

DSE 2020 P2B Q.3**Learning English through Social Issues**

In recent years, the number of small independent stationery shops in Hong Kong has fallen. Write a news report for the *Hong Kong Post*. Explain this trend and discuss whether independent stationery shops can survive.

Disappearing Independent Stationery Shops

Following the closure of a multitude of small independent stationery shops, many have been paying attention to their surviving possibilities. Some have floated the idea that they will be still existing because of their values towards tradition, while some hold the opposing idea that they will no longer exist in the future. While this started as a relatively trivial social issue, it has quickly evolved into a widespread topic that has garnered the public's attention.

To commence, it is patently obvious that the survival of the small stationery shops is becoming more challenging due to the fierce competition with state-owned chain stores and online shops in the market. It comes as no surprise that there must be a chain store selling stationery around you, and you have been frequently visiting online shops in these few years. Under globalization, goods and manpower are being transported easily in the absence of restrictions in time and spaces. As a result, a bulk production is easily achieved for large companies, which attributes to the lower selling prices of the products compared to the traditional stationery shops' ones. It is noteworthy that tremendous online shops are opened recently. With the online shops providing an array of stationery, consumers are more appealed to them and tend not to visit conventional stationery stores. In the light of this, the public opt to consume in chain stores and online shops, which results in the competitiveness being lowered for the small stationery shops and the acceleration of them being obsolete. While chain stores like Joint Publishing and online shops like Taobao provide us with an assortment of stationery, independent stationery shops only provide meagre choices, thus it is understandable that the public is inclined to shopping at the former one, which expedites the closure of small shops.

Second to mention, our preference in entertainment having been switched, the small stationery shops are becoming more extinct than before. It is crystal clear that the generation Z prefers electronic devices as entertainment tools to tangible toys nowadays, which is attributed to the well-developed Internet. So convenient is the Internet that we could easily get access to multifarious information anywhere at any time. It renders our satisfaction towards abundance of information. As long as there is mobile data, there is a way for us to acquire information. Accordingly, the teenagers accounting for the majority of income of the small stationery shops will no longer pursue physical toys for entertainment, which attributes to the decline in revenues and the termination of the independent shops. In the past, children played tangible toys and bought books from the conventional stores. Over the course of time, everyone is a netizen now, posting Shorts on YouTube, watching Reels on Instagram and sharing Tweets on Twitter. Research reveals that 61.8% of the world population have the practice of surfing the Net, which embodies the transformation of the public's interest. Losing the teenagers as the customers, it is hard for small stationery shops to stay in the future.

Thirdly, it is blatantly obvious that the small stationery shops are faced with tremendous obstacles to operate and survive in the foreseeable future because of the skyrocketing rents. So disastrous is the shortage of land in Hong Kong that the government has been considering the exploitation of country parks to build residential units. In fact, the larger the demand, the more expensive the rent is. Consequently, the owners of the independent shops have been facing increasing financial pressure, which is proportional to the rise in the exorbitant rents. It is obviously hard for the owners to generate revenues to cover the increase in rent level, if not impossible. Research shows that the average rent of these small stationery shops is approximately \$5,000 a month, an amount having doubled compared to theirs five years ago. A few decades ago, people working for only five days a week already could make a profit. Comparatively, even they spare no effort in operating for 24/7, they cannot improve the affordability of rents, not to mention the miscellaneous expenses. With the large financial burden being pushed towards the owners, it is clear that few of them could continue to survive in this city.

In spite of the transformation of the small independent stationery shops, such as selling a wide range of products in a hard-working manner, they could barely survive in the future. Not only

the astronomical rents, but also the severe competition ensues this disastrous situation. It is high time we treasured these conventional stationery shops. It is also earnestly hoped that this industry could successfully survive, by which we could endeavor to visit these shops more frequently.