

Recommendations

This research offers six recommendations to further develop and strengthen the position of bookshops within the community in relation to literacy teaching, reading promotion, cultural participation and place marketing.

1. Specialist expertise

Booksellers' passion and expertise set them apart from other high street retailers in consumers' eyes – it takes knowledge and skill to run a bookshop. The 'specialist' nature of bookshops feeds consumers' positive perception of them and can strengthen a sense of community wealth building.

Promoting this image can help business owners to stand out and attract and retain customers. Booksellers should also engage in a similar way with local authorities in order to raise awareness of their contribution to the high street experience.

2. The image of newsagents

Compared with other types of bookshops, newsagent's shops – particularly those in more urban settings – are less strongly associated with 'an experience' or 'specialist'.

It may be possible to close this gap by emphasising the local character, convenience and accessibility of this type of business: raise awareness that newsagents also have a fundamental value within communities, supplementary to the services and specialist knowledge provided by independent retailers, and that they have a unique role in fostering a reading culture.

3. High street experience

De rol van de boekhandel in de transformatie van de dorps- en stadskern van *place to buy* naar *place to do* of *place to meet* kan op verschillende manieren worden ingevuld. Het is ook voor boekhandelaren om richting lokale instanties duidelijk te maken dat de boekhandel als belevingswinkel fungeert, en wat het *halo*-effect hiervan is.

Daarbij kunnen ondernemers beleving vergroten, of dit nou is als rustpunt of als culturele *hub* met plek voor verschillende kunstvormen en evenementen.

4. Impact

Sharing facilities, knowledge and staff hours with libraries and other cultural operators – for instance during nationwide events such as Kinderboekenweek (Children's Book Week) or author visits – can increase impact. These occasions present a concrete reason to engage with other local players to explore the feasibility of organising joint events. Recurring annual events provide an opportunity to start conversations early and distribute workload more evenly.

5. New target audiences

Audience creation and expansion are major challenges for retailers. The books and publishing industry faces the challenges of audience shifts, the role of the new generation and new target audiences.

Partnerships open up possibilities in this respect, be that through collaborating with players who already have the requisite reach, sharing target audiences or increasing collective impact. The Young Adult books events are an example of collaboration between bookshops and libraries in recent years.

6. Explore your local network

Evidence shows that collaborations often begin with a brief introductory meeting. Explore your local network and reach out. Establish what you can offer: book sales at events, facilities, valuable connections in the book industry or something else altogether.