy what Western cool had validated.

In China, demand surged — not because of new designs, but because of **global visibility**.

2. The New York Effect: "If you can make it here..."

There's an old saying:

“If you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere.”

I once saw a twist on that:

“If you go viral in New York, you’ll go viral worldwide.”

This is the **cultural amplifier effect**.

- A figure sold out in Seoul? Niche obsession.
- A figure sold out in SoHo? Global signal.

When people camped out overnight in Myeongdong, Seoul to get Labubu, it was stunning.

But when Western media started covering it as a phenomenon — that’s when Labubu stopped being “a toy” and started being **a movement**.

3. Virality isn’t random — it flows downstream

There’s a pattern to cultural waves:

- **New York, LA, London** → signal origin
- **Bangkok, Seoul, Singapore** → fast cultural adopters
- **Shanghai, Beijing** → validation + scale

In other words, once Labubu became a thing in the West, it gained more weight back in Asia.

This isn’t about quality. It’s about narrative.

It’s about what Labubu represents.

- Rebellion against polish
- Cute-meets-goth
- Owning a mood, not a toy

What I’m Taking into UnaBra

As I develop Una — a soft, chubby lavender cat-girl who listens instead of performs — I think a lot about why people attach to characters.

Labubu reminded me of something important:

It’s not just what your IP looks like.

It’s what it symbolizes — and where that meaning gets validated.

That doesn’t mean I’m chasing celebrity attention.

But it does mean I need to:

- Be clear about the emotional space Una occupies
- Build stories people want to carry into their own world
- Stay open to where meaning might emerge — even if it's far from where I launched

Why This Matters

You don't need to "make it" in New York.

But understanding how global cultural signals work helps small creators think big.

Labubu's journey wasn't just about good design.

It was about timing, positioning, and **letting the world fall in love from multiple angles.**

I'm taking those lessons to heart — and into every detail I build at UnaBra.