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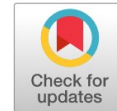


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Strategizing the Customer Relationship in the Independent Bookstore Network: A Case of Small Small Bookshop in Taiwan



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Published online: 24 October 2016

To cite this article: Zhang, Y., & Chung, H. (2016). Strategizing the customer relationship in the independent bookstore network: A case of small small bookshop in Taiwan. *International Journal of Business and Administrative Studies*, 2(5), 143-150. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.20469/ijbas.2.10004-5>

To link to this article: <http://kkgpublications.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/2/Volume2/IJBAS-10004-5.pdf>

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CSTRATEGIZING THE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP IN THE INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE NETWORK: A CASE OF SMALL SMALL BOOKSHOP IN TAIWAN

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Keywords:

Independent Bookstores
Customer Relationship
Partnership
Independent Bookstore

Received: 26 June 2016

Accepted: 27 August 2016

Published: 24 October 2016

Abstract. Mainly driven by globalization and digitalization, book publishing is undergoing a profound digital transformation today. The popularity of e-books, digital reading and online bookstores tremendously change our reading and consumption habits, exerting great impacts on brick and mortar bookstores, especially the small independent bookstores. Today many independent bookstores attach great importance to connecting with people, community and other partners in the same or different industries. “No independent bookstores should be independent”, and the spirit of partnership is needed to be re-examined. This research takes one representative independent bookstore in Taiwan, the Small Small Bookshop, as a case, aiming to explore the customer relationship in the independent bookstore network. Using participatory observation and in-depth interviews, the bookstore business network and its relations with customers are discussed and examined, which presents an example for the operation of independent bookstores today. To sum up, firstly, the research shows that Small Small Bookshop is an ideal champion. The idea and vision of the founder largely determine the corresponding practice of the business of Small Small Bookshop, and in turn, the business, including products, services and activities, reflect and even gradually strengthen the idea over the longtime. Secondly, Small Small Bookstore is not a solely operated independent bookstore-only selling books.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital Transformation of Publishing Industry in the World and in Taiwan

Mainly driven by globalization and digitalization, book publishing is undergoing a profound transformation nowadays, among which the transition from print to digital provides the most headlines. Print publishing is declining almost universally, while digital publishing now has entered the mainstream, especially in the English-speaking countries (Wischenbart, 2014). In the meanwhile, we are witnessing the rise of e-reading as device ownership jumps (Zickuhr & Rainie, 2014). In addition to challenge from the trend of digital publishing and reading, the growing popularity of the online book sales also exerts great influence upon the way people consume books. Hence, it seems that the brick and mortar bookstores suffer a lot, as in recent years we've heard a lot of news about the shutdown of the bookstores all around the world.

Undoubtedly, the digital transformation impacts the publishing industry in Taiwan as well. Compared with other European and American countries, however, the e-book market actually has not shown big progress yet. The market share of e-books only accounts for about 3.56%, mainly due to the lack of productive business model and the small market scale (Ministry of Culture, 2014). The greater impact of digitalization may lie in the change

of reading habit of Taiwanese consumers. A research done by Commonwealth Publishing Co. (2014) in Taiwan found that, four major indicators including average time for reading, titles read, titles bought and budget for buying books, simultaneously fell in 2014 compared with in 2010, which signals a decline of the reading fashion. In addition, just as in many other countries, the spring up of online bookstores is regarded as a greatest challenge to brick and mortar bookstores in Taiwan (Ministry of Culture, 2014).

Threats and Opportunities of Independent Bookstores in Taiwan

With the arrival of digital age, the operation of bookstores is faced with numerous challenges. Readers are less dependent on the traditional paper books and the traditional ways of buying books, thus the future of bookstores becomes a hot topic. Sadly demonstrated by the fact that nearly a thousand brick and mortar bookstores have shut down in recent ten years in Taiwan, especially small independent bookstores (Tsai & Tang, 2015). These small entities struggle to compete with the whole digital environment, as well as other large chain bookstores like the Kingstone and the Eslite, not to mention their internal pressures, such as high cost of operation, small profit and shortage of manpower. Overall, however, it is widely held that the biggest threat

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of independent bookstores in Taiwan comes from the price war triggered by the large chains and online bookstores (Kuo, 2013). The discount offered by the chains and online bookstores with strong bargaining power undoubtedly wins customers heart, however, it could fundamentally damage the book industry. Due to the small capital scale, the independent bookstores surely cannot compete in the price war, no wonder many of them are calling for the government to make a regulation to fix the book price in order to control the unfair price competition.

Despite all the threats, however, the independent bookstores still have a lot of opportunities to gain a place in the market, since most of them have direct and deep connections and interactions with consumers, local people and community (Ministry of Culture, 2014). With the trend that consumers increasingly adhere to digital devices, the independent bookstores provide a physical space creating possibilities for interpersonal interaction, knowledge sharing and cultural exchange in the real world, pulling consumers back to refocus the essence of reading. That's why, in recent years, we've heard increasing voices from a variety of independent bookstores. Until now, there are more than one hundred independent bookstores all around Taiwan, creating a distinctive landscape of independent bookstore. The unique cultural atmosphere they construct by connecting with people is irreplaceable. Confronting with various difficulties, independent bookstore owners have already begun to take actions to tide over them. Some of them transit to run a compound business that not only sells books but also provides food service and holds a variety of cultural events, aiming to provide a lifestyle experience for consumers. Some have joined force to establish alliance, hoping to help their business by cooperating and marketing together. The WenLuoDing Independent Bookstore Alliance and Taiwan Independent Bookstore Alliance had appeared in recent ten years. In 2013, a new independent bookstore organization, Taiwan Association for Independent Bookshop Culture, was established in the central city of Taichung to promote the business and cultural practices of small independent bookstores. The issue of independent bookstore has also received growing attention from Taiwanese government. The Ministry of Culture has already developed several policies and programs to support independent bookstores including subsidies for cultural activities held by bookstores and a fund for young people returning to their hometown to open up bookstores. It is a period that the difficulty goes along with the hope and the challenge coexists with the opportunity.

Under such circumstance today, it has become a trendy topic for independent bookstores to look for connection and interaction between books and people. Essentially, in the world of books, whether doing publishing or running a bookstore, the basic spirit is interdependence or partnership. As Hao (2014) claimed,

no independent bookstores should be independent. There is a mutual sharing spirit among authors, publishers, bookstores and readers naturally, but it is easily overlooked during the process of increasingly pursuing chain expansion and economic scale. To talk about the operation of independent bookstores, it may be a good time to re-examine the spirit of partnership and community (Hao, 2014).

Today independent bookstores can hardly survive if they attempt to compete with the chain and online bookstores only by selling books. Independent bookstores have to be creative and to redefine their identity as bookstores. It is important for them to explore new links with modern people, even to create a brand new lifestyle and meaning (Wang, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "independent bookstore" is generated generally in contrast to the chain bookstore, which is an independently owned store. While looking at its characteristics and value, a deeper insight can be gained. As Wang (2014) said, usually we not only use the term of independent bookstore to represent a reality of commercially disadvantaged and a pursuit beyond commercial purposes, but also to suggest the vigor of ideal and creativity. Different from the chain bookstores and online bookstores, most independent bookstores specialize in particular types of books or concern about specific issues, which especially attracts certain groups of customers interested in them. The bookstore business is closely related to the idea of operators themselves, as the main purpose of running the business usually lies in the individual interest or sense of social mission, rather than to seek profit. (Taiwan Cultural & Creative Platform Foundation, 2013) In today's society, the value of independent bookstores is not mainly due to their position in the publishing industry chain; they are not the previously traditional bookshops only selling books and stationaries, and also do not like the large chains and online bookstores driven by commercial mechanism. Considering the existing value of independent bookstores, the cultural significance is much greater than its industrial benefits (Taiwan Cultural & Creative Platform Foundation, 2013).

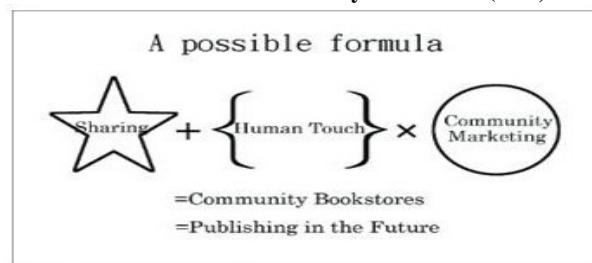
First of all, independent bookstores can be regarded as a platform for knowledge filtering that provides specific domain of knowledge in the era of information explosion. Through rigorous book selection, customized service, and even the various reading events, the bookstore operators are willing to provide customers with in-depth reading opportunities from certain areas which most operators are expert at. Secondly, independent bookstores have served the function of balancing the art and cultural resources in the city. As the chain bookstores mostly concentrate in urban areas, many independent bookstores located in remote areas not only play the role as knowledge

suppliers but also advocates of different social issues. Thirdly, independent bookstores have become a platform for independent authors. Concerning special issues, a growing number of independent authors has already considered independent bookstores as their important places to utter their own voices. Some independent bookstores even act as publisher to issue publications for independent creators. Last but not the least, the existence of various types of independent bookstores reveals the tolerance of multi-culture in the society. They provide a point of difference for book buyers and thus encouraging the book industry to remain dynamic and innovative. In the long

term, these independent bookstores might also act as a role of reflecting the social and cultural dynamic in Taiwan (Chien, 2012).

The independent bookstores that particularly gather a certain group of people with common needs and shared value can also be called community bookstores. Community bookstores attach great importance to the spirit of partnership or community. Hao (2014) puts forward a possible formula for the success of independent bookstores, that is:

A Possible Formula of Community Bookstores (Hao, 2014)



Sharing

Whether you do publishing or run a bookstore, the original purpose is to share knowledge and reading pleasure through book selling. Both “sales” and “sharing” should be taken into account in order to run the business well. However, nowadays, we increasingly focus more on sales instead of sharing. Given the spirit of partnership or community, we need to pay more attention to “sharing” rather than “sales”.

Human Touch

Undoubtedly, the spirit of partnership and community cannot work without the presence of human touch.

Community Marketing

To do community marketing, first of all, there should be a group of target audience. The service provided to this group of audience must be from the perspective of being a member of the community. Not only bookstores and readers, but also other participants at all levels such as publishers, authors, and libraries should join to form the community. Apart from commercial concerns, community marketing has to be a long-term practice and values more about “sharing” and “human touch”. To show the spirit of partnership or community, no independent bookstore should be independent. (Hao, 2014).

In general, research on independent bookstores started to spring up since they have to face the serious challenges triggered by the advent of Internet combined with the chain bookstores, which tremendously changed the whole ecosystem of book business.

Some studies describe the difficulties of independent bookstores in face of the chains and online bookstores these years as well as the coping strategies (Miller, 2006; Gatewood, 2007; Laing, 2008; Li, 2010). To overcome the difficulties by all means, actually weve seen a renaissance of independent bookstore as some have successfully distinguished themselves from other retailers (Laing, 2008; Teicher, 2013). Among all the strategies independent bookstore applied to seek for survival, marketing and branding strategies are discussed mostly (Li, 2010; Su & Chan, 2010; Teicher, 2013; Rosakebia, 2014; Wang, 2014). In Taiwan, the trend of community connection (Huang, 2011; Chien, 2012; Hao, 2014) and independent bookstore alliance (Su & Chan, 2010; Chen, 2014; Chien, 2014) have caught researchers attention as well. In addition, there are studies exploring the entrepreneurship of independent bookstore owners from the point of sociology (Chang, 2009).

All in all, researchers have already noticed the trend that independent bookstores begin to form a cooperation network with different partners in order to expand their business, which means more opportunities to survive. The importance for independent bookstores to connect closely with customers is also highlighted.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the qualitative research method, which takes Small Small Bookshop as a case, aiming to explore the customer relationship in the business network of independent bookstores.

Located in Yonghe District, New Taipei City, Small Small Bookshop is an independent bookstore committing to advocate integrating and sharing of arts and cultural knowledge, and aiming to improve the overall reading environment since its establishment from 2006. According to 2015 Formosa Bookstore Guide Map (2015), Small Small Bookshop is considered as the most active one to promote reading and literary activities among all the small bookstores in Taiwan. To look at its blog, it can be found that numerous business practices and cultural activities have been done by this bookstore during the ten years. It can be argued that Small Small Bookshop may have formed a close interaction with customers as well as the collaboration with many partners such as the community, social groups, book authors, and people of literary and art circles.

The research started from literature reviews and case selection. After settling the study case, the first face-to-face interview with the founder of Small Small Bookshop was done, from which the brief understanding about the idea of founder and the bookstore business was gained. Later on, the participatory observation was done in the Small Small Bookshop in order to obtain the insight about business operation and cooperation, as well as the interaction with customers. At last, the in-depth interviews with staffs of Small Small Bookshop and its customers were conducted to gain the perception from both the bookstore staff and customers. In order to gain comprehensive understanding and perception of customers towards Small Small Bookshop, six core customers were selected as the interviewees finally.

In general, this research process is mainly aimed to clarify the business network of Small Small Bookshop and fully understand the perception of customers towards the bookstore.

FINDINGS

Idea and Business, and Their Interrelationship

Hung-Fong Liu, the founder of Small Small Bookshop, established this small bookstore in Yonghe District, New Taipei City, in 2006. A sentence that Liu wrote down on the blog ten years ago can be regarded as her idea to open this bookstore:

“There is a bookstore, it exists to allow people who like books to have a comfortable place to stay, in which people gradually get together, know each other and exchange their idea about books; There is a bookstore, it exists to allow people who haven’t read books in a long time to know what it feels like to be close to books again and to feel the word and emotions contained within; There is a bookstore, it exists so that every book can find its owner who is willing to listen to the books word; There is a bookstore, it exists not just to buy and sell books, but also because books can create friendship and stir emotions.”

As an independent bookstore, Small Small Bookshop specializes in a particular genre of books that Liu is interested in and

expert at. The genres are mostly modern and contemporary literature, culture research, sociology, history, philosophy, poetry, art and design, film, music, comic, environmental protection, lifestyle and children’s books, while the majority are literature, history, philosophy and children’s books. The books in the bookstore are strictly selected. As one staff member said, “We actually stock quite a wide range of books, for each genre of books, we did not select them casually. Although there are many new books being published every day, we will just select some that we want to promote.” In addition to books, there are several kinds of creative lifestyle products sold in the store, ranging from CD and DVD collections, postcards, notebooks, handcrafted pens, bags, maps and even organic agricultural products, etc. The organic agricultural products include cereal, dry fruit, sauce, jam, vinegar and so on, which shows a sense of environmental consciousness and concerns which the bookstore itself values. All the products are from local Taiwanese artists, designers or producers, who present diverse local cultures and ideas. With a coffee corner, the bookstore also serves drinks and food to customers.

To deal with customers, bookstore services are definitely an indispensable part. Considering the needs of the bookstore customers, several services are provided in Small Small Bookshop, including: book finding and buying recommendation, ordering, reserving and sending books for customers, and drink and food services. Some are basic bookstore services, while some are quite special and sweet. Take reserving books for example; sometimes the staff will reserve books for customers proactively. Especially when some new books arrive in store, among which may have certain books that the staff remember some customers perhaps will want, then the staff will email the customers to inquire whether they need this book. In addition, bookstore now will design customized reading list to customers. Based on one’s reading demand, level, preference and even purpose, the bookstore can provide reading list exclusively for each customer.

Activities are another key business of Small Small Bookstore. Numerous and diverse literary and cultural activities are held week after week over the years, increasingly attracting customers who are interested in. There are both long-term regular activities such as book clubs and diverse literary courses and poetry group, and irregular activities like readers’ clubs and lectures, music event, film club, and community activities. The most distinctive activity is the book clubs. There are three kinds of book clubs being regularly held every week, including literature book club, philosophy book club and sociology book club, which are designed for those who love books to read together and share thoughts. At each book club, one leader leads members in class to read and discuss about a particular

book together. The purpose of the book club is that through the effort of both leader and members, a book can be read and understood as thorough as possible. Therefore, the opinions voiced by members matter very much.

As an independently owned and operated small business, the personal background, ability, personality and even preference of the founder usually dominate the whole situation. Because leading the course of literature reading in Community University and realizing the unsatisfactory condition above adult reading, Liu chose to bring the book club into the store to help foster the overall reading environment; considering various social issues like environmental protection and disadvantaged groups, she committed to support and collaborate with different social groups, and held numerous literary activities to appeal to the public for a peaceful and sustainable society; since valuing the love towards books and the friendship with people, a number of close customer services were designed to promote books, creating interpersonal interaction, although the loading of the store has already been heavy; owing to the love of the land, she continuously planned community activities and distributed community publications to involve the residents to care about their surroundings; because of her care and respect to life, she fed and even kept several stray animals in the store, etc. Therefore, to put it extremely, how to run the business depends on the idea in Liu's mind. It can be argued that the founder's own idea largely determines the business direction of the independent bookstore. However, to accurately reflect the idea and convey it to the public, it calls for the proper operation of the business in every aspect. Based on the illustration above, it can be deemed that the idea of Small Small Bookshop, or the idea of Liu is presented mainly through three aspects, that is, products, services and activities (Kuo & Chen, 2015).

Collaborative Partners

Obviously, Small Small Bookshop is not a solely operated independent bookstore. In addition to the cooperation with upstream and downstream partners in the publishing industry supply chain; it also gains many other partners in different industries. Through the collaboration, both parties support each other with various intellectual, cultural and social resources. The publishers and distributors are the main book suppliers of Small Small Bookshop. Each week, the bookstore will order stocks from different publishers and distributors, including new books and customers' orders. Damaged books and returned books will be sent back to publishers or distributors every month. In addition to the supply relations between publishers and the bookstore, they also cooperate to hold literary activities, such as readers club, lecture and book launch in the bookstore. Furthermore, Small Small Bookshop has built up direct relations

with authors, such as writers and poets. For instance, in order to help excellent writers utter their own voices, the Small Small Bookshop established the Small Idea Publishing Company to help the independent writers publish their works, so that readers can see their outstanding works and ideas. To foster the poetry community, the bookstore now plans regular poetry activities to invite the local poetry directly to share their ideas through poetry club. Besides collaborating with publishers and authors, as a member of Taiwan Association for Independent Bookstore Culture, the bookstore will also try to join in and cooperate with it based on the needs of the association, but it does not play a decision-making role.

Apart from all the partners in publishing industry, the bookstore has built up a lot of partnerships with organizations and people from different industries for different purposes.

In addition to suppliers for the books, the bookstore also has business cooperation with suppliers for different lifestyle products. In order to support the excellent local artists, designers or producers, in most cases, the bookstore is willing to cooperate with them to help promote their works by ordering and displaying them in the store. Another quite important partners are the leaders and teachers of book clubs and diverse courses. Usually the bookstore will have long-term collaboration with them. The teachers come the bookstore to have classes each week regularly. When it comes to other activities, different people in the literary and art circles such as musicians, film makers, painters and designers can all be the cooperators with Small Small Bookshop. As the bookstore itself concerns many social issues, it has planned and executed different lectures sharing and discussing social topics to the public. For these lectures, people in some social groups were invited to give the speech based on a certain social topic. In some cases, the social groups will even show cooperation intention to the bookstore proactively, trying to gain some support from the bookstore. Last but not the least, the community is also an important partner for Small Small Bookshop. As a community-based bookstore, several community activities have been held during the ten years. With each event, the teachers or experts in the community were invited to give the resident tour guides or lectures.

Communication Channels

To reach the customers effectively, a multiple of communication channels have been developed. These communication channels facilitate the communication and interaction between the bookstore and customers, and ensure the bookstore to meet the customers needs. It is also through these communication channels, customers are able to understand and perceive Small Small Bookshop. They mainly include the bookstore space, face-to-face communication, blog, Facebook, email, phone and

other media.

Among all the channels, the face-to-face communication in Small Small Bookshop is a direct way for customers and the bookstore to know each other, exchange different ideas, and even just trivia in life, and really get customers close to this bookstore. Another important channel is the blog of Small Small Bookshop, on which all the information about activities will be posted. The blog is the main online channel of the bookstore to promote itself. By visiting the blog, customers can easily understand how many efforts this bookstore has paid for these ten years. Besides the blog, the bookstore will promote the products and activities through its Facebook fan page and Liu's own Facebook as well, as it is a popular social media site in Taiwan, which will attract large number of people. On Liu's own Facebook, not only all the promotional information will be posted, but also Liu's self-talking regarding the interesting stories in the store, the personal thinking and emotion, the social topic she cares for, etc., all these will be shared through her own Facebook with her beautiful words every day. By following Liu's Facebook, customers get to understand this bookstore and its founder from different aspects. Some customers will often leave words below the posts, creating interesting conversation and interaction with Liu. Undoubtedly, the Facebook of Liu becomes an effective platform for the bookstore to do promotion. Furthermore, it builds the close relationship with customers. Though customers will not visit the bookstore every day, they frequently get to know the news of the bookstore from Liu's Facebook (Luekveerawattana, 2016).

Customer Perception towards Small Small Bookshop: A High Recognition

Through ten years' operation, Small Small Bookshop now has already accumulated a relatively large customer base, almost 6000 members now, according to the customer database. While among all the members, there is a group of people who are core members, accounting for nearly 40% of all the customers, as Liu estimated. They are mainly accumulated through regular activities such as book clubs and courses. Each week or month, they will not only show up in the store to have the class, but also purchase books and consume other products like the drinks and food. Except for them, there are core members often purchasing books from the bookstore or being the volunteers. Hence, they are a group of fixed customers who usually have built long-term relationship with the bookstores. Another 20% are customers that will particularly come for the first time for certain activities like a book launch, a reader club or a lecture that they are interested in. Liu estimated that this group of people will take up about 60% of all the people in each activity. Another group of people are the distant customers. They may live in other

cities or are not convenient to visit the bookstore, so they will order books from the bookstore online. They occupy about 20% of all the customers. The other 20% are individual customers, which is the most unstable customer base. They seldom visit the bookstore, and some of them just pass by and come across this bookstore, which are less likely to become the regular customers.

The result of the interviews of the customers showed that the core customers have gained a relatively comprehensive knowledge about Small Small. In general, a sense of high recognition is raised among the customers towards the bookstore in terms of different aspects including the business and the idea.

Firstly, the books selected by Small Small Bookshop are favored by customers. As a bookstore specialized in specific reading area, customers showed the agreement on the strict book selection of Small Small Bookstore. In addition, through the way that Small Small bookstore selects and displays their products, especially the books, customers are able to perceive and understand the idea of the bookstore. Except for the fondness and approval towards the books, customers expressed their affection for the diverse local lifestyle products presented in Small Small Bookshop. From the understanding of customer Wang and Yen, displaying and selling these lifestyle products in the bookstore also showed the support and help of Small Small Bookstore towards other people.

Secondly, when it comes to the attitudes towards the services, most customers hold the view that as a small bookstore, Small Small Bookshop provides pretty good and enough services. According to customer Cheng, he even thought that the bookstore has provided too many good services. When it comes to service, it also shows customers will naturally relate them with the service providers, the bookstore staff as well as the founder. Besides, customers generally spoke highly of the service of books recommendation, which even helps build up the brand effect of the bookstore. According to customer Yens perception, the books recommended by Liu were great as well. More importantly, customers themselves perceive the services as a way that the bookstore interacts and connects with people. Though knowing that providing these diverse services definitely increases the burden of the staff, customers feel that these services are indispensable. Likewise, customer Lin felt that the services of ordering and recommending books are of great importance as it helps create the stickiness with customers. It is shown that when perceiving the services of Small Small Bookshop, customers will highly consider the interpersonal interaction that makes them feel it is a unique experience in the independent bookstore.

Thirdly, compared with products and services, it seems that customers largely commented on the activities of Small Small

Bookshop and showed a high recognition especially towards them. As perceived by customers, Small Small Bookshop had planned various interesting activities related with the books, such as the book clubs, the readers club and lectures. While these activities were not limited to the books themselves, they would usually reach and explore the wider issues or fields. Through these activities, basically, customers felt that their knowledge based on books was extended. In addition, customers mutually spoke highly of the efforts that Small Small Bookshop has made on promoting the knowledge, social issues and culture to the public. Last but not the least, another reason that customers showed positive attitudes towards the activities is that they did feel these activities did output substantial effect and create significant influence on knowledge promotion and culture communication.

Since customers shared plenty of opinions and recognition towards the business of Small Small Bookshop including its products, services and activity, while at a deeper level, it can be argued that their recognition towards the business is more or less the recognition towards the idea of the founder and the founder herself. Because when asked about the view in terms of different aspects of Small Small Bookshop, most customers would descend to talk about the founder and her idea. "So you asked my opinion about these various courses Liu designed. How I would evaluate them? My judgement is not because of these courses, it is because of Liu herself." (Customer Tseng) "I'm not sure whether my saying is right. From my own understanding, the activities in this bookstore are largely related to Liu's own idea and preference, it should be said that I pretty much agree with it." (Customer Chang).

When looking at comments of customers related to Liu's idea and vision, it shows that they actually perceived and agreed. However, customers did not only recognize the idea itself, but also spoke highly of the spirit of Liu in terms of her practice and adherence to her own ideas.

"Few people can make it like her, this is what I appreciate her most. She could present her idea and dream, and stick to it for ten years; this is what I admire her most, etc. Without her insistence, the bookstore will not exit." (Customer Tseng).

All in all, the operation of Small Small Bookshop presents the idea and vision of Liu, and is perceived by customers. When being asked to review the words that Liu wrote down ten years ago after getting in touch with Small Small Bookshop, customers mutually shared the agreement that the idea and the business of Small Small Bookshop accorded with each other.

"I think what she wrote pretty fits in what she did." (Customer Yen).

"I think this passage pretty conforms to the direction she is going now and meets the image of Small Small Bookshop we have seen now. I think she is following her own idea." (Customer Lin).

CONCLUSION

To sum up, firstly, the research shows that Small Small Bookshop is an idea champion. The idea and vision of the founder largely determine the corresponding practice of the business of Small Small Bookshop, and in turn the business including products, services and activities, reflect and even gradually strengthen the idea over the longtime. Secondly, Small Small Bookstore is not a solely operated independent bookstore only selling books. To achieve the idea and vision of the founder, it really did numerous things. Taking the role of reading promotion, cultural exchange, environmental improvement, community sustainability and interpersonal interaction, it collaborated with various partners and connected with customers through different channels. The bookstore is actually embedded in a complex network; within which it constantly practices its idea year by year. Thirdly, from the perspective of customers, it can be argued that core customers shared a high recognition towards Small Small Bookshop not only about its business being operated but also the idea of the founder. During ten years practice, this gradually accumulated recognition that helped maintain long-term interaction and relations between Small Small Bookshop and its customers. Hoping that the research findings gained from Small Idea Bookstore could act as a sample to provide some experiences and insights regarding the industry cooperation and customer relations for other independent bookstores. However, this research contains only single case. Since independent bookstores are expected to distinctively operate, it may be insufficient to represent the whole situation. For future research, more different independent bookstores can be explored and compared in terms of their business and customer relationships.

Acknowledgements

It was really an unforgettable research journey. Thanks to my supervisor Prof. Chung who always gave me a lot of suggestions, inspiration and encouragement during the whole research process. Thanks to my research coach, the owner of Small Small Bookshop Hung Fong Liu, for offering me this research opportunity and I really learnt a lot. Thank you so much.

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– This article does not have any appendix. –