

# INSIDE



## A GLIMPSE INTO THE READING CULTURE IN SG

At Book Kinokuniya, a.k.a. Singapore's largest bookstore, I set out to find magazines for a school news project. Amidst the expansive aisles of this literary haven, it struck me—this might just be the perfect place to offer a glimpse into Singapore's reading environment.

*Customers: why are you in a bookstore on a workday afternoon?*



*Fantasy, one of the most popular genres in store.*

When I approached to one customer browsing around the bookshelves, I asked this question. He said, “well because I figured I need to read more.” At Kinokuniya, eighty percent of the customer population appears to be adults. The primary motivation for their presence, whether shopping or reading, is the desire to enhance their knowledge through literature. While only a few customers admit to shopping for gifts and stationery. When asked about their preference for physical books over digital ones, Tan, 45, smiled and said, “I like holding the book.” Technically, physical books allow for note-taking and quick information checks by flipping pages. Mentally, readers find it easier to stay focused without the disturbance of unexpected or unwanted information popping out of the screen. Furthermore, in the interviews, all customers suggested that shopping in a physical bookstore significantly enhances the reading experience. They feel that online book-shopping websites cannot provide an equally immersive environment, preventing them from having a forward preview of the content. “You don’t want to commit to buying when you are not sure,” says Tan.





*Had a conversation with the department manager.*

## Employees: have you noticed...?

TO GATHER MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PEOPLE'S READING HABITS, I'D LOVE TO HEAR PERSPECTIVES FROM EMPLOYEES WHO ARE HERE IN THE SHOP EVERY DAY. HERE ARE THE CONVERSATIONS I HAD WITH A DEPARTMENT MANAGER RESPONSIBLE FOR DISPLAYS, HANDLING, AND STOCKING:

**Q:** Normally how many people would come to Kinokuniya for a day?

**A:** "It really depends on whether it's weekday or weekend and holidays, but averagely 8-12 thousand."

**Q:** Wow that is a lot. Out of these people, how many of them would actually purchase?

**A:** "I would say a quarter. I wish."

**Q:** Is there more female or male buyers?

**A:** "(laugh) I haven't really noticed this, so i would say quite equally."

**Q:** Have you noticed the long-standing trend where people lean towards reading digital books or shopping for books online? What makes the physical bookstore irreplaceable?

**A:** "Yes, this is the case. However, we offer the unique experience. The tangible feel of a book, the ability to browse through physical shelves. It's about more than just buying a book; it's an immersive and enriching experience that online platforms struggle to replicate."



*The best sellers.*

## Employees: how is feel working here?

Working in a giant bookstore like Kinokuniya seems to be a pleasant job. Employees express contentment with the bookstore's atmosphere, where they experience a less competitive yet fulfilling work environment compared to other jobs. "Because most of the time we are coping with books," Kwa, who works for corporate sales department of Kinokuniya says, "If you work for one publisher, you sell that publisher's books. But if you work for Kinokuniya, you sell all sorts of books."



*Displays in store.*

However, when asked about the future, employees express reservations. Although they appreciate their current roles, they are always on the lookout for opportunities with more attractive salaries. "It's always no harm to look," says Kwa with a smile.