

### **Fading of the forgotten street corners**

Glamorous and prosperous, Hong Kong has long been hailed as one of the most flourishing cities in the world, where citizens enjoy a high living standard. However, what is behind the shimmering surface? The answer is obvious. Downfall of the small and independent shops, especially those sell stationery. It has become a major concern of the citizens. When is the last time you have been to a stationery shop? Do you know about the business environment of 'the precious and irreplaceable assets? No matter what your answer is, this news report will unveil the story of those almost forgotten street corners.

There are numerous reasons why there is a tidal wave of forced closure of stationery shops with the hegemony of chain stores being the first one. In the bygone days, hardly can you find a big company selling stationery on the street. You have no choice but to visit the local small shops while there are a wide range of options in front of you ranging from Muji and Stationery Generation to some famous bookstores due to the trend of globalism that aggregates all international companies in such a tiny city. The domination of chain stores suits the needs of citizens leading a fast pace of life. Chain stores being convenient and distance-friendly, citizens leading a hectic schedule will opt to patronize the nearby chain stores in the shopping mall of their own housing estates, consequently leading to a phenomenon that the meager profit earned by small shops cannot even cover half of the astronomical rents. It is under this backdrop that the number of small stationery shops dwindles significantly despite its long history and connection built with the community.

Apart from an oligopolistic market with a few dominant sellers, under no circumstances should we overlook the fact that the decline of these 'sellers' without market power can also be attributed to the favour of a paperless environment by citizens. Considering that there is a gargantuan increase of environmental awareness among citizens, they are more inclined to a lifestyle that everything is stored online. A recent survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong has revealed a fact that the frequency of each HongKonger using cloud storage like Google drive and OneDrive and note-jotting applications such as OneNote and Good Note each day falls on a median of 50 times, an irrefutably absurd number. It is also worth noting that the pandemic further accelerates the development of a paperless society through the widespread of google classroom. With this in mind, it is undeniably true that students and office workers still strive for their exams and burn the midnight oil by using iPad and Apple pencil, but not pens and correction tapes, giving rise to a catastrophic drop in number of visitors and marginal profit in the long run.

Under this line of thinking, the gradual disappearance of these invaluable cultural

heritage can be accounted by the value of an environmentally friendly city.

After acknowledging the contributory factors behind the fading of these small stationery shops, the most urgent thing is to revitalize this withering sector. Maybe you will say 'it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to win against the overwhelming current of ferocious competition and loss of target customers. Nevertheless, there is still a glimmer of hope at the end of the dark tunnel.

By no means should we underestimate the uplift in awareness of myopia awareness of the public. Exposure to too much blue-ray will undoubtedly result in myopia, making people not being unable to see a distant object. According to the Education Bureau, 70% of students are suffering from myopia in each school. No matter how you want to prevent exposure to blur-ray, you must use your phone for communication plus the prevalent trend of using iPad in the wake of jotting notes. The former one cannot be abolished whereas there are alternatives to later one which are traditional notebooks and paper. It was not until the public realizes the fact that inadequate usage of electronic device will intensify the myopia problem that they will reduce their screentime and visit the small stationery shops instead. In other word, the surge of awareness of eye's health will become the panacea for the turning down of operation of small shops.

You may wonder, how can you ensure that the customers will choose those small shops instead of chain stores? The rise in localism will decimate the possibility of visiting chain stores as if putting fingers on the throbbing pulse of small shop owners and a sooth ice packing at the pounding temple. Being renowned with a highly cohesive environment, the community full of warmth and care is one of the Hong Kong's characteristics, just like what is said in the Lion Rock spirit. The fading of the small shops will ignite their sense of local identity and belonging to Hong Kong. It is irrefutable that chain stores are in the lack of warmth and friendliness while the small shops are fully acquainted with them. It is foreseeable that they will become less in favour of chain stores and pull the small stationery shops from a point of no return.

All in all, the upsurge of health and local awareness is not the only two factors pulling the small shops from the abyss of regrettable loss, the future of these 'remarkable memories' hinges on the effort put by all possible stakeholders. You must regret when there are no small stationery shops standing firmly on the street! So, what are you waiting for? Go visit a nearby stationery shop now!