The Differentiation of Uppsala Independent Bookstores Based on Servicescape Theory

Jingya Lu and Zhuofan Wu
Abstract

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The study examines how independent bookstores differentiated themselves from other bookstore retailers, to satisfy their customer needs and then to achieve customer engagement. The research proposes two questions as following: How do independent bookstores in Uppsala differentiate themselves in the book retailing industry? How do customers engage with independent bookstores? In order to answer these questions, qualitative research method was employed in this study. This research took all of the seven independent bookstores in Uppsala as a sample, interviewed owner/managers of each of them, and collected 85 questionnaires from their customers on the basis of servicescape theory. The researchers employed the approach of qualitative data analysis. The analysis of the findings was based on Raffaelli’s 3C’s model, servicescape theory, and customer engagement theory. The conclusion of this study illustrates the actions of independent bookstores of differentiating themselves in the six dimensions of servicescape theory and indicates that both independent bookstore and their customers lay emphasis on the differentiation of functionality and employees. Furthermore, the customer engagement could be enhanced through the differentiation.

Key Words: Independent Bookstore, Servicescape, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Engagement.
Popular Science Summary

Recently, the independent bookstores around the world are facing increasingly serious market conditions, for example, competition from other book retailers, increasing eBook sales, reductions in institutional budgets, and publishers selling directly to the consumer. An issue of what efforts the existing independent bookstores took to react to this trend arouse the interest of the researchers. Therefore, this study attempts to explore how independent bookstores keep running their business in such a difficult situation. To achieve this goal, the study examines what independent bookstores in Uppsala did to distinguish themselves from other bookstores, to retain their customers, and to create value together with their customers.

The conclusion presents the actions of independent bookstores to differentiate themselves from other bookstore retailers in terms of the physical service environment and the service staff qualities. The result indicates that both independent bookstores and their customers considered functions and employees as critical issues for the development of independent bookstores. Furthermore, the independent bookstores could build and improve the relationship with their customers through the enhancement of the physical environment and the service staff qualities.

The result of this research is important for the independent bookstores, the book retailing industry, and the society. From the perspective of independent bookstores, firstly, the conclusion could provide inspiration or guidance about their actions to satisfy their customers and keep running. Secondly, the questionnaire used in this study could serve as a reference for other independent bookstores to conduct customer investigation and to gain a better understanding of their customers. From the view of the whole book retailing industry, the existence of independent bookstores could ensure the diversity of the industry, promote positive competition in industry, and encourage the book retailing industry to maintain dynamic and innovative. Regarding as the social aspect, independent bookstores act as the cultural participant to offer a different purchasing point for customers and to provide places for cultural communication. Independent bookstores could also be viewed as social connectors to produce well-being for the community which the bookstores locate in.
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1. Introduction

Book retailing is considered to be an industry with both cultural and economic value and independent booksellers are regarded as guardians of book culture (Jen, 2010). As one of the players in the book retailing industry, the independent bookstores are facing a shrinking market share and decreasing sales due to competition in recent years. Inspired by this situation, Raffaelli (2017) proposed a 3C’s model about the differentiation of independent bookstores, which contains three dimensions: community, curation, and convening. In order to explore whether there are more dimensions could be differentiated, the researchers introduced the servicescape theory (Bitner, 1992) to analyze the physical environment and the service staff qualities of independent bookstores, which could be viewed as a potential complement of the 3C’s model. Thus, the researchers established a theoretical framework based on 3C’s model of Raffaelli (2017), servicescape, customer engagement cycle and matrix for this study. With the assistance of the framework, this study attempts to examine how independent bookstores differentiated themselves from other bookstore retailers, to satisfy their customer needs and then to achieve customer engagement.

1.1 Problematization

Books have been viewed as having an important function in society for a long time (Jen, 2010). They cultivate and disseminate ideas (Young, 2007) and were considered to have social and cultural value. Thus, book retailing is viewed as an industry with both cultural and economic value and independent booksellers are treated as guardians of book culture (Jen, 2010). However, books retailers perceived that purchasing patterns are changing and they need to think about some solutions to address this issue in response to new entertainment media and retail trends (Young, 2007; Jen, 2010). Independent bookstores are facing difficult market conditions which include rising costs, particularly rents; increased competition from retailers such as the chain bookstores, discount department stores, shopping centers, supermarkets and online retailers; increasing eBook sales; reductions in institutional budgets; publishers selling directly to consumer (Gemma & O’Brien, 2016). According to The Digital Reader (2018), the bookstore sales over the world declined 37% from $17.02 billion in 2006 to $10.73 billion in 2017, which shows the whole bookstore sales has declined for about 26% in recent years. Similarly, the research of the situation of independent bookstores in some countries and regions showed that almost all independent booksellers have experienced a decline during decades. Independent bookstores, as minor actors in the market, are facing a turbulent challenge and need to seek for some solutions to maintain the current places, or at least to survive.

Being enlightened by this phenomenon, Raffaelli (2017) proposed a 3C’s model about the differentiation of independent bookstores, which contains three dimensions: community, curation, and convening. Aiming for explore whether there are more dimensions could be differentiated, the researchers introduced the servicescape theory to analyze the physical environment and the service staff qualities of independent
bookstores, which could be viewed as a potential complement of the 3C’s model. This study is conducted to examine how independent bookstores differentiated themselves from other bookstore retailers, to satisfy their customer needs and then to achieve customer engagement. The definition of servicescape refers to ‘the combination of the physical environment and service staff qualities’ (Bitner, 1992), and this theory is employed as a tool to formulate the research.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the research is to examine how independent bookstores differentiated themselves from other bookstore retailers, to satisfy their customer needs and then to achieve customer engagement. The actions about differentiation will be divided into six dimensions of servicescape theory, connected back to the 3C’s model, and analyzed on the basis of customer engagement theory. One task of this study is to compare the offering provided by the independent booksellers and the value perceived by customers and then to explore whether the independent bookstores’ attempt of differentiation is perceived by customers. Another task is to examine how customers engage with the independent bookstores based on customer engagement theory.

After accomplishing these tasks mentioned previously, the independent bookstores could understand their customers better, differentiate themselves in the bookstore retailing industry, provide proper and higher customer value, satisfy the customers, and subsequently gain customer engagement. Thus, the research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

RQ1. How do independent bookstores differentiate themselves in the book retailing industry?
RQ2. How do customers engage with independent bookstores?

Since both researchers are students in Uppsala University, this study chose Uppsala city as the empirical site for exploring these research questions.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

The overall structure of the study is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One, the introduction, presents the context of independent bookstores, the theories used in the related study field, and puts forward two research questions according to the problematization. Chapter Two is the background part of the thesis, which introduces the whole book retailing industry, the situation of independent bookstore all over the world, and the book market in Sweden. Chapter Three is the section of literature review, in this part, case studies related to independent bookstores and empirical studies using the servicescape theory are reviewed. The reviewed literature provides inspiration and reference for this research. Chapter Four is the theoretical aspect of this study, which gives detailed explanation of the servicescape theory, the “3C’s” model, and customer engagement theory. Chapter Five presents the methodology used
in this research, which is qualitative research method. From the perspective of data
collection, both semi-structured interviews and qualitative questionnaires are
employed. On the other hand, qualitative data analysis method (thematic analysis) is
used in the process of data analysis. Chapter Six and Seven are the sections of
findings, analysis, and discussion. The position of customers, the actions taken by
independent bookstores to differentiate themselves, and the servicescape elements that
influence customer satisfaction most are discovered and discussed. The last chapter of
this study is conclusion. In this chapter, the previous findings are connected back to
the related theories. Besides, the limitation, implication, and the direction of future
research are separately illustrated.
2. Background

2.1 Book Retailing Industry

According to the worldwide bookstores retailing industry report, this industry contains several sub-industries, which are book stores (general), foreign books, religious books, children’s books, college book stores, and comic books (Barnes Reports, 2018).

In recent years, online retailers have increased their market share. Despite the growth of e-commerce, increasing store closings, and ominous media predictions of a brick-and-mortar (physical) “retail apocalypse”, there are still possibilities for growth by independent bookstores (Publishers Weekly 2018).

There are multiple book retailers from which people can purchase a book but not all of them are equally important to the book retailing industry (Jen, 2010). There are two main categories, which are physical retailers and online retailers. Moreover, each of the main categories has some sub-categories, which is shown in Figure 1. The bookstore retailing industry, which will be studied in this research, is included in book retailing industry.

![Figure 1. Different types of book retailers](Source: Jen, 2010.)
2.2 Independent Bookstore

2.2.1 Introduction and Definition of Independent Bookstore

In this research, an independent bookstore (or an independent bookshop) is defined as a privately-owned company that receives more than half of its income from the sale of books, and the owner(s) are able to shape the bookstore’s cultural identity is a critical feature of both independent bookstores in this study and independent bookstores overall. Furthermore, the independent bookstore is neither a franchise nor offers franchises of its own (although retailers with multiple outlets can be included) and sells books directly to the end user (Jen, 2010).

According to data of Bookseller Association, American Bookseller Association and other related associations, independent bookstores over the world have experienced a significant decline because of the rise of digital technology. Laties (2005) mentioned that one of the main advantages of independent bookstores is to offer a unique assortment of titles for display in their stores, which could enable independent bookstores to have the freedom to curate and recommend books of less well-known authors. This could simultaneously eliminate the phenomenon of homogeneous inventory in physical bookstores. Jen (2010) also argues that independent bookstores play a significant role in providing a point of difference for customers, which could provide competitive advantage to the bookstores and thus encourage the book retailing industry to remain dynamic and innovative. Moreover, Miller (2007) claims that handselling is a kind of ability to match the right book with the right book buyer, which is a sought-after skill for book retailers, although technology has rationalized this process, and computer records are currently used to collect and collate data on buying patterns and preferences of their customers.

2.2.2 Independent Bookstores in Different Countries

In order to get an overview about independent bookstores worldwide over decades, the researchers chose some main countries and regions for investigating their situation and figuring out a common trend of their development.

2.2.2.1 The Independent Bookstore in the UK

According to Booksellers Association (BA), in 2014, the number of independent bookstores in the UK had fallen below 1000. Between February 2013 and February 2014, the number of had fallen from 1028 to 987 (The Bookseller, 2014). By November 2015, the number of the independent bookstores had fallen to 895, however, the chief executive of BA claimed that the rate of decline was slowing (The Bookseller, 2015). Moreover, according to the Publishers Association (2015), physical sales of books and journals increased by 0.4 percent from £2,748 billion in 2014 to £2,760 billion in 2015, while digital sales fell by 1.6 percent to £554 million in 2015. An article of BBC News (2015) claimed that although it initially seemed that the rise of e-books gave an existential threat to publishers and physical booksellers,
unlike the expectations, the physical book is still struggling and surviving in the battle with e-books.

Also, data presented by the BA has shown that in 2018 the number of independent bookstores rose by 15 to 883, despite the impact of both chain bookstores and online book retailers. There were 1,894 independent bookstores across the UK in 1995 but in 2016 that number decreased significantly to 867. Moreover, the data of 2017 presented the obvious declining trend may have been changed, as the number increased by one shop (Loughrey, 2019). This indicates that there still be a place for physical books as well as independent bookstores in the UK.

2.2.2.2 The Independent Bookstore in the USA
The number of brick-and-mortar bookstores fell almost year by year from 1992 to 2014. The US Census Bureau reported 13,136 bookstore establishments in 1992, consisting of small independent bookstores and larger chain bookstores. As of 2014, the number of bookstores released by the Census Bureau survey had decreased 48%, which was 6,888. According to the American Booksellers Association (ABA), the number of independent bookstores began to decrease in the early 1990s due to competition from superstores like Borders and Barnes & Noble, and online booksellers such as Amazon, which was established as an online bookstore in 1994 (Humanities Indicators, 2016). However, according to figures from Statista, the number of independent bookstores across the USA experienced a steady growth from 1,651 in 2009 to 2,470 in 2018, which were separately operated by 1,401 and 1,835 independent bookselling companies (Statista, 2019). This showed a rise of American independent bookstores.

2.2.2.3 The Independent Bookstore in China
According to the statement of Yang (2002), the 1990s witnessed the development of Chinese private booksellers in terms of quantity and quality, and their numbers increased from just over 10,000 in 1987 to 37,374 in 2000, almost four times as many as Xinhua’s outlets. Liu (2018) claimed that the 2000s was a turning point for Chinese private booksellers. It was in this decade that after more than 20 years of rapid growth, private booksellers began to decline. Liu also estimated that the proportion of the market share of Xinhua (state-owned bookseller), online and private booksellers may become 4:5:1 with the steady increase in online book sales, which indicates an obvious decline of the private booksellers but also implies that there still remains space for Chinese independent book retailing industry.

2.2.2.4 Common Trends of the Development of Independent Bookstores Worldwide
Based on the previous investigation of the situation of independent bookstores in some main countries and regions, a common trend could be conducted, which is almost all of the independent booksellers have experienced a shrink during the past
decades but a resurgence could not be ignored in some certain countries like UK and USA. Although the market share of Chinese independent bookstores has been narrowed down continuously, there remains space for them to survive in the marketplace.

2.3 Book Market in Sweden

2.3.1 History and Current Situation of Swedish Bookselling

During the past years, bookstores were the main participants in the book market. For a long period in Sweden, the book trade was crucial for book-related activities and often combined with publishing, transporting, printing, collating and/or bookbinding businesses with bookselling. Wholesalers, retailers and other distributors were main characters of the book trade circuit from the 16th century to the start of the 21st century (Murray & Squires, 2013). However, because of the appearance of e-books, the online book sales, the deregulation of the book market in some countries, and changes in reading habits, the book trade was influenced and traditional bookstores experienced an increasing pressure (Maceviciute et al., 2015). In the recent past, Swedish bookstores represented the stable ability of resilience to the pressure, which is due to the long bookselling tradition (Maceviciute et al., 2015).

Before 1954 in Sweden, booksellers were dependent on the Swedish Publishers Association. The publisher provided books for booksellers for fixed prices and didn’t ask for payment for the copies returned to the publisher. In this way, the booksellers were quite sure that they could get new titles without problems and won’t face fierce competition in certain areas (Yrlid, 1975). In 1954, the fixed prices system was abandoned but the book market got an exemption from that. In 1970, the deregulation of book market happened in Sweden, the control over the booksellers disappeared and that enabled the Swedish booksellers to set the prices by themselves. That was a great threat to old, family-owned bookstores but it gave book clubs and other types of bookstores opportunities (Maceviciute et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Types of Retailers

There are multiple participating book retailers in Sweden, which including the physical bookstore, internet bookstore, grocery, and digital subscription services, which is depicted in detail in Table 1. Most of the physical bookstores are chain bookstores, there are only 15 independent bookstores up to 2016 (Nielsen, 2018).

Different from the physical book industry in other countries which was challenged by the e-book industry, in Sweden, the digital surge is being powered by audiobooks (TNPS, 2018). There are few self-publishers involved in the digital subscription, which is almost monopolized by Storytel, the biggest streaming service in Sweden (TNPS, 2018). Storytel has strict criteria about the entrance of publishers and very
few independent authors can afford to produce their own audiobooks without the cooperation with Storytel (TNPS, 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Bookstore</th>
<th>Akademibokhandeln; The majority of stores in the JB group; Pocketshop; the majority of Ugglan stores; independent stores.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet Bookstore</td>
<td>Adlibris; Akademibokhandeln.se; Bokus; Cdon; The Children’s Book Club; Bonniers Book Clubs; Massolite Book Clubs; Norstedts Book Clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>Axfood; Bergendahls; Coop; Ica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Subscription Services (Listened/ read E-books in subscription services, differ from sales of sold copy)</td>
<td>Bookbeat; Nextory; Storytel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1. Different Participating Book Retailers in Sweden**


### 2.3.3 Market Share of Different Channels

According to Statista (2018), the book industry in Sweden is experiencing a shift to online retailing. The sales revenue generated in physical bookstores decreased in recent years, while sales through online bookshops increased. Through the shift to online retailing, book publishers are continuing to generate their income via online channels. As of 2017, almost 27 percent of sales revenue from Swedish publishers came from bookstores, which is a fall of roughly 3% compared to the previous year. However, sales revenue from online stores grew by 1%. Figure 2 and Table 2 indicate the change in sales for different retailing channels between 2016 and 2017. TNPS (2018) also indicates that compared to the same period of 2017, in the first half of 2018, the digital subscription services increased by 36.9%, internet bookshop increased by 7.5%, while the physical bookshop and grocery trade declined by 5.2% and 5.8%. Almost four out of ten books in Sweden “sold” via digital subscriptions (TNPS, 2018).
Figure 2. Sales in 2016 and 2017 broken down by channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chanel</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Bookshop</td>
<td>1402730</td>
<td>1339367</td>
<td>-4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Bookshop</td>
<td>1950233</td>
<td>2046932</td>
<td>+5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMCG (Fast-moving consumer goods)</td>
<td>300380</td>
<td>266662</td>
<td>-11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in ordinary data</td>
<td>3653343</td>
<td>3652961</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Subscription Services</td>
<td>339088</td>
<td>508830</td>
<td>+50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- E-books</td>
<td>18156</td>
<td>35747</td>
<td>+96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Digital Sound Books</td>
<td>320932</td>
<td>473083</td>
<td>+47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (including digital subscription services)</td>
<td>3992431</td>
<td>4161791</td>
<td>+4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Sales in 2016 and 2017 broken down by channel
3. Literature Review

3.1 Independent Bookstores in Sydney

According to Jen’s article about the independent bookshops in Sydney (2010), the trend of the demise of the independent bookstore in Australia is exaggerated. Jen (2010) discusses the book as a commodity, the role and position of independent bookshops through literature review. Miller (2006) argues that chain bookshops offer a very different experience and service in book purchasing, and their offerings like inventory, design, and function are becoming more homogeneous and standardized. Although the emerging technology of data science has already figured out the buying patterns and preferences of customers, Miller claimed that handselling is still a kind of popular competence to match the right book with the right customer. Jen (2010) developed strategies for independent bookstores which includes four aspects: location, design, inventory, and service, based on Miller’s findings.

Jen (2010) uses semi-structured interviews, field observation, and longitudinal statistical analysis to explore the Australian book industry. The interviews are performed with 30 general independent bookshop owners and 3 managers in the greater Sydney region. Jen examines the strategies employed by independent booksellers to differentiate themselves from other types of booksellers. In addition, the author claims that the independent bookshops have recognized the importance of providing a pleasurable shopping experience to the customers instead of just providing the product itself.

Through the review of this article, the researchers recognized the significance of providing personalized customer service and designing unique bookshops, which can distinguish independent bookstores from chains and then carve a niche in the marketplace to survive. However, this study is lack of the theoretical support, more literature about theory would be reviewed.

3.2 The 3C’s Model of Independent Bookstores’ Differentiation

The phenomenon of the resurgence of independent bookstores around the world appealed to Ryan Raffaelli, an assistant professor in Harvard Business School. Although some mature organizations have significant advantages when compared with new companies, many also find that it’s difficult to adapt to radical technological change (Gilbert, 2006; Kappor & Klueter, 2015). The research direction of Ryan Raffaelli is “technology reemergence”, he began his study with the Swiss watch industry, which collectively reinvented itself and survived in the threat of digital watches (Harvard Business School, 2017). In 2012, he began to discover how independent bookstores kept themselves alive and even thrive under the press of ebooks and online retailers. At the end of the study, Ryan Raffaelli proposed the “3Cs” model of independent bookseller’s resurgence: community, curation, and convening.
The combination of these three aspects served as important bottom-up processes that reframed the independent bookselling industry and distinct independent bookselling from brick-and-mortar bookselling and online bookselling (Raffaelli, 2017). Raffaelli’s (2017) study provides theoretical support in the field of differentiation of independent bookstores, which could be linked to the conclusion of Jen’s (2010) article.

3.3 An Empirical Study About Servicescape Theory

A case study about the luxury hotels performed by Carol et al. (2015) which related to the servicescape (or service environment) employed semi-structured interview and a parallel questionnaire for researching. Carol’s research gave some hints on employing the servicescape theory in the case study of independent bookstore. It also has some guiding significance in applying the servicescape theory into practice and in conducting the qualitative methods of this study.

The qualitative research aimed for determining whether luxury hotel managers and customers have the same perception of the service quality and satisfaction and whether there is a gap between services provided by luxury hotels and the way guests experience them. The authors used a conceptual framework proposed by Walls et al. (2011), including luxury, service quality and satisfaction as the primary dimensions for study. The researchers adopted semi-structured interviews with luxury hotel customers of five-star hotels in Taiwan and adopt a questionnaire for hotel general managers. Then they perform qualitative analysis to obtain both the luxury hotel managers’ and guests’ understanding of the definitions and perceptions of luxury, service quality and satisfaction. The research is based on the theoretical background of luxury, service quality, customer satisfaction, marketing communications, and branding. The researchers develop a conceptual framework including luxury, service quality and satisfaction as the primary dimensions for exploration. The results of this analysis claim that the managers and guests use different words to describe luxury, service quality and satisfaction, but they don’t have substantive disagreements on their understanding. Therefore, luxury, service quality, and satisfaction were closely related in the minds of both the general managers and customers and they are not independent constructs.
4. Theoretical Framework

In the section of theoretical framework, Raffaelli’s 3C’s model, the servicescape theory, and customer engagement theory will be introduced in this section.

Firstly, Raffaelli provided a 3C’s model related to independent bookstores, which is fundamental and acts as a starting point for this study. The model focuses on related three factors (community, curation, and convening) about the differentiation of independent bookstores, the combination of these three aspects served as important processes that reframed the industry of independent bookstores and differentiated independent bookstores from other bookstore retailers (Raffaelli, 2017), which will be beneficial for the development of independent bookstores. Secondly, the definition of servicescape refers to ‘the combination of the physical environment and service staff qualities’ (Bitner, 1992), which is suitable for the situation of independent bookstores. Thus, the servicescape theory is employed as a tool to formulate the research. Moreover, two factors of curation and convening in the 3C’s model are connected with two dimensions of functionality and cultural atmospheric of servicescape theory. Finally, customer engagement theory contains customer engagement cycle and customer engagement matrix, which also have connection with the servicescape theory. Customer satisfaction is the end stage of the servicescape theory, and it is the intermediate stage of the customer engagement cycle. In addition, the transactional customer of customer engagement matrix could achieve the customer engagement with the help of actions in differentiation.

4.1 The Theory of Servicescape

4.1.1 The Development and Definition of Servicescape Theory

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) are the pioneers of examining servicescape and its impact on human behavior. They developed a model about the relationship between servicescape and consumer behavioral intentions. The consumers’ perception of various servicescape induce different emotions and thereby drive them to perform either approach behaviors or avoidance behaviors. Bitner’s (1992) research is an extension of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) model. According to Bitner (1992), servicescape is defined as “the design of the physical environment and service staff qualities that characterize the context which houses the service encounter, which elicits internal reactions from customers leading to the display of approach or avoidance behaviors”. Bitner (1992) also identified that servicescape is made up of three environmental dimensions: (1) ambient conditions, (2) spatial layout/functionality and (3) signs, symbols, and artifacts. Hightower (1997) claimed that servicescape is “everything that is physically present to the consumer during the service encounter.”

Based on Bitner’s (1992) theoretical model of servicescape and Wakefield and Blodgett’s (1996) complement of another element which is the cleanliness of the
facility, a more comprehensive model of perceived servicescape quality was established. The previous study mainly explains servicescape as physical components of the consumption environment. However, according to Arnould et al. (1998), Heide et al. (2007), Lloyd & Chris (2007), and Dong & Siu (2013), the concept of servicescape could also include humanitarian aspects. Lloyd and Chris (2008) developed a global configuration of the servicescape which includes four aspects (two for physical aspects which are ambient conditions and design factors, another two for social aspects which are staff behavior and staff image). Arnould et al. (1998) defined two types of servicescape, which are substantive staging servicescape (including background atmospherics and the physical facilities) and communicative staging servicescape (including employee service, employee image, and the cultural elements) (Dong & Siu, 2013).

As the research subject of this study is independent bookstores, which also includes elements of both physical service environment and humanitarian aspects, servicescape theory is suitable for this study.

4.1.2 The Significance of Servicescape Theory
Because services are intangible in nature, they are difficult to be assessed (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005). While the servicescape has a great influence on the customer experience and could help to facilitate customers’ experience assessments (Lee et al., 2017). According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2004), servicescape has strategic importance and plays multiple roles in the marketing of otherwise intangible services because of its tangible dominance nature. Servicescape could wrap the provided service as a package, help to convey service features and facilitate customers’ purchase decision substantially. Better design of servicescape could bring a smoother flow of service activities for both customers and employees. Furthermore, a unique servicescape enables differentiation when compared to competitors (Shashikala & Suresh, 2018).

4.2 The Framework of Servicescape Model

4.2.1 Introduction of the Framework
Based on the previous literature review, we construct a conceptual framework of the elements related to servicescape. In this study, customer perceived value evaluation was assumed to be influenced by the substantive staging of the servicescape (the functional and mechanical clues) and the communicative staging of the servicescape (the human clues) (Dong & Siu, 2013). Subsequently, the customer perceived value would influence customer satisfaction about the servicescape. Figure 3 shows the framework of the servicescape model.
4.2.2 Two Staging of Servicescape

4.2.2.1 Substantive Staging

Substantive staging of the servicescape refers to the physical creations of the service environment (Arnould et al., 1998). Mattila and Wirtz (2001) confirmed that in the retailing industry there is a relationship between the physical environment and the business outcomes such as firm performance, behavioral intentions, and consumers’ emotional responses. Furthermore, the physical dimension (substantive staging of servicescape) encompass manufactured, observable or measurable stimuli controlled by the firm to facilitate (or constrain) customer and employee actions, therefore, it is easy for managers to comprehend (Zeithaml et al., 2009). For this framework, there are four aspects of the substantive staging: Ambient Conditions, Functionality, Design Factors and Cleanliness.

**Ambient Conditions**

Ambient conditions refer to the background of environmental stimuli or atmospherics that affect human sensations (Grayson & McNeil, 2009; Turley & Milliman, 2000). These stimuli or atmospherics include auditory (e.g. music, noises (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Morin et al., 2007)), ambient (e.g. temperature (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005)) and olfactory (e.g. aroma (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001)) elements. Cozy ambient conditions...
could encourage customers to spend more time in the servicescape (Morrin & Ratneshwar, 2003).

**Functionality**
Functionality is defined as an ability of each item to facilitate the accomplishment of customers’ and employees’ objectives (Norhidayah et al., 2015) and to improve and innovate consumer support in an ergonomic manner (Aubert-Gamet, 1997).

**Design Factors**
In this study, design factors refer to spatial layout and signs, symbols, and artifacts. The spatial layout represents the arrangement and relationship of objects, for example, physical machinery, equipment (e.g. electronic), furniture and service areas that needed to deliver the services (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002; Bloch, 1995). According to Siu et al. (2012), a well-designed layout could enhance the perception of customers and increase the percentage of repetitive customers (Liu & Jang, 2009). Sign, symbols, and artifacts refer to physical signals that managers employ in servicescapes to communicate general meaning, which including the rules of behavior, the firm image, and rules of an organization (Bitner, 1992), about the place to consumers (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). Firms could use sign, symbol, and artifacts to create positive aesthetic impressions (Zeithaml et al., 2009), influence customer intention (Rosenbaum, 2005), and increase the quality of services provided (Norhidayah et al., 2015).

**Cleanliness**
There is some research that includes “cleanliness” in the category “ambient conditions”. For this study, according to Wakefield and Blodgett (1996), cleanliness is understood as an independent element under “substantive staging” of servicescape. Cleanliness could be defined as the absence of dirt, which including dust, stains and bad smells (Lloyd and Chris, 2008). Cleanliness is considered as an important factor in the service environment and was highlighted by lots of literature (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996; Berto, 2005).

### 4.2.2.2 Communicative Staging
The communicative staging of the servicescape refers to how the service environment is presented and interpreted. It contains the transmission activities both directly related to service delivery and that exceeding the instrumental context (Arnould et al., 1998). Under the occasion of independent bookstores, when customers enter a service setting, sometimes they will ask the employees for help or for complaining. For this study, communicative staging includes three aspects: employee behavior, employee image, and cultural atmospheres.
Employee Behavior
Employee behavior is defined as “an employee’s tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context” (Brown et al., 2002). For a customer-oriented organization, both internal collaboration and customer familiarity are important (Deshpande et al., 1993; Noble et al., 2002). Therefore, customer orientation is “an individual-level construct that is central to a service organization’s ability to be market-oriented” (Brown et al., 2002) Another aspect of employee behavior is “credibility”, which is defined as the degree of a source that perceived to possess the needed skill and could be trustworthy to provide proper opinion (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971; Ohanian, 1990). Also, customers believe that employees representing the organization and in contrary, well-designed service environment some kind means more credible service staff to customers (Bitner, 1992).

Employee Image
For this study, an employee image contains two factors: competence and physical attractiveness. Competence is defined as “the expertise of service staff derived from knowledge of the subject” (Goldsmith et al., 2000). The “Curation” aspect of “3C” model proposed by Raffaelli (2017) also relates to this factor. Customers depend on the service staff to solve their problems during the consumption processes and the ability of salespeople is considered to be the highest ranked issues of importance to customers (Sharma & Stafford, 2000). Furthermore, the competence of service employee is important for an organization to gain competitive advantage among the competitors because it is inimitable (Bogner et al., 1999). Physical attractiveness is “the perception of the physical characteristics of an individual or group, race or type of people, as attractive or beautiful.” (Lloyd and Chris, 2008). The physical attractiveness could enhance customers’ service experience (Baker, 1987), provide the motivation for customers’ approach behavior (Bitner, 1992) and some kind represents the organization’s image (Hutton & Richardson, 1995).

Cultural Atmospherics
Cultural elements could be important in many types of service settings, especially when customers expect to interact comprehensively with the setting (Dong & Siu, 2013). Cultural atmospherics are substantially designed to influence customers’ psychological feelings about the service setting and in turn, influence their service experience (Dong & Siu, 2013). Also, the “convening” aspect of the “3C” model mentioned before is corresponding to this element.

4.2.3 Customer Perceived Value
After the accomplishment of servicescape dimensions, the customer perceived value could be produced subsequently. According to Zeithaml (1988), customer perceived value is described as the customer’s overall appraisal of a product based on perceptions of what is perceived and what is given. On the basis of this definition, Siu et al. (2012) add two personal factors which are perceived value and value-for-money
consideration. Perceived sacrifice refers to a customer’s perceived non-monetary costs related to a consumption experience, which includes psychic, convenience, and time or effort costs. Value-for-money consideration refers to a customer’s overall assessment of the perceived value of service as worth the money. In terms of previous literature review, the definition of perceived value is the customer’s overall evaluation of the net worth of the service, which is based on the customer’s assessment of what is received (benefits provided by the service), and what is given (costs or sacrifice in acquiring and using the service) (Ryu et al., 2008; Hellier et al., 2003).

Customer perceived value could be defined as “a ratio between customer’s value received and cost experienced when purchasing and/or using service/product” (Aiste, et al., 2015) or as a multidimensional concept, which generally includes three dimensions: functional value, emotional value and social value (Virvilaite et al., 2015). While the number of dimensions and their expression also depend on the research context, research field, and researcher’s aim (Aiste, et al., 2015). Functional value is related to the extent to which a product or service is useful due to its characteristics, desired functions, reliability, performance quality, effectiveness, etc. Emotional value could be described by the extent to which a product creates appropriate feelings and emotions for the customer. Cengiz and Kirkbir (2007) claimed that emotional value consists of novelty, control, and hedonics. Social value means relational or network benefits, connectedness, personal interaction, developing trust or commitment, and responsiveness (Aiste, et al., 2015). Customer perceived value can lead to customer satisfaction, which in turn is the main antecedent of the establishment of long-term customer relationships (Egan, 2011).

4.3 The “3Cs” Factors of Independent Bookstores’ Resurgence

The phenomenon of the resurgence of independent bookstores around the world appealed to Ryan Raffaelli, an assistant professor in Harvard Business School. Although some mature organizations have significant advantages when compared with new companies, many also find that it’s difficult to adapt to radical technological change (Gilbert, 2006; Kappor & Klueter, 2015). The research direction of Ryan Raffaelli is “technology reemergence”, he began his study with the Swiss watch industry, which collectively reinvented itself and survived in the threat of digital watches (Harvard Business School, 2017). In 2012, he began to discover how independent bookstores kept themselves alive and even thrive under the press of e-books and online retailers. At the end of the study, Ryan Raffaelli proposed the “3Cs” model of independent bookseller’s resurgence: community, curation, and convening. The combination of these three aspects served as important bottom-up processes that reframed the independent bookselling industry and distinct independent bookselling from brick-and-mortar bookselling and online bookselling (Raffaelli, 2017).
4.3.1 Community
According to Raffaelli (2017), the resurgence was facilitated by several bottom-up processes related to social movement emerged from independent booksellers. From the mid-2000s, independent booksellers began to build a network of small business owners, investors, policymakers and citizens focused on creating local economies, which also could be called “localism”. The independent bookstore owners were the pioneers of the localism and that encouraged others to form alliances with them to make a community where everyone could share values. Moreover, independent bookstore owners encouraged the consumers to support the local communities by shopping from the neighborhood businesses, in this way, independent business won some customers back from online retailers (Harvard Business School, 2017).

4.3.2 Curation
Raffaelli (2017) also found independent booksellers could have some specific practices to distinguish themselves from other actors in the bookselling industry. Independent booksellers began to focus on the “curation” of inventory. They develop a theme and then select what is going to be included and how it is to be presented. They could also use a part of the bookstore to arrange a thematic exhibition to present specific authors or books in the context of a chosen narrative. The curation of inventory enables independent booksellers to provide a more personal and customized service to book buyers during the purchase processes (Raffaelli, 2017). Rather than only recommending bestsellers, they could develop personal relationships with customers by helping them to find some special items (Harvard Business School, 2017).

4.3.3 Convening
Another finding of Raffaelli (2017) is that independent booksellers adopted practices to reframe their role in the community as a “convener”, which could also enhance their presence in the community. They began to host activities, for example, author-reader meetings, book signing events, book release, etc. (Raffaelli, 2017). The bookstores could be recognized as a center for gathering people together.
4.4 Customer engagement

4.4.1 The evolution of customer engagement theory

From the perspective of marketing, customer engagement has been considered as activities of the customers toward the company (Kumar et al. 2010; Brodie et al. 2011; Vivek et al. 2012).

Pansari and Kumar (2017) claim that customer management has evolved from the marketing focus on customer transactions to relationship marketing perspective over time, as shown in Figure 4. Kumar (2013) also declares that it’s not enough for companies to satisfy customers only by providing proper product/service because they are homogeneous, and competition is intense. To better satisfy customers, firms need to engage customers in multiple ways beyond product/service purchase. Until the 1990s, the measurement of evaluating the influence of customer transactions on companies’ profitability was past customer value, share-of-wallet, recency, frequency, and monetary value.

The commitment trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) laid the foundation for relationship marketing. According to this theory, the main goal of companies is to build positive relationships with customers through establishing commitment and trust with the customers. This means that two constructs of relationship marketing are trust and commitment and the aim of relationship marketing is to satisfy the customers in enduring relationships and make them loyal as well as profitable (Berry &
Parasuraman, 1991). The relationship with the customer had been restricted to customer purchases at this stage.

However, the relationship has evolved with upgrading technology, changing customer needs, and the capabilities of the company over time. Customers have easier access to the company and a larger platform to share experiences and opinions due to the advent of social media. On the other hand, profitable loyalty and satisfaction are not enough when considering how to maintain the long-term relationships with customers in a profitable manner and taking the customers’ lifetime value into account at the same time (Kumar et al, 2008). Pansari and Kumar (2017) ascertain that customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability should be also evolved to a higher level of desired differentiation and of sustainable competitive advantage. Thus, the core objective of companies evolved from the focus on relationship marketing to gaining customer engagement in all possible ways.

Then, the concentration of the companies moves on to the quality of the relationship between the company and the customer, which depends on the level of satisfaction gained from the relationship itself and the level of customers’ emotional bonds toward this relationship. When trust, commitment, satisfaction, and an emotional relationship with the customer could be achieved by the company, the customer is engaged and can offer maximum contribution beyond purchases to the company. Thus, Pansari and Kumar (2017) propose that the two constructs of the engagement theory would be satisfaction and emotional bonds, as customer engagement emerges only after a relationship is established based on trust and commitment. They claim that the theory of engagement is not only suitable for the relationship between the company and the customer, it could also be applied to all the stakeholders of the company. The goal of every engaged partner is to establish a long-term association and cooperation.
4.4.2 Customer Engagement Cycle

According to Sashi (2012), the process of building customer engagement constitutes a customer engagement cycle. As depicted in Figure 5, there are seven stages in the CE cycle, which contains connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, loyalty, advocacy, and engagement.

4.4.2.1 Connection

Connecting sellers with customers together via both traditional offline methods and new digital online methods is the prerequisite for building a relational exchange and emotional bonds. Through the connection between customers and sellers, both the existing customer needs and the potential ones could be explored and better understood to support the process of problem-solving and product development.

4.4.2.2 Interaction

After connecting with the customers, they can interact with both sellers and other customers and then the better understanding of changeable customer needs could be prompted via interactions. Thus, it would be helpful for sellers to modify their existing products based on changing needs and develop new products for better solutions. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) claim that interaction is becoming the...
locus of value creation and value extraction. The interaction allows customers to participate in the process of value-adding and to collaborate with sellers in value creation.

4.4.2.3 Satisfaction

Oliver (1980, p. 460) proposed that satisfaction is a function of an initial standard and some perceived discrepancy from the initial reference point. After purchasing and using a product, customers will compare its quality and performance against their expectations. According to Johnson and Fornell (1991), customer satisfaction is defined as a customer’s overall evaluation of the performance of an offering, it could mediate the effects of product quality, service quality, and price, and could create repeated product or service usage (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Oliver, 1999). Once the interaction between sellers and customers results in satisfaction, which means both two parties stay connected and continue to interact with one another. As Mittal and Kamakura (2001) argue that satisfaction is not the end but an intermediate stage of the customer engagement cycle, it is defined as a necessary but not sufficient condition for customer engagement by Sashi (2012).

On the other hand, dissatisfaction, which refers to the customer’s exiting behavior with negative attitudes, related to less likelihood of repeated purchases. Customer satisfaction may occur at any time point during the whole purchase process, and dissatisfaction at any stage can disrupt the process and result in customer’s exiting behavior (Sashi, 2012). Based on the previous discussion, the actual performance of highly satisfied customers is superior to their expectations, which propel the customer to patronize again and result in repurchases. Oliver et al (1997) also claimed that a high level of customer satisfaction was achieved when customer expectations are exceeded, and emotions become highly positive. On the other hand, when the actual performance is worse than the expectation, which indicates the customers are dissatisfied, a negative response occurs (Hirschman, 1970). After that, Wicks and Roethlein (2009) claimed customer satisfaction means providing products and services that create specific levels of perceived value for the customer, so that the customer remains engaged positively with the organization or company.

According to Oliver (1993), customer satisfaction could be divided into two categories, which are transaction-specific satisfaction and cumulative/overall satisfaction. From a transaction-specific perspective, satisfaction is regarded as a post-choice assessment of a specific purchase occasion. Anderson et al (1994) defined cumulative/overall satisfaction as an overall appraisal based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time. The transaction-specific satisfaction could provide specific evaluative information about a specific product or service, while the cumulative/overall satisfaction is a more essential indicator of the organization's past, current, and future performance. It is the cumulative/overall satisfaction that stimulates a company's investment in customer satisfaction.
Once the interaction between sellers and customers results in satisfaction, which means both two parties stay connected and continue to interact with one another. Mittal and Kamakura (2001) argue that satisfaction is not the end but an intermediate stage of the customer engagement cycle, it is defined as a necessary but not sufficient condition for customer engagement by Sashi (2012). Satisfaction may occur at any time point during the purchase process and dissatisfaction at any stage can disrupt the process and result in customer exit. According to Oliver (1993), satisfaction could be divided into two categories, which are transaction-specific satisfaction and cumulative/overall satisfaction. Anderson et al (1994) defined cumulative/overall satisfaction as “an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time”. Oliver et al (1997) claim that a high level of satisfaction achieved when customer expectations are exceeded, and emotions become highly positive has been described as not just satisfaction but delight.

4.4.2.4 Retention

Either overall satisfaction over time or highly positive emotions can lead to customer retention. The former situation is considered as a result of repurchases and indicates a long-term relationship without highly positive emotions, whereas the latter one could be seen as the result of strong emotional bonds without enduring relationship.

4.4.2.5 Commitment

Customer commitment is defined as customer’s enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman et al., 1993). Gustafsson et al (2005) claimed that the commitment has two major dimensions: affective commitment and calculative commitment. Calculative commitment is more rational and stems from a lack of choice or switching costs, and it contributes to higher levels of customer loyalty and long-term relationships with sellers. The result of calculative commitment to a product, brand, or company is defined as customer loyalty. Affective commitment is more emotional and stems from the trust and reciprocity, and it results in higher levels of trust and emotional bonds in relationships with sellers. The result of affective commitment to a product, brand, or company is defined as customer delight. If customers are both loyal and delighted, this means the customer and seller are in an enduring relational exchange with strong emotional bonds.

Additionally, in a service setting, customers can become committed to two distinct entities: the service company and the individual service employee with whom the customer interacts (Jones et al, 2008). Moreover, based on social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), the service employee could play two different exchange-based roles: economic exchange (i.e., the offering of service) and/or social exchange (i.e., the friendship). Therefore, the commitment to the person is a compound relationship including multiple roles (Ross & Robertson, 2007). Jones et al. (2008) proposed three different targets of commitment in service provider-consumer relationships: organization commitment (entity = service organization, role = economic exchange), employee commitment (entity = individual employee, role =
economic exchange), and personal commitment (entity = individual employee, role = social exchange), which are differentiated not only by entity (organization vs individual employee) but also by role (service provision vs friendship).

4.4.2.6 Advocacy
According to Harrison-Walker (2001), delighted customers share their positive experiences with a product, brand, or company to others in their social networks but loyal customers with enduring relationships are less willing to do so in offline interactions. Only if loyal customers in long-term relationships develop emotional bonds will they become advocates for a product, brand, or company. Both sellers and customers can play advocacy roles in relationships. Urban (2004) claim that if a company advocates for its customers’ best interests, they will reciprocate with their trust, loyalty, purchases as well as advocacy. Thus Nordin (2009) argue that sellers and customers are expected to look after each other’s interests and the focus will be on exchange of values that transcend their self-interest.

4.4.2.7 Engagement
Customer engagement emerges when customers have relational exchanges as well as strong emotional bonds with sellers. This implies that customer delight as well as customer loyalty are necessary conditions for customer engagement, which means both affective commitment and calculative commitment are requirements of customer engagement. The engaged customers are included into the process of value adding as co-creators of value, which improves the level of satisfaction of both customers and sellers. Those engaged customers are also defined as fans who become advocates for the product, brand, or company in interactions with other customers as well as non-customers. Then, these behaviors contribute to new connections and interactions, which creates a virtuous customer engagement cycle. Hibbard et al (2001) claim that when problems emerge in relationships with engaged customers, they are prone to be addressed via passive acceptance or constructive discussion rather than venting or disengagement.

4.4.3 Customer Engagement Matrix
Since customers in different stages of the customer engagement cycle will vary according to the degree of relational exchange and emotional bonds that defines their relationships with sellers. If the first two stages of the customer engagement cycle, which are connection and interaction, proceed to the next stage of satisfaction, customers may be arrayed in a customer engagement matrix.

Both Sashi (2012) and Pansari and Kumar (2017) construct customer engagement matrix and they are analogical to each other. Sashi (2012) propose a customer engagement matrix with relational exchange along the horizontal axis and emotional bonds along the vertical axis. There are four cells with low or high relational exchange connected to low or high emotional bonds, which are transactional
customers, delighted customers, loyal customers, and fans. Pansari and Kumar (2017) also establish a customer engagement model in the form of a 2x2 matrix for managing both satisfaction and emotion (Figure 6). There are four cells with low or high intensity of emotions linked to low or high level of satisfaction, which are indifference, attraction, passion, and true love. Here we select Sashi’s model to depict the customer engagement matrix. Figure 7 presents the connection between the customer engagement cycle and the customer engagement matrix.

![Customer Engagement Matrix](image1)

**Figure 6. Customer Engagement Matrix**
Source: Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media, Sashi, C.M., 2012.

![Connection of Customer Engagement Matrix and Cycle](image2)

**Figure 7. Connection of Customer Engagement Matrix and Cycle**
4.4.3.1 Transactional Customers

Transactional customers have an overall neutral attitude towards a product, brand, or company. They are price sensitive and likely to deals. They consider the product as a commodity and will purchase from the seller offering the lowest price, switching across sellers from transaction to transaction. The customer interacts with the sellers only if they can meet a current need and if there are not many options available to the customer. Thus, Pansari and Kumar (2017) defined them as “fill in need” customers. They are as well treated as the source of customers for the other three cells in the matrix. Only by ensuring the overall satisfaction of transactional customers can they be converted into either loyal or delighted customers, and finally fans. The long-term strategy is to promote these customers to transact more, develop a closer and stronger relationship, and become more engaged.

4.4.3.2 Loyal Customers

Loyal customers are defined by Pansari and Kumar (2017) as “value focused”. They are loyal because of purely rational reasons rather than the emotional bonds. The relationships between sellers and customers are characterized by calculative commitment in which is equipped with high switching costs or the shortage of available suppliers creating lock-in or stickiness with the current supplier. Due to those barriers to exit, the relationships maintain over time. However, loyal customers are not willing to recommend a seller on their own, but the seller can induce them to act advocacy roles. In order to gain the benefits of the loyal customers’ indirect contribution, the seller should try to establish a deeper and more emotional connection with them, which means developing affective commitment in the long-term relationships. Developing a high positive emotion like trust toward the product, brand, or company in loyal customers would assist the seller to turn the loyal customer the fans.

4.4.3.3 Delighted Customers

Delighted customers are defined by Pansari and Kumar (2017) as “altruistic focused”. The expectations of these customers have been exceeded, which results in highly positive emotions and a high level of satisfaction. Even if they are not satisfied, they still have high positive emotions toward the product, brand, or company. The low levels of satisfaction could sometimes be attributed to the uncertainty in expectations of the customer. The high emotional bonds imply that the affective commitment in relationships with the sellers has been developed by delighted customers, which can make them advocate for the product, brand, or company. However, customers interact infrequently with the seller and transactions occurs rarely, which indicates that delight only does not convert into enduring relationships. The goal is to maintain the high emotional attachment and to improve the level of satisfaction by providing a better customer experience at the same time. By developing a long-term relationship with delighted customers who are willing to be responsive to a better customer experience
and are already in the advocacy stage of the customer engagement cycle, sellers can move delighted customers into fans.

### 4.4.3.4 Fans
Fans are described as “engagement focused” by Pansari and Kumar (2017). They are delighted as well as loyal, which means they are highly satisfied and have high positive emotions with the product, brand, or company. This indicates that they have long-term relationships with both affective commitment and calculative commitment. Fans have trust in sellers and become passionate advocates for the product, brand, or company. This is the ideal stage in the customer engagement cycle, and sellers will have many customers who have already been won over by themselves. It is complex for the competitors to steal fans unless there is a disruptive innovation emerging in the customers’ experience, and this kind of difference in value could inducing fans. In addition, sellers will also likely to convert their delighted customers, loyal customers, and transactional customers into future fans. The objective in this stage is to ensure the maximum levels of engagement, to improve the emotional connection, and to maintain the high level of satisfaction. Loyal customers could be transformed into fans through building emotional bonds and creating affective commitment. Delighted customers could be converted into fans via establishing calculative commitment and developing enduring relationships.
5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

For this study, qualitative method is used. According to Hammersley (2013, p12), qualitative research is: “a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis”. Compared with quantitative research, qualitative research is more focus on what happens in the ‘real’ world instead of under experimental conditions (Hammersley 2013, p12). Through the study of small number of cases in qualitative research, in-depth examination of each case is allowed (Hammersley 2013, p14). Moreover, the qualitative approach enables researchers to gain information from a group or organization to identify what is really happening and look at the case from the perspective of related persons (Gillham, 2000, p11).

In order to address two research questions proposed previously, qualitative method is more appropriate than quantitative method. As a qualitative study is more relevant if the purpose of the research is to understand what people think, what they do, and the context of their thoughts. In this research, seven independent bookstores in Uppsala are studied and their actions of differentiating themselves in bookstore retailing industry based on servicescape theory are explored. The researchers used the approach of qualitative data analysis. The analysis of the findings was connected back to Raffaelli’s 3C’s model, servicescape theory, and customer engagement theory.

5.2 Data Collection

There are two data sources in this study. The first one is the semi-structured interviews with owners/managers of all the seven independent bookstores in Uppsala about the servicescape they provide in the bookstores and their opinions about the relationship between themselves and the customers. The second data source is 85 questionnaires (Appendix 2) in total towards the customers of each independent bookstore about their perceptions about the servicescape provided by the bookstores. In this way, the points of view of these two groups could be compared.

5.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In qualitative research, there are mainly two types of interview: unstructured interview and semi-structured interview. In both cases, the interview process is flexible compared to the structured interview (Bryman & Bell 2015, p481).

For this study, we utilize the semi-structured interview, which needs to prepare an interview guide (Appendix 1) in advance for the interviewers. The initial questions in the interview guide were developed based on our previous literature review. Meanwhile, this technique offers more space and freedom for both the interviewers’
questions and the interviewees’ answers, which contains more flexibility than the structured interview (Bryman & Bell 2015, p482).

For this study, the research questions are about how the independent bookstore in Uppsala differentiate themselves in book retailing industry and engage with their customers, thus the researchers need to do the interviews towards bookstore owners/managers to know about the situation and their actions.

The collection of the interview data lasted for about one and a half months. In order to contact the total seven owners/managers of Uppsala independent bookstores and ask for their permission of interview, we sent emails as the first contact, but only two of the seven agreed with the interview process. Then, we visited the other five independent bookstores and made appointments with them for the interviews. Before the interview, we prepared a guideline about the questions of the interview, the interview questions are based on our research questions and the situation of the bookstore themselves.

The interviews were conducted in English in their bookstores, and the average interview duration was about 40 minutes. All the questions were asked with a similar wording, which was employed from interviewee to interviewee to guarantee the credibility of the research (Bryman & Bell 2015, p482). However, due to the different responses of the informants, there were some slight difference about the follow-up questions. Besides, the audio-recording was employed during the whole process and the transcripts for further analysis were produced on the basis of the audio records (Gillham, 2000, p12). The interviewees agreed to be recorded on condition of anonymity.

5.2.2 Questionnaires

Besides the perspective of independent bookstore owners/managers, the study also focuses on the side of customers. For this study, the research questions are about what perceptions the customers of independent bookstores in Uppsala gained from the actions of bookstores aiming to differentiate themselves and how they engage with the bookstores, thus the researchers need to perform self-conducted questionnaires towards independent bookstore customers to know about their experience and opinions.

According to Gillham (2000, p10), questionnaires were introduced as a more efficient method of gaining information about attitudes and values. Therefore, to investigate the attitudes of the independent bookstores’ customers and collect enough data, we applied questionnaires in the research. The questions of the questionnaire are more open-ended, in other word, the questionnaire could be treated as a qualitative questionnaire (Gillham 2000, p8).

Before distributing the questionnaires to the customers, we conducted a pilot study. According to Bryman and Bell (2015, p272), pilot studies are crucial for the research
which use self-completion questionnaire, because there will not be an interviewer, and nobody could clear up any confusion for the respondents. We selected ten customers in two bookstores (five in each), asked them to read and answer the questions, and then refined our questions according to their suggestions. For distributing the questionnaires, we left 15 questionnaires to each of the 7 bookstores when we finished our interview and collected them after 15 to 25 days. In the end, we got 85 back in total.

There are 10 questions (Appendix 2) in the questionnaire in total, which including 2 questions about the experience of the customer themselves and 8 questions about the servicescape of the bookstores. The questions in the questionnaire are corresponding with the questions in the interview.

5.3 Sampling

In qualitative research, researchers need to choose the ‘right’ cases, groups and materials in a somehow defined way in order to do the study with limited resources (Flick, 2008, chap.3). Compared with sampling in quantitative research, which is normally random, sampling in qualitative research is more purposive and flexible (Flick, 2008, chap.3). Sampling in qualitative research in most cases is not oriented on a formal (e.g. random) selection but is conceived as a way of setting up a collection of deliberately selected cases, materials or events for constructing empirical examples for the study in the most instructive way (Flick, 2008, chap.3).

5.3.1 Purposive Sampling for Interviews

According to Flick (2008, chap.3), sampling decisions could pursue different goals, one is to find the most typical or the most developed case(s) for studying. Rather, the case(s) should be able to represent the relevance of the phenomenon related to participants’ experience and their concern about this phenomenon. In other words, variation is needed for sampling.

For this study, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven owners/managers who are working for independent bookstores in Uppsala. There are in total seven independent bookstores in Uppsala, which means all the available samples are included in this study. Two of the participants are female and five of them are male, two managers and five owners are included. Their work experience ranges from 5 months to 44 years.

All seven interviewees work in independent bookstores in Uppsala, but the sub-industries of the bookstores are different. As mentioned in Barnes Reports (2018), the bookstores retailing industry contains six sub-industries, which are bookstores (general), foreign books, religious books, children’s books, college bookstores, and comic books. We found that all of the independent bookstores in Uppsala almost
covers all the range of these sub-industries, this would be viewed as a microcosm of the whole Swedish book stores retailing industry.

Table 3 displays the detailed information about the informants. In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, each interviewee received an anonymous name which was used in data analysis. Each owner/manager was assigned a number for the following analysis, i.e. A1, A2, A3, A4, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anonymous name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Work Length</th>
<th>Sub-industry of the bookstore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>6 months (14 years in total)</td>
<td>Book stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>40 years</td>
<td>Comic books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>44 years</td>
<td>Book stores (second-hand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Children’s books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>Foreign books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>Book stores (second-hand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>Religious books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. General information about the informants

5.3.2 Sampling for Self-Completed Questionnaires
For distributing questionnaires to the customers of independent bookstores, we used random sampling strategy in each bookstore. After customers finished their purchases in the bookstores, we distributed the questionnaire to them, and they could decide whether to participate in the survey or not according to their own situations. For one month, we collected 85 valid questionnaires among 115 distributed and all the answers were analyzed at the next stage.

5.4 Data Analysis
As Bryman and Bell (2015, p13) mentioned in Business Research Methods, the sector of data analysis is mainly about data reduction, which is reducing the large corpus of information gathered in order to make sense of it. As we claimed above, this study selects the qualitative method, thus in the case of qualitative data, the researchers group textual material into categories such as themes.

After finishing the data analysis, the researchers rank the interpreted data by concepts and then compare to the entire body of data to examine the nuances and the different viewpoints. Then, the researchers make a series of comparisons between independent bookstores owners/managers and customers and selected quotations to illustrate the various perspectives (Carol et al., 2015).
5.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis for Interviews

Since our data collection contains recording semi-structured interviews, we followed the advices proposed by Bryman and Bell (2015, p595) and started to transcribe them at a relatively early stage.

Then, we selected the thematic analysis, one of the most common approaches to qualitative data analysis, according to Bryman and Bell (2015, p599). We decided to employ the framework approach, which is described as ‘a matrix-based method for ordering and synthesizing data’ (Ritchie et al. 2003, p219). This approach offers one way of thinking about how to identify themes and manage data, and it reflects the researchers’ awareness of recurring ideas and repetitive topics in the data.

We read through the transcripts of all the interviews several times to obtain a general sense of the overall data. Meanwhile, we made marginal notes and wrote memos, such as recurring short phrases, repetitive ideas, and keywords to facilitate later analysis. This step generated an index of central themes and subthemes which were then displayed in a matrix and helped us to interpret and theorize in relation to our data. The themes and subthemes are the outcomes of several thorough readings and rereading of the transcripts. This procedure can be viewed more or less as a coding process as well (Carol et al., 2015; Bryman and Bell 2015, p599).

Then, the researchers identified and elaborated concepts on the basis of previous literature review and the thematic analysis. Through this process, the broad content meaning was narrowed down to core concepts (Kvale, 2007; Bryman and Bell 2015, p599).

5.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis for Self-Completed Questionnaires

In order to explore the attitudes of the customers and avoid unnecessary embarrassment during the process, we employed self-completed questionnaires in the research to collect enough data. All the questions in the research questionnaire are open-ended with text boxes, in other word, the participants could provide free-text comments, allowing them to reflect on details about their experiences and describe what factors gave them impressions (Phelps et al., 2007). Therefore, we use the approach of thematic analysis to analyze the free-text data as well.

We gathered all the answers from the questionnaires, and then conducted the similar coding process, integrated a list of main themes and subordinate themes derived from the original collected data (Phelps et al., 2007; Bryman and Bell 2015, p599).

5.4.3 Critical Reflection of Data Analysis

From the perspective of methodology, thematic analysis is employed in data analysis, which could help to identify themes, manage data and in turn find the recurring data (Bryman and Bell 2015, p599). Due to the required steps of extracting, ranking, and
selecting the repetitive topics of transcripts in thematic analysis, the action of calculating frequency is necessary (Carol et al., 2015; Bryman and Bell 2015, p599).

Despite the fact that the qualitative research methods usually emphasize words rather than quantification in the data collection and data analysis (Bryman and Bell 2015, p392). Considering the practical situation of the research itself, calculating the frequency and ranking the themes (the dimensions of servicescape) could help the researchers to know what dimension(s) is(are) considered as the most important one(s) by the bookstore owners/managers and customers. Moreover, the research is supposed to provide inspiration and guidance for other researchers and independent bookstores, which also needs more detailed supporting information. Thus, the frequency and rank of subthemes (the elements of servicescape dimensions) is significant and beneficial.

Therefore, the researchers introduce the frequency of themes and subthemes to support the following analysis and discussion of findings, which could provide more insights for future research.

5.5 Reliability and Validity

The reliability, which parallels dependability, could be divided into external reliability and internal reliability (Bryman and Bell 2015, p400). According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982), the external reliability refers to the degree to which a research can be replicated. In order to achieve it, the researchers acted as the interviewers to conduct all the semi-structured interviews and distributed the self-completed questionnaires. Moreover, the researchers prepared the interview guide and provided the original questionnaire for conducting a replication. As stated in Bryman and Bell (2015, p400), the internal reliability refers to all of the members of the research team agree about what they see and hear. Since the research team has two members, both of the researchers agree about the content of the transcripts and the results of the questionnaires. Besides that, the reliability in the thematic analysis was maintained through the comparison of coding of the same data by two members of the research team (Silverman, 1993), thereby reducing ambiguities in coding via discussion between the researchers.

Based on the definition given in Bryman and Bell (2015, p401), the internal validity, which parallels credibility, means whether there is a good match between researchers’ findings and the theoretical framework they develop. The external validity, which parallels transferability, refers to the degree to which research outcomes can be generalized across social settings (Bryman and Bell 2015, p402). Therefore, to ensure the validity of the research methodology, the interview guide, research process, and the study outcomes were reviewed by experts in industrial management who were not directly associated with the research. Moreover, the research is performed according
to the criteria of scientific study and the validity of the transcription is partly ensured through a review of the transcript.

### 5.6 Methodological Limitations

There are some methodological weaknesses naturally existing in this research. Firstly, for the aspect of validity, the researchers have distributed the questionnaires to the independent bookstores, however, we cannot ensure who actually answered the questionnaires. Maybe the respondents have personal inclines towards the bookstores, which will make their answers not objective. Furthermore, for the interviews, we could not ensure the authenticity of the statements of the interviewees. Secondly, on the hand of reliability, since the result of qualitative research is a joint-effort between interviewers and interviewees, other researchers could replicate the methodology of this study, while, it’s difficult to ensure that the result they get from the interviewees are exactly matched with ours. Moreover, the sampling size of this study is relatively small due to the research context, it’s difficult to be replicated to the area with high customer volume.

In addition, there are also some limitations related to the process of practically conducting the research method. Because all the interviewees we chose are from independent bookstores, there are not many employees in the bookstore, sometimes the interviewee himself/herself is the only staff of the bookstore. Thus, it was difficult to make an appointment with them for a 40-minute interview. Sometimes during the interview, if customers visit the bookstore, the owner/manager needs to take care of them, and the interview would be interrupted. Also, sometimes there would be some noise in the audio record. For the questionnaire, some people didn't have time to answer; some people considered there were too many questions and didn’t want to answer; and some people took the questionnaires home but didn’t return. Moreover, because the questionnaire is conducted in English, it was difficult for some people to understand and answer properly. Finally, for the follow-up questions after the interviews, it was difficult for both the researchers and the independent bookstore owners/managers to schedule another appointment due to the limited time and ability.

### 5.7 Ethical Issues

According to Flick (2008, chap.7), the awareness of ethical issues and concerns has grown considerably in recent decades in qualitative research. Ethics should play a role in researchers’ considerations of how to plan a study, of who should be the person(s) to work with, and how the researchers should act in the field (Flick, 2008, chap.7).

For this study, all the participants were informed before they took part in the research and they had the right to decide whether to join in or not. To ensure their privacy, all the answers and data provided by the participants are treated anonymously. For the interviews, before we started, we asked the interviewees’ permission of audio recording and promised them the recorded material would only be used for the thesis.
We also informed the interviewees that they could express their opinions freely and will not be forced to talk about anything if they feel uncomfortable. For the questionnaires to customers, we would like to give the participants enough time and let them answer freely, so they could choose whether to finish the questionnaire in-store or take it home to finish.
6. Findings

6.1 The Findings of Semi-Structured Interviews

Table 4 are a series of matrix that derive from the coded transcripts and that would be utilized for representing the data on various themes and subthemes. According to Bryman and Bell (2015, p599), the next procedure is to insert the brief quotations from the transcripts into the appropriate cell. Moreover, we used the question number to indicate the location of the quoted transcripts fragments. The interview guide is shown in Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seller and Buyer (transactional customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 2: Ambient Condition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Aroma</th>
<th>Lighting</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>‘works very well’(Q1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘spend more energy to make a nice environment’(Q1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>No(Q1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>‘feel a taste of books’(Q1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘keep the warm and bright lighting’(Q1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>‘play English speaking voices from radio, soft music, or folk music’(Q1)</td>
<td>‘the smell comes from the books in a good way’(Q1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing(Q1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>‘play CDs for sale’(Q1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 3: Functionality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Book Inventory</th>
<th>Book Shelves</th>
<th>Reading Areas</th>
<th>Other Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>‘focus on novels, crime, but no specific academic books’(Qa), ‘under two years old’, ‘not too strange’, ‘prevailing’(Q2), ‘as much books as possible’(Q3), ‘have stock-tracking system’(Q7)</td>
<td>‘place books thematically’(Q2), ‘all the shelves have wheels’(Q6)</td>
<td>‘have chairs’, ‘treat them cafe’(Q2)</td>
<td>‘reading tips with reviews’, ‘customized ordering service’(Q3), ‘will have online store in the future and attempt to have loyalty program’(Q7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>‘updated weekly’, ‘almost 2000 titles’(Q2), ‘order books customers are asking’(Q6)</td>
<td>‘different comics in different shelves’(Q2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Facebook homepage’(Q2), ‘customized ordering service’, ‘posting service’(Q3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>‘secondhand books’(Qa), ‘over 70,000 books which is a appreciated by customers’, ‘easy to find’</td>
<td>‘used to be a book cafe for a’</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘external online searching and selling service’(Qd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit (Q1)</td>
<td>Books (Q1)</td>
<td>Meeting point (Q1)</td>
<td>Customized recommending service (Q7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'have books cannot be found' (Q8)</td>
<td>'have books' (Q1)</td>
<td>'meeting' (Q1)</td>
<td>'customized recommending service' (Q7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A4</th>
<th>A4</th>
<th>A4</th>
<th>A4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'children’s books' (Qa)</td>
<td>'the latest and classic books', 'find special titles people wouldn't find in a normal bookshop'</td>
<td>'nostalgic bookshelf' (Qa), 'organize books in different themes' (Q1)</td>
<td>'low-leveled chairs, tables, and shelves' (Q2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'from small publishers', 'in odd subjects' (Qb), 'have internal stock-tracking system' (Q2)</td>
<td>'handpick everything' (Qa), 'only English books' (Qb), 'find things people wouldn't have found' (Q1), '14,000 titles in stock' (Q2)</td>
<td>'with many subcategories for search and discover' (Q1), 'the furniture has wheels' (Q6)</td>
<td>'use a lot of social medias' (Qa), 'provide inspirations' (Qb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'ask children customers to read and recommend', 'attempt to have external online searching service', 'have a web page' (Q2), 'make gift wrapping' (Q7)</td>
<td>'large, curated stock', 'handpick everything' (Qa), 'only English books' (Qb), 'find things people wouldn't have found' (Q1), '14,000 titles in stock' (Q2)</td>
<td>'different themes on different shelves', 'theme-based display' (Q2)</td>
<td>'give away books to a local youth cultural center', 'help build local community' (Q8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A5</th>
<th>A5</th>
<th>A5</th>
<th>A5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'secondhand books' (Qa), 'the most important thing is to have good books' (Q8)</td>
<td>'religious books about Christian and theology' (Qa), 'not readily available in other stores.' (Q8)</td>
<td>'different themes on different shelves', 'theme-based display' (Q2)</td>
<td>'customized ordering service', 'have a website for online ordering service and social media' (Q2), 'have ads on religious papers' (Q3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A6</th>
<th>A6</th>
<th>A6</th>
<th>A6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'have tables and pillars to place books' (Q3)</td>
<td>'not use too much navigating signs', 'price signs' (Q3), 'not so much' (Q3)</td>
<td>'flowers or plants would be nice'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Theme 4: Design Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial Layout</th>
<th>Signs/Symbols</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Plants/Pets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'have tables and pillars to place books' (Q3)</td>
<td>'not use too much navigating signs', 'price signs' (Q3), 'not so much' (Q3)</td>
<td>'flowers or plants would be nice'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘books are focuses’(Q8)</td>
<td>‘something brings atmosphere’(Q3)</td>
<td>‘have a plane model and comic figures’(Q3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>‘have a fantastic window and table for the latest comics’(Q3)</td>
<td>'have a portrait of a national author’(Q2)</td>
<td>Yes(Q2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>‘looks like a candy store but with books’(Q1)</td>
<td>‘adorable, colorful toys together with the books in different themes’, ‘will have larger signs’(Q3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>‘be cozy, cluttered but ordered’</td>
<td>‘handmade and personal craft element’, ‘not sloppy but have quality’, ‘have a graphics guy for making signs’(Q3)</td>
<td>‘have all the little trinkets’(Q1) ‘have bags, mugs, and stamps with brand name for brand building’(Q7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>‘make it cozy’, ‘homey wallpapers’(Q3)</td>
<td>‘sculptures for gifts’(Q3)</td>
<td>Yes(Q3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 5: Cleanliness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>‘sweep the floor every morning’ ‘clean the windows once a month’ ‘occasionally use a whole day to sweep away dust on books(Q4)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>‘sweep the floor weekly’(Q4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>‘not too much’(Q4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>‘sweep the floors regularly’, ‘circulate the goods all the time and dust the shelves’(Q4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>‘clean the floors every morning’, ‘clean out windows every now and then’, ‘student working interns dust books’(Q4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>‘try to stay clean’(Q4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A 7 ‘do vacuuming weekly’, ‘dust the books once a day and sweep the floor before leave’(Q4)

Theme 6: Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Orientation</th>
<th>Credibility</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 ‘Service is the most important factor’(Q8)</td>
<td>‘recognize what kind of the customer is’(Q8)</td>
<td>‘well-educated’ ‘study literature, history or religion’(Q5)</td>
<td>‘no training’(Q5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 ‘ask customers what they are looking for and do something that people are interested in’(Q6)</td>
<td>‘talkative’(Q6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>‘serve the customers when they come’(Q5)</td>
<td>‘find the right book’(Q8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4 ‘major selling process is to recommend books’(Q5), ‘offer service and get feedback’(Q8)</td>
<td>‘find out who is the person going to get the book’, ‘have a mature person like a retired librarian’(Q5)</td>
<td>‘find the reading level and subject’, ‘like to read, have read and know a lot’(Q5), ‘look for books customers cannot find’(Q7)</td>
<td>‘ask student trainees to read and write little notes’, ‘have student holiday staff(Q5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5 ‘be personal with the customer’(Qa) ‘focus on the joy of reading’, ‘what people want to read’(Qb),’talk and listen to the customers’(Q2) ‘being good at providing books and services’(Q8)</td>
<td>‘keep a very high-quality service’(Qb) ‘be a people person’, ‘can empathize with people and understand what they are looking for or what they need’(Q5)</td>
<td>‘have passion for books’, ‘recommend the right book to the right person at the right time’, ‘have a very broad knowledge base and an academic education’(Q5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6 ‘service is satisfied by customers’(Q5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>‘interested in books and read a lot’, ‘have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 7: Cultural Atmospherics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author-reader Meetings/Book Releases</th>
<th>Reading Clubs/Special Theme Seminars</th>
<th>Festivals/ Fairs</th>
<th>No Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 Yes(Q6) ‘Yes’(Q6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Yes(Q6)</td>
<td>‘annual comic festival’(Q6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 ‘Used to have’(Q6)</td>
<td>‘used to have’(Q6)</td>
<td>currently yes(Q6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4 Yes(Q6)</td>
<td>‘have storytelling sessions’, ‘be part of larger children events’(Q6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5 ‘do author visits and book releases’(Q6)</td>
<td>‘do storytelling for kids’, ‘do reading groups’, ‘special themed evenings on different topics’, ‘do different talks’(Qa)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘only book selling business’(Q6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7 ‘sometimes, not very often’, ‘have release party’(Q6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. The transcript of bookstore owners/managers interviews

6.2 The Findings of Self-Conducted Questionnaires

Table 5 including proportion together with the quoted fragments of the free-text comments from the answers of questionnaires participants was stemmed from the results after the thematic analysis, which is shown below. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>Proportion (%)</th>
<th>Free-text Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Not so long, this is the first time in this bookstore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first visit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 years</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Since I moved to Uppsala a year ago. Since moving to Uppsala in April 2018. From time to time over almost 6 years. Visitor since 6 or 7 years, but a regular since 4 years ago. Discovered it three years ago. I have been a customer on and off for 10 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-30 years</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Since its inception. Have been going to it since the beginning. I remember shopping there in their first location, the attic by the river. Possibly during the first six months after they started. Since they opened, around 1990. A very long time. I think more than 20 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Over 30 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seller and Buyer (transactional customers)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Professional and knowledgeable. It’s important that the staff shows interest and that they actually want to talk to their customers and give tips and the like. Mostly stick to business. Don't know them personally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance (loyal customers)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Good and pleasant. They are lovely acquaintances that knows me and my preferences in books. They all know my name for example. Feeling of being seen as an individual and not a potential customer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend (delighted customers)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>Personal and friendly. Helpful advisors and friends. A few of them know me by sight and remember my interests. They are friendly and I think of them as friends. Have a nice friendship between me and the staff. Going there feels like visiting old friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Group Member (fans)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Great, excellent. I get the best service and personalized recommendations.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambient Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>The BBC radio is on (very suitable and increases the English part of the store name). There is always a familiar and warm feeling when you enter - like a lovely hug.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aroma</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Smell of books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Cozy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t like the dim light, bright environment is good for reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Quiet, no music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>Silent and quiet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coziness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feels like a home away from home after all the years.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relaxed atmosphere.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The whole feeling of the bookshop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functionality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Inventory</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>Filled with a good variety of books everywhere so I could explore.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collection of books</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily the fact that it has such a large and well-stocked science fiction and fantasy section.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Great selection, only bookshop I like to visit more is the Sci-Fi/Fantasy branches in Stockholm/Malmö.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wide selection of young adult books.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Shelves</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Pleasant displays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I love the “British way” of organizing books, with the British genres. In Sweden this style of genre-sorting is uncommon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Areas</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>The level of service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The service of ordering books is very good.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nice variety of things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
That it was an English bookstore. I am not Swedish and having a place where I could buy books in English was very good. It is a specialized bookshop for children, this is excellent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Factors</th>
<th>Spatial Layout</th>
<th>57%</th>
<th>Bags and boxes on the floor made it feel more home friendly. Lack of space to turn around. Love the different rooms. The order in the chaos. Well-organized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs/Symbols</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>Soft toys Posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants/Pets</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>The plants make the inside environment vivid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>Very Swedish General interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>Individual customer service. The care of the customers, often get recommendations and books without asking. They are very inviting and friendly to newcomers, just like old customers and not just nice on the surface. Friendship they exude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>The helpfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>The staff read more books than me. Independent bookstores are different than major bookstores because the staff are usually passionate and knowledgeable people. Competence of personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Tuesday dog Nilsson Friendliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Atmospherics</td>
<td>Author-reader Meetings/Book Releases</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Clubs/Special Theme Seminars</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Festivals/Fairs</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Key Factor                                  | Ambient Condition                   | 13% |
|                                             | Functionality                        | 30% |
|                                             | Design Factors                       | 3%  |
|                                             | Cleanliness                          | 2%  |
|                                             | Employees                            | 51% |
|                                             | Cultural Atmospherics                | 16% |
|                                             | Others                               | 2%  |

| Hints from staff about upcoming releases and events |
| Don’t know Haven’t participated in any events |
| There are events, didn't have that before. |

| Functionality                              | The books, of course |
|                                           | That they had so much and even old books that are affordable |
|                                           | I could order the book I wanted to pick up late |
|                                           | Good variety of books |
|                                           | Lots of books |
|                                           | All of the books!! There are just so many good books in such a small area. |
|                                           | The way the books are sorted by sub-genres |

| Employees                                  | Friendliness |
|                                           | They are very helpful. |
|                                           | Independent bookstores are different than major bookstores because the staff are usually passionate and knowledgeable people. |

| Cultural Atmospherics                      | It is a great children’s bookshop |

**Table 5. Thematic Analysis of Questionnaires**

The findings are derived from qualitative analysis of the interviews with seven owners/managers of the independent bookstores in Uppsala and the questionnaires
answered by their customers. The analysis synthesized the viewpoints of the independent bookstore owners/managers and customers based on the proposed theoretical framework, which contains seven themes – relationship, ambient conditions, functionality, design factors, cleanliness, employee, and cultural atmospherics. Except for the relationship, the other six themes could be categorized into two dimensions of the servicescape, which are the substantive staging of the servicescape and the communicative staging of the servicescape.

7. Analysis and Discussion

7.1 The Position of Customers in Customer Engagement Matrix

According to the results of the interviews and questionnaires, the customers of Uppsala independent bookstores could be categorized into four genres based on customer engagement matrix: purchaser (transactional customer), acquaintance (loyal customer), friend (delighted customer) and family/group (fans).

7.1.1 Purchaser (Transactional Customer)

According to Pansari and Kumar (2017), the customers who are in a seller and buyer relationship have an overall neutral attitude towards a product, brand, or company, and they are defined as transactional customers. 15% of the questionnaires’ participants think they are simply book buyers of the bookstores, which indicates the relationship commitment is based on economic exchange according to Jones et al. (2008). Some of them answered that the staff are professional and knowledgeable, but mostly stick to business.

7.1.2 Acquaintance (Loyal Customer)

According to the statement of A6, the owner of a secondhand bookstore, he had more than one meeting with most of his customers, which implies his customers could be regarded as acquaintances. Furthermore, both A1 and A3 mentioned not only new customers but also old customer would patronize their bookstores. On the other hand, 16% of the questionnaires’ respondents viewed the staff as acquaintances. The answers like “They are lovely acquaintances that knows me and my preferences in books” and “They all know my name for example” shows their good and pleasant relationship with the bookstore’s employees. Additionally, the comment of “feeling of being seen as an individual and not a potential customer” also implies a kind of relationship beyond the transaction.

7.1.3 Friend (Delighted Customer)

According to the interviews of the bookstore owners and managers, the relationship between themselves and customers is nice, friendly and personal. Most of the independent bookstores have been open for several decades and have some returned customers according to the results of both interviews and questionnaires. Compared to
chain bookstores, independent bookstores pay more attention on customers, they have better communication with customers, know more about customers and provide personalized service (Jen, 2010). Moreover, unlike the chains or online retailers who have lots of customers, independent bookstores are spaces where small numbers of people discover small numbers of diverse print books (Gemma & O’Brien, 2016). Because of that, staff of independent bookstores could have better communication with their customers. During the long-time interaction, some returned customers (37%) became friends with bookstore owners or staff. As Jones et al. (2008) stated, the value of additional relationships such as friendships between service employees and customers could enhance the commitment to the service organization. A2 claims that some loyal customers even don’t care much about the price because they were willing to support the independent bookstore to survive,

“We have a good relationship with our customers here. They are friendly people here and they have told us that: "It’s okay, we can pay maybe extra 10 or 20 kronors or more.” And they also go to the web shop. They are supporting us very good and they are very loyal here. Yeah, they want to keep us having business here.”

Moreover, A5 also emphasized the significance of personal relationship commitment to its customers:

“One of our key ideas is to be personal with the customer, to welcome the customer, to tell them what we like and what they might like and to have a conversation, the meetings are very important… When people talk about our shop, they say good things. It's very important to have a good narrative.”

37% of the questionnaires’ participants treated themselves as friends with the bookstores’ employees. The keywords like “personal and friendly” and “helpful advisors and friends” occurred frequently. The comments like “A few of them know me by sight and remember my interests. They are friendly and I think of them as friends”, “Have a nice friendship between me and the staff”, and “Going there feels like visiting old friends” indicate that the relationship commitment is based on social exchange according to Jones et al. (2008).

7.1.4 Family/Group Member (Fans)
Since some of the independent bookstores have been located in Uppsala for a long time, the fact is that most of them possess their own fans. The owner of the comic bookstore A4 mentioned that there is a fan community of the bookstore. Apart from that, some customers were even willing to assist the bookstore with some moving work voluntarily. A5 told us a story like, several years ago their bookstore moved to another place, customers came to help and arrange the bookstore together:

“It's like family almost … we told our customers that we were going to move the shop and then they started asking if they could help. And We were going to move it
over Midsummer's weekend and nobody's in town from midsummers… But we had
over 40 customers showed up and helped us the whole weekend, they painted the
walls and packed the books… It was just an amazing community thing.”

In addition, the behavior of introduction and recommendation is another obvious sign
of being fans of the bookstore (Pansari, A. and Kumar, V., 2017). A5 described the
situation occurred in store:

“… because the customers become very proud of the bookshop as well. You can hear
sometimes, when they have visitors, regular customers will come in with their visitors
and probably they will show it off like it's their shop. And here it is, we have this and
look this. And they're so proud. And so, it's all about sharing the pride.”

32% of the questionnaires’ respondents think they are in excellent relationship with
the bookstores. One comment of “I get the best service and personalized
recommendations” indicates the ranking of the independent bookstore in customer’s
mind.

Besides, bookstores are not only recognized as somewhere for shopping, but also as a
place that people have chances to get together and share something with each other.
Many independent bookstores attempt to bridge the gap linking shopping with well-
being (Gemma & O’Brien, 2016). Bookstores could build a well-being community
together with customers. According to Raffaelli (2017), the independent bookstore
owners were the pioneers of the localism and that encouraged others to form alliances
with them to make a community where everyone could share values. Gemma and
O’Brien (2016) also claimed that the independent bookstores could provide social and
political learning and sharing activities within the bookstores themselves and in a
wider community. They connect with people in ordinary, more deeply, everyday
ways, participate in community supportive and learn cultural activities (Gemma &
O’Brien, 2016). As A5 said during the interview,

“We are a community-based bookshop with a lot of regular customers who come
quite often to us… and that was always the original idea to be a very strong part of
the local community and to do something to build a dream bookshop together, sort of
bookshop that we liked… That sort of builds community and relations is very
important.”

Another interviewee A1 mentioned that also the customers enjoy being a part of the
bookstore-community, the bookstore A1 works in have combined with other
bookstores several months ago and changed the owner and name.

“… most of the customers actually say, “Oh, it's so nice, it's still the bookstore.” “It
doesn't matter is a new owner or, while, of course, things will change. But just as long
as the bookstore is still here, in our community.”
7.2 The Actions Taken by Independent Bookstores Related to Servicescape Dimensions to Differentiate Themselves in Bookstore Retailing Industry

According to the servicescape theory, there are six dimensions that independent bookstores could improve to achieve better differentiation: ambient conditions, functionality, design factors, cleanliness, employees and cultural atmospheric, which will be discussed in detail as following. Moreover, we compared the actions taken by bookstore owners/managers and that perceived by customers to figure out if customers notice bookstores’ efforts of differentiating themselves.

7.2.1 Ambient Conditions

Ambient conditions refer to the background of environmental stimuli or atmospherics that affect human sensations (Grayson & McNeil, 2009; Turley & Milliman, 2000). According to existed literature, these stimuli or atmospherics include music, noises (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Morin et al., 2007), temperature (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005) and aroma (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001). We added a new element, lighting, to the framework based on the result of interview.

When comparing the result between factors related to ambient conditions provided by bookstore owners/managers and that perceived by customers, we found that most of the bookstore owners/managers don’t make much efforts of the ambient conditions to satisfy the customers. Among the seven bookstores, only two of them play music or radio, two of them think that the aroma of the store is come from the books themselves, none of them make specific aroma in the store to attract customers. Also, none of them concerned about the temperature inside the bookstore. Similarly, only two of the bookstore owners/managers took the lighting issue into consideration. From the perspective of the customers, most of them (49%) recognize the ambient conditions as a whole and chose “others”. In other words, most of them don’t put the attention to one or two specific factor(s), the thing they care about is the whole feeling they get from the surrounding atmosphere. The ratio of the factors chosen by customers is relatively low when compared with other servicescape elements, which varies from 6% to 29%. In general, the investment of the bookstore owners/managers of the aspect of ambient condition is not much, thus, the perception of their customers about these elements is not distinct. Additionally, temperature is an element which is ignored by bookstore owners/managers but noticed by some of the customers.

7.2.1.1 Music and Noise

Music often plays an important role in service environment, such as restaurants, cafes, shopping mall, etc. While for bookstore, whether to play music is a problem. Some customers prefer quiet environment to concentrate on books, while others may think soft music make them comfortable. As A1 said,
“Music is one thing. We play music. Sometimes to satisfy the customers sometimes to make them go home. (Laugh) But I think music is okay here, it's not like student library, the bookstore is supposed to let people buy things and talk to each other. And it's not like you are supposed to sit down and study.”

Three out of seven independent bookstores we interviewed play music in the store, two of them want to use the music to bring cozy atmosphere in store and make customer feel comfortable, one of them is a comprehensive bookstore, besides books, they also sell a few CDs, cards etc., thus, they play the music they sell to attract customers and it’s also a marketing for the CDs.

According to the result of the questionnaires, 8% of the customers chose “music” and 6% chose “noise”. Some customers mentioned that sometimes there’s radio broadcast in bookstores, some of them think it’s good and bring atmosphere to the store, while others think it’s a bit disturbing when reading books.

7.2.1.2 Aroma
For independent bookstores, the aroma mainly comes from the books, some bookstores have floral aroma because of the plants. Both A3 and A5 claimed that the smell of books could be an attractive point to their customers.

“The smell in the shop comes from the books, people will come in. And they will say it smells like books, not in a bad way but in a very good way.”

29% of the customers chose “aroma” in their questionnaires. Some of them said like “It smells of books”, which is correspondent with what bookstore owners said.

7.2.1.3 Temperature
During the interviews, none of the seven bookstore owners/managers mentioned about the element: temperature. While as the result of the questionnaires, 11% of the customers expressed that temperature inside the bookstores gave them impressions during their visits. Although the ratio of that is not high, the result shows that “temperature” is an element which ignored by bookstore owners/managers but noticed by some of the customers.

7.2.1.4 Lighting
Lighting is an element we added to the framework according to the interview. Lighting is an important element of ambient conditions for bookstores. According to Vertex (2018), nowadays, many bookstores have not only sold books, but also have some different functions which will be introduced in later part of the thesis. In different spatial areas of the bookstore, the methods of using lighting are also different. Many bookstores are making efforts to design lighting for different environments and create lighting environment that suitable for each area, that also can
help to meet the needs of every type of readers. A1 told us that their bookstore is trying to design better lighting for customers.

“Along with the music, I think the lightning, which we would like to spend more energy, no it's not that energy (Laugh), I mean, to think about how we use the lights to make a nice environment. Yes, it takes time very much, but we tried to work with it.”

A4, as the owner of a children bookstore, paid attention to the lighting part as well:

“I also try to keep the warm and bright lighting in store.”

19% of the questionnaire respondents chose “lighting” as the element that gave them impressions during their visits, some customers mentioned that the lighting inside the bookstore could make the whole atmosphere cozy, one customer also mentioned that “Don’t like dim light, bright environment is good for reading”.

7.2.1.5 Others
For ambient conditions, most of the customers (49%) chose “others” in the questionnaire. 58.06% of the customers who chose “others” expressed that the whole atmosphere of the bookstores gave them deep impressions and make them feel cozy, relaxed, and good. Some of them even wrote “It feels like a home away from home after all the years”. They think that the elements mentioned above combined together and made the whole feeling of the bookstore, it’s difficult to choose only one or several of them. Among the customers who chose “others”, 16% of the “others-choosing” customers think that the bookstores are quiet and silent, which is proper for reading and picking books. Moreover, some customers comment that the friendly staff of the bookstores make the whole ambient condition comfortable.

7.2.2 Functionality
As mentioned above, the definition of functionality is the competence of each item to facilitate the accomplishment of customers’ and employees’ goals (Norhidayah et al., 2015) and to improve and innovate consumer support in an ergonomic manner (Aubert-Gamet, 1997). Under the situation of independent bookstores, book inventory, book shelves, reading areas, and other value-added services are four main factors related to the functionality.

From the perspective of independent bookstore owners/managers, “book inventory” and “bookshelves” are the elements related to functionality that they made most efforts. All of them claimed that the book inventory of their bookstores is an important factor related to functionality that would influence customer satisfaction, some of them have large inventory, which make it easier for them to meet the needs of majority of the customers and others have some specialized categories which is difficult to find in somewhere else. Six out of seven bookstore owners/managers
considered the bookshelves as important in the functionality theme. They have specific ways of arranging bookshelves and placing the books to make it easier for customers to find the book they want. For the reading area, four out of seven bookstore owners/managers mentioned about that, while one of them said that they used to have the reading area but have abandoned it now because it was difficult to maintain, and the performance was not ideal. Moreover, six out of seven bookstore owners/managers put forward some other efforts related to functionality they have made. “customized recommending and ordering service” are the ones that mentioned most frequently by them.

On the side of the customers, the majority of them (81%) considered the book inventory as one of the most impressive elements of functionality and about half of them (54%) regarded the bookshelves as one of the most essential elements of functionality. 24% of the customers selected “others” and mentioned two major points which are the level of service and the significance of being a specialized bookstore. Only 12.7% of the customers chose the element of reading area, which implies that it is less important than other three factors about the functionality.

Therefore, two of the most critical elements of the functionality in the minds of both owners/managers and customers are the book inventory and the bookshelves, which comes to an agreement. In other words, the bookstore owners/managers put more resource on book inventory and bookshelves. Subsequently, the customers give positive feedbacks to that, which means the input of bookstore owners/managers is worthwhile. Besides that, most of the owners/managers regarded the customized service as one of the most important elements as well, while only a small part of the customers took the service level into consideration in this part.

### 7.2.2.1 Book Inventory

Since almost all the independent bookshop in Uppsala are specialist bookstores, each owner/manager of the bookstore emphasized their wide-ranged, customer-oriented, but unique book inventory. In order to have a wide-ranged inventory, independent booksellers made lots of efforts. A5 stated the puzzle of keeping various inventory but simultaneously controlling large stock:

> “…we have a very large, curated stock, where we handpick everything that we sell… and of course there are many more books in the world than we have stocked in our bookstore. So, we can't stock everything.”

A1 mentioned that the bookstore has a policy with the publishers, which could help them relieve the pressure of having too much stock in the storage.

> “I think we work pretty hard to keep at least one copy in the store. While, of course, we don't want too much stock. But we have opportunities to within a year or within
two years return new books to the publishers. So, if a book is not more than two years old, we probably have it. We try to have as much books as possible.”

Therefore, to make an appropriate balance between the wide-ranged inventory and the massive book stock is a big challenge for an independent bookstore. Furthermore, having a prevailing customer-oriented book inventory is another critical element to satisfy the needs of the segmented customers. Following the current trend and asking for customers’ requests are two major way of solutions. Both A1 and A2 mentioned that they follow the current news to know the prevailing trend of customers’ interests:

“We sell the books, so we have to have the books that are talked about in newspapers and so on.”

Besides that, A2 also pay attention to the customers’ demands via making personal talks:

“…when we have a time to talk to our customers, like ask them what they are interested in, what they're looking for. So, we can order these books that they are asking. And we also following all the news that happening in the comic world.”

In addition, four out of seven independent booksellers are proud of their unique book inventory, which uncovers an obvious advantage of the physical independent bookstores:

“...have books that cannot be found, which are not really readily available in other bookstores.” (A3, A5, and A7)

“You can find what you wouldn't find in a normal bookshop. So, you can ask for some special titles… have a lot of books from smaller publishers, and in very odd subjects.” (A4)

From the perspective of the customers, the majority of the questionnaires’ participants (81%) think the book inventory is one of the most impressive elements related to the functionality. Some of them leave the comments like “Filled with good variety of books everywhere so I could explore”, which implies the wide selection and high-quality collection of books is really the critical feature of an independent bookstore.

In addition, this part of the thesis is corresponding to the “curation” part that Raffaelli (2017) purposed in the “3Cs” model. Independent bookstores began to pay their attentions on the “curation” of their inventory to develop a theme, select items and decide how the selected items would be displayed. Instead of having a standardized flow, the processes of managing book inventory in independent bookstores are kind of personally, which give them chances of distinguishing themselves from other competitors in bookstore retailing industry, enabling them to have the freedom to
curate books of less well-known authors, and remaining dynamic and innovative in
the book industry (Jen, 2010).

7.2.2.2 Book Shelves

Another significant functionality element for independent bookstore is naturally the
bookshelves. Almost every independent bookseller mentioned that the bookshelves in
their bookstores help them to make a theme-based display of all the books. So that
those bookshelves could play an important role of navigating customers to take a part
of the responsibility of employees, especially when the independent bookstores only
have the owner to act as an employee. Some of the independent booksellers illustrated
their logic behind the thematically display:

“We try all to, maybe place the books thematically, like we have the shelves where
you can find the books for yourself. But also, then we have the tables and the kind of
pillars in the store where we can place books thematically…” (A1)

“I keep organizing the books on different walls according to different themes or
different color, or different ideas… try and have like, theme-based and then by
authors names… So, customers can easily find what they want.” (A2, A4, and A7)

A5 described the scene like an exploring trip in the bookstore:

“And also, the way we set up the bookshop with many, many subcategories, makes
for a very interesting search for the customer. You come in and you discover, oh,
there's a shelf for crime. I've never seen that before. And then you can find things that
they wouldn't have found otherwise.”

Besides the function of providing thematically organization, the antique and nostalgic
bookshelves themselves are worth being noticed at all, especially when they are
placed in a second-hand bookstore or an independent bookshop with a long-term
history. This could add extra value for the independent bookstores:

“We are very proud of our antique bookshelves and also it's appreciated by the
customers. Here, it's really easy to find the book, people don't need to ask so
much …” (A3)

A4 told us why she didn’t replace the old bookshelves, which carried with the
memories of a generation:

“… some of the furniture are from the very beginning. And that is the green shelves, I
have this very, very large bookshelf. And I've sometimes thought maybe I should
change it. But then when I see the people who come in, and they get nostalgic. So
that's why I've decided to keep it.”
Bookshelves on wheels is another user-friendly feature, which is also mentioned frequently by our interviewees. The movable function provides booksellers more convenience to rearrange the placement of the bookshelves when there is a need for organizing events in the bookstores.

“All the shelves have wheels. So, we can move them freely to the side when there's an activity. Unfortunately, the chairs are stacked over there. So, they're very hard to carry on. But the wheels on the shelves are very good.” (A1 and A5)

Around half of the questionnaires’ respondents (54%) selected the book shelves and one customer wrote that the bookshelves in store created the pleasant displays and another comment mentioned that the style of genre-sorting is uncommon in Sweden.

7.2.2.3 Reading Areas

Three out of seven independent bookstores have special reading areas for their customers to sit down and read books, or just chat with other people. This kind of sitting area could encourage their customers take time to explore and carefully select the book they want to buy and could provide potential social opportunities as well. A1 told us some little stories happened in the bookstore, which implies the existing demand of providing a reading area or just a meeting point for customers.

“We try to have chairs in the bookstores, people can sit down. It's pretty much asked for by the older customers, they often take like five or six books: "Oh, can I sit down somewhere and look these through?" While, the chairs also use actually by a group of teenagers. They used to come here like, maybe once or twice a month, and they drop by five or six. And they sit down, and we treat them like some kind of cafe for kids etc. They check their phones, talk to each other, see each other's laptops and flirting. I don't know what they actually do, but then they use the chairs.”

A7 also described a situation when the customers would like to stay in the bookstore and enjoy the atmosphere built by the independent booksellers:

“…like having coffee and cake, like bringing a little bit fika in the bookstore to have like, the place that you can buy a book, sit down, drink a cup of coffee and stay for a bit while.”

A4, as the owner of a children bookstore, even customized the furniture in reading area for children customers:

“... it's very good that you have all of the books in a very low level, so they can see the books and they recognize the characters. Also, the chairs and tables I've made very low so the kids can sit down and read.”
However, to have a cafe place is not always an appropriate way to make customers stay in an independent bookstore, and it even consumes more human labor to operate it. As A3 mentioned:

“…we used to have a cafe even, but that didn't work, too few customers came, and it was too much work to keep it running, so it's not very easy to do that.”

12.7% of the customers thought the reading area in store gave them impression after their visits.

7.2.2.4 Other Services

Except for the three elements discussed above, a couple of value-added services were also mentioned by the independent booksellers, which could be categorized into several facets. Firstly, the customized ordering and recommending service was mentioned almost by all of the interviewees, which indicates the significance of offering customer-oriented service in an independent bookshop.

“We have a very good special-order system in place. So, if there's something that our customers can't find in store, then we can always help them get it.” (A1, A5, and A7)

A2 illustrated how the customized ordering process work in his bookstore:

“We have a lot of the customized things. We have a special service for our customers. They are ordering comic things. They get in every week and they put what they want inside the file and they come here again every week to pick up their comics. We have several hundreds of people who doing that. So that's very popular.”

A3 emphasized the power of its database which could help its customers to find the book or just offer some customized recommending items, when the customer could only provide some vague information about the book itself:

“Of course, if it is a serious customer, we help them to try and find what they need. Customers may come in and they don't know the author, they don't know the title, and only have a vague idea of what it's all about. And then we try to maybe get a word or two we can use our search engine and the database. So, in that way we have hit such words in as we call it or most books, so we can try to find what it is they are looking for in that way. For instance, we have this, it is also a service.”

A4 told us the story about learning and getting inspirations from its customers:

“So sometimes customers come in and ask, what was that book that came out and was written by this and that person? And maybe I haven't heard of it before… Maybe if they come from another country, they say that well, we used to have this book in my country, is this available in Swedish? And then it might be something that I've never seen, but I start googling it and looking for it. And then I let them know if it's possible
to order it also in Swedish… I tried to always look for books that they cannot find. So, I can offer to order just one example of one book if they need it.”

Moreover, one point should be concerned is some of the reading reviews about the recommendation are not only from the booksellers, but also from people who have read the book or even at the similar age with the aimed reading group. This kind of suggestions are more reliable and persuasive from the perspective of customers.

“… like tips from the person who has read this book: "Oh, I like these small reviews from the staff or stuffs like that.” (A1)

A4 explained the reason behind the story in detail as well:

“So sometimes I have some trainees that come from school. So, I asked them to read and write little notes. So, I've put some little notes that my students have been here. This is somebody who goes in year seven, in the school and she said that this book is very good. I have always tried to get also people from the same age to read and recommend. Because sometimes if I say that I like this one. They say yes, you like it, but does the child like it? That is very important to be considered serious, you know, so I just didn't say this is good, because I want to sell it. But I said this is good, because somebody else has already done at the same age.”

The second frequently mentioned facet of value-added service is the use of social medias and web pages of the independent bookstores. They are utilized not only for posting the updated information like the new items of the books or the coming events, but also for providing external online searching service or online ordering service. Additionally, the function of making advertisement and brand building could be regarded as the added value as well. Both A2 and A7 used the social media to post new information and help with the online book sales:

“We have also Facebook and homepage, when we get the new stuffs here, the information would be posted in the social networks to let customers know… The customers also go to the web page… We're also sending comics all over the Sweden by post for selling more copies. They are mailing and calling to order the books. I send the books with the bills, then they pay.” (A2)

“We have social media of course, like Instagram and a Facebook page… We usually have a little ad or something. So that's usually how we do it. Because obviously the customer base is mostly religious. So, we take time to advertising more in religious papers… We have a website, we are trying to have everything in that website as we have in the store, but sometimes we don't. But you can always buy the books online and get it home or buy it and pick it up here. If you pick it up in store, you don't need to pay for the postage.” (A7)

A4 simply employed the web page like an introduction or a guidance to let its customers have a brief understanding of the bookstore. The main purpose of operating
a website is to appeal the customers to walk into the real bookstore and then make purchases:

“I have a web page and you can buy certain items there… I only do five or six recommendations that I keep changing… So, for me that web page is more like a taste of what you can find, but it's impossible to find everything that I have there. So, you see the difference? I just showed that we have books about this and that, come to the shop and you will see them.”

A5 mainly applied the social media for brand building as well as advertising:

“And then we use a lot of social media. We have maybe 15,000 followers in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. And we use storytelling a lot to tell them stories of what we do. And that gets very, very much shared and liked. And we try to keep the same tone in social media that we do in the shop. So, you feel like meeting a person. It feels independent, small and good… And then we try to use of course, our social media a lot to keep the brand up.”

Thirdly, A5 emphasized a special service that an independent bookstore should offer to its customers, which is providing serendipity and inspiration:

“But I'm saying that, I also think that my favorite customer is someone who comes into the shop, no, someone who leaves the shop with something they did not intend to buy. But they bought it anyway, something so the surprise element that the serendipity factor is very important when they come in and they go, oh, and you hear that noise and you buy something. So that's a happier experience. They're like coming in to find what you're looking for. But of course, very often they find what they're looking for. But the inspiration factor is more important.”

Finally, A4 mentioned making gift wrapping is another value-added service that could bring delightful purchasing experience to its customers:

“And one important thing here is to always make gift wrapping for the kid. Because most of the customers want to give this as a gift. So, I do nice parcels. So that if they go to the parties. So, it's often for a new baby or one-year-old kids or something. So, I try to make them satisfied. It is important and I noticed the customers are very pleased.”

24% of the questionnaires’ participants selected “Others” and added the statements like “the level of service” and “nice variety of things”. Some of customers mentioned the significance of being specialized bookstores, which is also one of the important factors of functionality that impresses the customers a lot.

Since customer satisfaction refers to a customer’s overall assessment of the performance of an offering (Johnson and Fornell, 1991). It could mediate the effects of product quality, service quality, and price, and could create repeated product or
service usage (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Oliver, 1999). Take the independent bookstores as an example, although sometimes the customized ordering service will result in higher price of the books, the customers are still willing to pay for the added service and the book itself. Moreover, when the customized ordering services occurs, the customers need to return and interact with bookstores again. Once the interaction between sellers and customers results in satisfaction, which means both two parties stay connected and continue to interact with one another. As Mittal and Kamakura (2001) claim that satisfaction is not the end but an intermediate stage of the customer engagement cycle, which may lead to organization and employee commitment in terms of economic exchanges (Jones et al., 2008).

### 7.2.3 Design Factors

For this study, design factors include spatial layout, signs, symbols, artifacts and plants/pets of independent bookstores. Spatial layout means the arrangement and relationship of objects in bookstores which could help to enhance the perception of customers and lead them to be repetitive customers (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002; Bloch, 1995; Sui et al., 2012). Sign, symbols, and artifacts refer to physical signals that bookstores employ in servicescapes to communicate general meaning about the place to consumers (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011). Moreover, through the interview of independent bookstore owners/managers, another aspect of the design factors was discovered and added to the previous framework: plants/pets.

In the sight of bookstore owners/managers, “spatial layout” and “artifacts” are the most important elements related to design factors and they made major efforts on these two parts to satisfy customers. Five out of seven owners/managers mentioned about the efforts they make related to spatial layout and the tone of the whole bookstore is set through the design of spatial layout. Moreover, five out of seven bookstore owners/managers claimed that they put some artifacts related to the theme of the bookstore inside to attract customers. Three out of seven owners/managers talked about signs/symbols in the store, while one of them declared that too much signs or symbols would be a distraction of customers when their attention should be focused on books. For the plants/pets, only two owners/managers mentioned about that and one of them just thinks it would be nice if there are some plants in the store, but actually they don’t have.

From the perspective of the customers, over the half of them (57%) thought the spatial layout is the most impressive elements in the design factors and 30% of them considered the artifacts like posters or soft toys are very significant. 25.4% of the customers viewed signs/symbols as one of the essential elements and 17% of them chose “others”. In addition, 10% of the customers took plants/pets into their accounts, which attracts their interests during their visits. 11% of the customers selected “none”, which indicated that a small part of the customers is not sensitive about the design factors and totally ignored the design factors in store during their visits.
Therefore, spatial layout and artifacts are two of the most critical elements in the aspect of design factors on the sides of both the owners/managers and the customers. The bookstore owners/managers took advantage of the design factors to make the whole bookstore look nicer and in turn, most of the customers noticed and got good feelings from that.

7.2.3.1 Spatial Layout
Spatial layout is important for all the bookstores, whether the layout is customer-friendly, complying the customs of customers or satisfying the aesthetic mentality of customers could directly influence their behaviors. For independent bookstores, the owners/managers try to make customers feel comfortable and stay longer through making the layout cozier.

“... it's trying to make it a little bit cozy to have this kind of arrangement and also like with the wallpaper here is also to make it a little bit homier than just white walls.” (A7)

“It's supposed to be cozy. Cozy is the leading word… it's perfect for us because it's an old building from 1840s. So that makes the whole atmosphere even cozier.” (A5)

Another important issue for the layout is about “placing books”. In order to make the store more ordered and make it easier for customers to find the book(s) by themselves, independent bookstores often try to place the bookshelves well-organized, as mentioned before in 6.2.2.2, independent booksellers put the book thematically on book shelves.

“We try all to, maybe place the books thematically, like we have the shelves where you can find the books for yourself. But also, then we have the tables and the... kind of pillars in the store where we can place books thematically.” (A1)

“The environment is supposed to be cluttered but ordered.” (A5)

Moreover, some bookstore owners place the new arrival books or the books they want to promote in the most conspicuous place of the bookstore.

“We have to set some big places here near the window and we are getting new comics at same place every week, when we get new books, we place them here. We have also here, at the table, we have the latest books here.” (A2)

According to the result from customers’ questionnaires, 57% of them think that the spatial layouts of the bookstores give them impression of their visits. As the bookstore owners/managers mentioned before, the customers noticed their strategies about placing books and making the entire environment cozy. Customers said something satisfied like: “Love the ways of organizing books”, “Love the different rooms of
placing books”, “Bags and boxes on the floor made it feel more home-friendly”, etc. While, also some customers left comments for example: “There are so many books and lack of space to turn around”, which should be considered as a reminder that the bookstore owners/managers need to pay more attention to the balance between the number of books displayed in store and the space for customers to move.

7.2.3.2 Signs/Symbols and Artifacts

Compared with chain bookstores whose design are usually normal and standardized, the style of independent bookstores is more personalized and related to their themes. Signs/symbols and artifacts play important roles in making bookstores unique and different from others. According to the interviews, independent bookstores use different signs/symbols and artifacts to represent their themes, deliver their emotions and create a good atmosphere for customers. Children bookstore uses toys and vivid colors in the store and there are models of comic characters in comic bookstore.

“And there's a plane model, if you know, it's from Dingding. It's a real plane… We also have some other comic figures here. (point to a table)” (A2)

“This is a portrait of a national author. (Pointing to a painting nearby) and we have lots of things like that.” (A3)

“It looks like a candy store but with books. So, it's like almost you could eat them. So, I of course, like colorful things. So, a lot of pink and green stuff and things in the shelves also in different childish colors.” (A4)

“We don't have like, standard furniture at all. We have antique furniture, and we have all the little trinkets.” (A5)

Despite the signs/symbols for decorating, the owners/managers mentioned that there are also some signs/symbols for functionality, they could be used as comments for recommendation or short description for books. For the children bookstore, the owner put toys near the books to attract children’s attention and maybe get more sales.

“We also use signs with prices and like tips from the person who has read this book: ‘Oh, I like these small reviews from the staff’ or stuffs like that.” (A1)

“Sometimes I have some trainees that come from school, I asked them to read and write little notes. They are somebody who goes in year seven and said that this book is very good. I have always tried to get people from the same age to read and recommend.” (A4)

While, some interviewees claimed that although the signs/symbols and artifacts could be a point of attracting customers, the use of them should be moderate and the quality of them should be controlled, the emphasis of bookstores must be books.
“We try to do it, but it shouldn't be too much. It shouldn't be like a sign factory with signs everywhere. The focus should be on the books... We already have the bookshelves so we don't have to use so much text signs... using your eyes to be drawn to the place or books in the same color or something.” (A1)

“But you can't get kind of get too sloppy, it needs to have quality as well.” (A5)

25% of the questionnaires’ respondents viewed signs/symbols as one of the most impressive elements related to design factors. In addition, 30% of the customers selected artifacts in the questionnaires.

### 7.2.3.3 Plants/Pets
Besides the aspects mentioned above, plants or pets are also an element that ignored by some independent bookstores of making deep impressions for customers. They are considered as the ones that could bring nice atmosphere to the bookstores.

“Sometimes I've thought it would be nice with... maybe some flowers or plants or something that could bring the atmosphere to the room.” (A1)

“And also, we have some plants in your store, the real plants.” (A3)

“We’re trying to make it a little bit cozy to bring in plants.” (A7)

Moreover, even the bookstore owner himself (A2) didn’t mention about the pet in the bookstore, the customers wrote about it in questionnaires. The dog, Nilsson, who just appears in the bookstore on Tuesday of every week, leaves deep impressions for customers. Some of the customers even consider Nilsson as an employee of the bookstore.

10% of the customers chose plants/pets in the questionnaires. They claimed that “The plants make the inside environment vivid.” And as we mentioned before, customers don’t consider dog in bookstore as a “pet” but an “employee”, which shows their love to the dog.

### 7.2.3.4 None and Others
One point should be noticed is that 17.63% of the questionnaires’ participants chose “Others” and gave the comments like “very Swedish” and “general interior”. Another phenomenon is 11% of the customers selected “None” as their answers, which indicates that a minority of the customers are not sensitive about the design factors during their visits.

### 7.2.4 Cleanliness
According to Lloyd and Chris (2008), cleanliness is defined as the absence of dirt, which including dust, stains and bad smells. Cleanliness is considered as an important
factor in the service environment (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). For independent bookstores, it's also crucial to keep the surrounding environment clean and give a good impression to customers. While, because of the big number of books and lack of employees, cleaning the bookstore is a not easy for any independent bookstore. Thus, most of the bookstore owners/managers choose to do the cleaning work regularly, for example once a day or once a week to make the work not that difficult.

“We sweep the floors. I think, every morning. It's a big work but if you do it every day, it's not so much.” (A1)

The independent bookstores often focus the clean work on sweeping the floor, sweeping the bookshelves, dusting the books and cleaning the windows. Some owners/managers do that by themselves, and others may hire someone else to help when they think the work is too heavy to them. Also, the workload of cleaning is different between summer and winter, as A1 and A4 said,

“... the worst parts are, I think, the ones around the door, because it comes dust from the street. And sometimes in the summer, when the door open, it's like a beach!” (A1)

“And it's easier to keep it tidy when it's in winter, because then I have the door closed. But in the summertime, I like to have the door open to get fresh air in and to let people come in and welcome them. But that means leaves and dust flies in.” (A4)

According to the interviews, all the independent bookstore owners/managers have made efforts to keep the bookstores tidy and clean to create better shopping environment for customers. The result we got from questionnaires to the customers is corresponding with the interviews, 100% of the customers said that they are satisfied with the degree of cleanliness of the bookstores during their visits.

7.2.5 Employees
As claimed in the section of theoretical framework, the theme “employees” could be divided into two dimensions: employee behavior and employee image. Employee behavior is defined as “an employee’s tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context” (Brown et al., 2002). Customer orientation and credibility are two sub-categories under employee behavior. Customer orientation is “an individual-level construct that is central to a service organization’s ability to be market-oriented” (Brown et al., 2002). And credibility is defined as the degree of a source that perceived to possess the needed skill and could be trustworthy to provide proper opinion (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971; Ohanian, 1990). Employee image also contains two factors: competence and physical attractiveness. The definition of competence is that: “the expertise of service staff derived from knowledge of the subject” (Goldsmith et al., 2000). And Lloyd and Chris (2008) defines physical attractiveness as “the perception of the physical characteristics of an individual or group, race or type of people, as attractive or beautiful.”
According to the result of interviews, the three elements related to employee, “customer orientation”, “credibility” and “competence” are all considered as important by majority of the bookstore owners/managers, while no one referred to “physical attractiveness” of the employees. During the recruitment, the owners/managers have the tendency to find the staffs who are outgoing, talkative, knowledgeable, passionate and knowing customer needs.

From the points of view of the customers related to the employee, the proportions of customer orientation, credibility, and competence are relatively high, which are separately 81%, 71%, and 90%. Only 8% of the customers took the physical attractiveness into their consideration and 17% of them chose “others”.

Therefore, both the owners/managers and the customers considered customer orientation, credibility, and competence were relatively important when it comes to the employee. This indicates that the bookstore owners/managers paid much attention to select and recruit employees, because customers consider that as a major competitive advantage of independent bookstores which could differentiate them from other types of booksellers. Additionally, all owners/managers directly skipped the physical attractiveness over and a few of the customers took this element into account. That is probably because of the different ways of data collection (face to face interviews for owners/managers and self-conducted questionnaires towards customers).

7.2.5.1 Customer Orientation and Credibility

Employees of independent bookstores usually have closer relationship with customers when compared to big, chain bookstores. For chains, there are too many customers and it’s difficult to communicate with everyone. As mentioned before, most of the independent bookstores have friend-type relationship with customers, when customers come in, a conversation often occurs. Employees of independent bookstores are often prepared to answer customers’ questions, make recommendations and give the services asked by customers. Six of the seven independent bookstores we interviewed have specific customized service for customers, if customers can’t find the book they want in store, the bookstore could help them to order it. The way of ordering books is different from one to another. According to A1, they often purchase book from other countries, if a customer happens to want the book from the country, they have purchasing issue, they could also include it in their purchasing list and the price of ordering would be relatively low. A3’s bookstore has an online network with some other fellow bookstores, when customers can’t find the right book in their store, the staff could help to search whether the fellow bookstores have it. However, A7 mentioned that not every customer wants to order the book in store because the price might be high, sometimes they just choose to search online by themselves.
Because it's like the printer sets a price for us. And a private person can't really buy one book from the printer, you need to go to supplier. In this way, the price for one book would be high and beyond the amount that the customer wants to afford."

To be customer-oriented is very critical from the perspective of owners/managers, so asking customers what they are looking for and do something that people are interested in has become one of the major behaviors happened in store. This kind of practice could also let the customers feel like being personally served by the employees. Thus, the strategy of offering personal service and then getting feedbacks is applied by our interviewee A4, and she told us a story happened in store:

"And in my case, the happiest customer is the one that comes back and said, you recommended that good book. So, I want to have one that is just as good as the last one or my child loved the book that you recommended. Now we want to thank you so because sometimes they have had children who don't read. And if I know that I can choose Okay, not too hard book, I will recommend this book. And that means that the child would like to read it. So, the parent becomes very, very happy and pleased that I managed to get their kid to read. So that is the best reaction that I have that they come back and just let me know that it was great. So sometimes when I have sold something, and they were very unsure, I said, come back and tell me how it went. I want to know if I did right or wrong?"

Except for having the customer-oriented theory, the employees need to be trusted by customers. Trust and commitment are two constructs of relationship marketing, which is restricted to customer purchases at this stage (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). When trust is produced between bookstores and their customers, the recommendation given by the staff would be easier accepted and thereby the purchasing processes would be pushed further. While it’s difficult to gain trust from customers, the owners/managers of independent bookstores need to choose right person during the recruitment and make proper training to enhance their competence, which will be discussed in later part of the thesis. During the interview, A4 told us that she used to have high school students worked as part-time interns in the bookstore, because the bookstore is a children bookstore and she thought student staff are relatively in similar age with children when compared to adult employees. However, the feedbacks from customers were not what owners/managers anticipated. Some customers thought the young staff are less credible than the mature ones.

"I've noticed that some of my customers, they prefer a mature person when they asked for advice, which is very strange. But they think that if you are a young student, you don't remember their classics, you don't know this author, and so on. So now I'm tending towards maybe trying to have a retired librarian like that, because the idea of this shop is a little bit to be like a specialist shop. That means that you need to know so much. And if you're only 19, maybe you haven't."
Moreover, both A1 and A4 emphasized the ability of finding out who is the person going to get the book and recognizing what is the reading type of the customers, which is important in the beginning of the recommending process. Another preferred quality is to be outgoing and have empathy, in other words, be good at integrating with other people. A5 claimed that,

“And you also need to love people, you need to be a people person. Because you need to be able to sort of empathize with people and understand what they are looking for or what they need. So, you can recommend the right thing to the right person.”

81% of the customers who answered the questionnaires thought that they felt the employees’ customer orientation during their visit and 71% of them thought the employees’ credibility left them impressions. The ratio of both elements is relatively high. Some respondents wrote the statements like “The care of the customers, often get recommendations and books without asking” and “They are very inviting and friendly to newcomers, just like old customers and not just on the surface”. Others emphasized the friendship developed between the staff and themselves and the helpful customer service offered by the employees.

7.2.5.2 Competence

Besides the passion to customers and work, the competence of bookstore employees is also quite important. In order to make the work more efficient and effective, an employee needs to have enough knowledge about books, price and know what the customers want. Most of the bookstore owners/managers we interviewed have several (1 to 5) staff in the bookstore, at least part-time staff. When selecting the employees, all of them have their own standards. To sum up, the first standard of recruiting is that the person should love, have passion for books and read a lot. Only when they have that kind of interest, they will work not only for salary but also for feelings. As A4 said,

“Well, the most important criteria is that they like to read… if they have personal favorites, and can always try to sell them, yeah, they can always recommend something that they like. And that would be the strongest impetus of their work.”

The second one is that the applicant needs to have a broad knowledge base and be well-educated, while for different type of bookstores, different kinds of knowledge are needed. As the manager of a Christian bookstore told,

“It's always a plus sense, just a Christian bookstore, that you have some knowledge in Christianity or have a faith yourself. But that's not like a criterion: "you have to believe", it is more like a plus. Because then you can talk with the customers and it's easier if you know what they want.” (A7)

Therefore, the final goal of recommending the right book to the right person at the right time could be achieved. Sometimes big, chain bookstores have employee
training after recruitment, while most of the independent bookstores are freer with that and don’t have much training, after the employees get familiar with the environment and situation of the bookstores, they could start to work. A7 claimed that,

“We went through how we do things in the stores one day, and I would say that usually you go with somebody for a whole day. So, you can see what they do and then you can come to the workplace. But not that much training.”

90% of the questionnaire respondents chose “Employees’ competence” when answering. Some of them gave the comments like “The staff are usually passionate and knowledgeable people” and “The staff read more books than I”, which indicates the deep impression of good competence of personnel on the customers.

As claimed by Miller (2007), handselling is a kind of competence of bookstore employees to match the right book with the right book buyer, which is a sought-after skill for independent bookstores owners/managers, although currently computers could give similar recommendation through the data collection of buying patterns and preferences of their customers.

7.2.5.3 Physical Attractiveness

During the interviews, none of the bookstore owners/managers talked about physical attractiveness of employees when they were asked about the standards of choosing staff. They also didn’t consider employees’ physical attractiveness as a way of satisfying customers. Maybe that was because they are too shy to talk about this in person. While, in the questionnaires, which is anonymous, 8% of the customers chose “physical attractiveness” as one element that gave them impression about employees during their visits.

7.2.6 Cultural Atmospherics

As Dong & Siu (2013) claimed, the cultural elements play a significant role in several types of service settings, especially when the customers expect to interact thoroughly with the setting. Cultural atmospherics are substantially set up to make some influence on the customers’ psychological feelings towards the service setting and in turn, influence their service experience (Dong & Siu, 2013). Thus, under the situation of the independent bookstores, a variety of culture-related events and activities held by the independent bookstores should be taken into consideration, which could provide the customers with an immersive experience. Our interviewees mainly mentioned four types of the events, like reading clubs, author-reader meetings or book releases, special theme seminars, festivals or fairs, book releases, etc.

Through the interviews, five out of seven bookstore owners/managers provided different types of activities to bring cultural atmospherics for customers and the
owners/managers of the other two bookstores claimed that they don’t have enough resource or strength to do that, hence just focus on bookselling itself. Among five independent bookstores which offer multiple activities, all of them have author-reader meetings or book releases, two of them have reading clubs or special theme seminars and two of them have festivals or fairs.

Around half of the customers (51%) viewed author-reader meetings/book releases as one of the most impressive elements related to the cultural atmospheric and 37% of them considered reading clubs/special theme seminars as one of the most significant elements. 29% of the customers thought festivals/fairs were an important aspect of the cultural atmospheric, while 21% of them selected “none” and 5% of them choose “others”.

For the activities related to cultural atmospherics, most of the attended customers gave positive feedbacks towards that, which means that the efforts of owners/managers of organizing the activities have gained the acceptance and approval. Therefore, it is worthwhile for the independent bookstore owners/managers to establish the cultural atmospheric through holding events and organizing activities under the condition of possessing adequate resource. Moreover, these actions could also help the bookstores to build a good public image and enhance the reputation and popularity.

According to Raffaelli (2017), convening is one of the important factors in the “3Cs” model, which refers to the practices adopted by independent booksellers to reframe their role in the community as a “convener”, and it could also enhance their presence in the community. The bookstores become a center of gathering people together through hosting activities like author-reader meetings, book signing events, book release, etc. (Raffaelli, 2017). This factor purposed by Raffaelli (2017) is corresponding to what we found in the aspect of cultural atmospheric in servicescape theory.

**7.2.6.1 Author-reader Meetings/Book Releases**

Five out of seven independent bookstores have author-reader meetings or book releases in their stores except for two second-hand bookstores, which implies that almost all the local independent bookstores are willing to cooperate with the local authors and help with the local cultural communication. Both A1 and A2 mentioned that the events like author meetings are beneficial to gather customers together and cultivate the relationship with the book readers:

“We have reading with authors or the authors signing the books, it's a good time for people to gather together. The authors come and sit here, it's not very big but it's okay. I can also say that we have some little own production here also, we have a mingle in store. We have gotten out almost, I think, eight or nine books already. And
some local artists also come when we have a publishing event here, they take their books also.”

Furthermore, as the owner of a children bookshop, A4 seriously considered the special situation of its customers and carefully selected the event type like book releases rather than author signing activities:

“What's going to be a children’s shop, author signings are not very popular, the children don't care about signatures. Only if it's a very famous person been in TV or something like that. That's what would interest children. So, I have therefore decided to have more like book releases for new authors. Because they have a lot of social network, they want to host all their friends and family to come and see their new book. So that is a good kind of activity. Because that makes the event very friendly. So, if you've written a book, you will of course, invite all of your friends and your family. So those events work very well here.”

In addition, even in the English bookshop that only sell books in English language, the owner A5 said they do book releases for Swedish language authors as well. Since as a community-based independent bookstore, it should take the responsibility to help building the local community:

“We've even done book releases for Swedish language authors, just because we're in nice place, and we know them and it's a good thing to do for the community.”

Nearly half of the questionnaires’ participants (51%) selected author-reader meetings.

7.2.6.2 Reading Clubs and Special Theme Seminars

As the owner of one of the best independent bookstores in the world, A5 is proud of its popular theme-based events like special themed evenings or reading groups about different topics, which indicates that the independent booksellers take a great care of their customers:

“We do storytelling for kids, and we do reading groups and special themed evenings like Dr. Who, Sherlock Holmes. And we do lots of different talks and events, like yesterday we had an evening of Irish poetry and Swedish folk music in the shop. We do themed evenings on different kinds of topics that our customers like and we have, for instance, for Harry Potter evening, people will dress up.”

However, A3, as the owner of a secondhand bookstore, used to have the similar activities in his store, but cannot continue with them because he was too old to conduct that kind of events. This also reflects one concern about the current situation of the independent bookstore with only the owner and especially when the owner is getting older:
“There used to be a time when we were young and especially the owner was stronger (laugh) to arrange public meetings and so on.”

According to the result of the questionnaires, 37% of the customers treated reading clubs and/or special theme seminars as one of the most impressive factors related to the cultural atmospherics.

### 7.2.6.3 Festivals/Fairs

The form of holding or participating in festivals and fairs is more like making a movable bookstore outside the original location of the store. A2, the owner of the comic bookstore, introduced us the annual comic festival and the bookstore will be part of it every year:

“We have also the comic festival once a year. It's more like, some kind of comic conference. They are comic companies and they are selling books, then we have a speak there and we are getting artists from England, USA and France, and some Swedish artists. It's a small festival, it's only 500 people gathered. It's only for comics, there's no games, no films, or something like that.”

Similarly, the owner of the children bookstore A4 is also the part of some larger children events. This is an important way for the independent bookstore to integrate with the local community and make advertisements of the bookstore:

“Then I do events where I take the bookshop out to different places… I took some books there and have either like a table and sell them or had a storytelling session there. So instead of having all my activities here, I tried to be part of larger events. Just one part there. So of course, these events have to be connected to children... I was staying in also the culture carnival… So, I turned up there with my stuff. So that kind of event.”

Due to the same reason we mentioned in 6.2.6.2, A3 used to take part in the book exhibitions for selling items as well:

“We try to get people to come, take part and also exhibitions to take part in place where they were selling books. We used to put a longest book table thing in Stockholm, a very long table and then we took part in that and also in other things like that exhibitions and so on. But now it's too heavy for us. Now we just selling books in store.”

29% of the questionnaires’ respondents selected festivals/fairs.

### 7.2.6.4 None and Others

One issue should be concerned is 21% of the customers chose “None” and wrote the comments like “Don’t know”, “Haven’t participated in any events”, which reflects the independent booksellers need to make more efforts in creating cultural atmospherics
in store. 5% of the questionnaire participants selected “Others” and some customers mentioned the hints from staff about upcoming releases and events, which showed their interests in the aspect of cultural atmosphere.

7.3 The Servicescape Elements that Influence Customer Satisfaction Most

During the interviews, when asked which factor they think will influence the customer satisfaction most, four out of the seven bookstore owners/managers said that they consider the employee as the most important factor. Some of them said that the service provided by the employees is the crucial part; some think that the personal relationship between staff and customers is important, because good relationship means customers have satisfied connection or even personal commitment with the bookstore, they have the sense of identity about the bookstore, in turn, that could lead to positive narrative of customers, which is beneficial for the bookstore. And some of the bookstore owners/managers regarded the competence of employees as the one that influence customer satisfaction most. As A4 said that,

“... the happiest customer is the one that comes back and said, you recommended that good book.”

Moreover, three out of the seven interviewees claimed that they think the functionality of the bookstore is the most important thing for customers. They told us that the customers come for buying the books they want, and then, finding right books for them is crucial indeed. Some bookstore owners/managers are proud of their book inventory, as A3 and A7 said,

“When we together with them, find the right book for them. We have a big chance to find right book for them with our big store, inventory.” (A3)

“We have these kinds of books, which is not really readily available in other stores.” (A7)

Although the seven bookstore owners/managers either considered “employee” or “functionality” as the most important factor that influence customer satisfaction, some also claimed that the factor may be different for different people. Some come just for low price, some come for the book itself and some come for socializing. Then it’s important to know what the customers want and provide correspondent service to them. As A1 said,

“I think the trickiest, maybe it's to recognize what kind of customer is in front of you. What does he or she like? Are they here for price or for like, getting the book very fast because they have a kid shouting outside or they are just here walking around, listening to the jazz in the loudspeakers and looking at books?”
According to the results of the questionnaires, 51% of the customers chose “employees” as the factor they think that influence their satisfaction of the bookstore most. Many of them left the comments like “Friendliness” and “The staff are helpful, knowledgeable, and passionate”. The second most choice is “functionality”, 30% of the respondents made this choice. They commented that “The books, of course”, “They had so much and even old books that are affordable”, “Good variety of books”, and “The way the books are sorted by sub-genres”. Moreover, 16% of the participants consider “cultural atmospherics” as the most important part, 13% chose “ambient conditions”, 3% chose “design factors”, 2% chose cleanliness and the same proportion of customers selected “others”.

The result of interview is corresponding with that of customers’ questionnaires to a certain degree. Both the owners/managers and customers considered “employees” and “functionality” as two of the most important factors that influence the customer satisfaction. Because there is usually not much resource for independent booksellers, it’s necessary for them to concentrate on the crucial points to get further development.
8. Conclusion

8.1 Conclusion

This study is aiming for examining how independent bookstores differentiated themselves from other bookstore retailers, to satisfy their customer needs and then to achieve customer engagement. To accomplish the aim, the actions about differentiation have been divided into six dimensions of servicescape theory, connected back to the 3C’s model, and analyzed in terms of customer engagement theory. We compared the offerings provided by the independent booksellers and the value perceived by customers, to explore whether the independent bookstores’ attempt of differentiation is perceived by customers. Meanwhile, how the customer engaged with the independent bookstores are examined based on customer engagement theory.

Seven independent bookstores in Uppsala were studied with the help of semi-structured interviews about owners/managers of the bookstores and qualitative questionnaires towards their customers. After the data collection and qualitative analysis, the following conclusions are presented below.

After comparing the results related to the elements about the six dimensions of the servicescape theory between Uppsala independent bookstore owners/managers and customers, we found some points based on common consent as well as several differences between the differentiated actions of bookstores and customer perception of the offerings, which indicates how the independent bookstores differentiate themselves from other bookstore retailers. The answers for the first research question are as following.

Firstly, in the ambient condition aspect, the investment of the bookstore owners/managers is not much, the perception of their customers about these elements is consequently not distinct. Moreover, among the five elements, temperature is the one that ignored by all the bookstore owners/managers but noticed by some of the customers. Secondly, in terms of functionality, two of the most critical elements considered by both owners/managers and customers are the book inventory and the bookshelves, which have reached to an agreement. The bookstore owners/managers put more resource on book inventory and bookshelves and in turn, the customers give positive feedbacks to that, which means the input of bookstore owners/managers is worthwhile. Furthermore, most of the owners/managers also viewed the customized service as one of the most important elements, while only a small part of the customers took the service level into account. Thirdly, regarding as the design factors, spatial layout and artifacts are two of the most critical elements on the side of both the owners/managers and the customers. The bookstore owners/managers utilize the design factors to make the whole bookstore look better and subsequently, most of the customers perceived that and felt good because of that. Fourthly, as for the facet of
cleanliness, all the independent bookstore owners/managers made efforts to keep the
bookstores tidy and clean for establishing a better shopping environment for their
customers. Correspondingly, 100% of the customers stated that they were satisfied
with the degree of cleanliness in store during their visits. Fifthly, when it comes to the
employees, both the owners/managers and the customers regarded customer
orientation, credibility, and competence as important elements to achieve
differentiation. This implies that the bookstore owners/managers focused on selecting
and recruiting employees, because these three elements were considered by customers
as major competitive advantages of independent bookstores which could distinguish
themselves from other types of booksellers. In addition, all of the owners/managers
didn’t mention about the physical attractiveness of employees but a few of the
customers took this element into consideration. That is probably due to the different
ways of data collection (face to face interviews for owners/managers and self-
conducted questionnaires towards customers). Sixthly, for cultural atmospherics
aspects, most of the attended customers gave positive feedbacks towards the related
activities, which means that the efforts of organizing the activities made by
owners/managers have gained the acceptance and appreciation from customers. Thus,
it is worthwhile for the independent bookstore owners/managers to build the cultural
atmospheric through holding events under the condition of possessing enough
resource. In addition, these kinds of actions could also contribute to good public
images and the reputation and popularity of the independent bookstores among the
customer groups.

Finally, as for the element that influence customer satisfaction most, the viewpoints of
Uppsala independent bookstore owners/managers are corresponding to those of the
customers. Both the owners/managers and customers regarded employees and
functionality as two of the most significant factors that affect the customer
satisfaction. Since there is usually not much resource for independent booksellers, it’s
critical and beneficial for them to focus on some crucial points to get further
development.

For the second research question, the results of the interviews and questionnaires
indicate the customers of Uppsala independent bookstores could be divided into four
categories: purchaser, acquaintance, friend, and family/group. These four categories
are corresponding to four stages of the customer engagement matrix, which are
transactional customer, loyal customer, delighted customer, and fans. This illustrates
how the customers engage with independent bookstores. Moreover, these four
categories could be pushed from one to the next by employing the actions related to
differentiation mentioned previously.

Regarding as the theoretical aspects, the 3C’s model is proven to be expanded by the
servicescape theory. The 3C’s model is particularly about the differentiation of
independent bookstores, which mainly introduced three aspects (community, curation,
and convening). Meanwhile, the servicescape theory contains some other aspects
which could be also used in the differentiation of independent bookstores. On the one hand, two factors of the 3C’s model: curation and convening, are corresponding to the functionality (especially in inventory) and cultural atmospherics in servicescape theory. On the other hand, the remaining dimensions of servicescape theory: ambient conditions, design factors, and employees, could be considered as the significant compensate of 3C’s model, which could bring benefits to the differentiation of independent bookstores as well. Additionally, the factor of community in 3C’s model could be linked to the fans stage of customer engagement matrix, which refers to the customers of fans stage could engage with the independent bookstores and build community together with the bookstores.

8.2 Contributions

This research can contribute to four aspects. Firstly, it enriches the empirical study on the servicescape theory in independent bookstore business area. Secondly, qualitative methodology is used in this study, which is rarely employed in the whole field. Then, the methodology and conclusion of this research could be replicated and applied to similar environments. For example, Lund, which is under the similar situation as Uppsala (both them are typical college towns in Sweden). At last, the study of the survival of independent bookstores could provide inspiration or guidance for other researchers on enhancing the development of independent bookstores and other traditional industries which are affected by the increasingly serious market conditions.

8.3 Limitation and Implication

There are two aspects of limitations existing in this study. Firstly, the thesis takes 105 customers of Uppsala independent bookstores as part of the sample, however, due to the limited time, resources, and sample volume, it’s difficult to comprehensively reflect the whole attitudes of all independent bookstores’ customers in Uppsala. Besides, the study is conducted in Uppsala city and it could be only expanded and applied to cities which have similar situations with Uppsala.

The implication of this research is mainly in social aspect. The independent bookstores are significant sources of social connectivity and cultural participation, producing well-being for customers, volunteers, and workers and playing an important role in social connection. As the role of social connector, the retailing pattern of independent bookstores is necessary. The independent booksellers could gain immense pleasure taken from contributing to the well-being of the bookseller’s community (Gemma & O’Brien, 2016). Furthermore, independent bookstores could be considered as places that providing well-being values to the whole society (Wrigley & Lambiri, 2014).
8.4 Future Research

Regarding as the future direction, this case study could be replicated to the areas with high customer volume on the premise of enlarging the sampling size of both bookstores and customers. Moreover, the approach of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis could be employed, as massive raw materials will be processed in that situation. Therefore, due to massive empirical data, the outcomes of future case study are more likely to be generalized to other areas, comparing with this Uppsala case study.
References


Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Who we are?
We are graduate students in the program of industrial management and innovation at Uppsala University. We’re doing our degree project.

What is our research?
The research mainly studies the independent bookstores in Uppsala city. The main method is to conduct semi-structured interviews with the owner and/or managers and the customers of independent bookstores.

What is the purpose?
Our thesis is aiming for figuring out whether there is any disparity between the value offered by Uppsala independent bookstore owners and/or managers and the value perceived by customers based on servicescape theory.

About confidentiality
Your answers will be treated confidentially. The gathered information will just be used in our thesis work and won’t be concealed.

Asking for permission for interviewing the customers.

The Initial Protocol of Interview Questions

Questions for managers/ owners
a. Could you please give a brief introduction of your bookstore?
b. As the owner/manager, how long have you operated/been employed in the bookstore?
c. What’s the original intention and ambition of running this bookstore?
d. How do you think about the relationship between yourself and your customers?

Please take a moment to think about your bookstore.

1. What kinds of effort related to the ambient conditions (music, noise, aroma, temperature, lighting) did you make to satisfy your customers?
2. What kinds of effort related to the functionality (book inventory, bookshelves, reading areas) did you make to satisfy your customers?
3. What kinds of effort related to the design factors (spatial layout, signs/symbols, artifacts, plants/pets) did you make to satisfy your customers?
4. What kinds of effort related to the cleanliness did you make to satisfy your customers?
5. What kinds of effort related to the employees (customer orientation, credibility, competence, physical attractiveness) did you make to satisfy your customers?
6. What kinds of effort related to *cultural atmospherics* (*cultural elements that influence customers’ feelings*) did you make to satisfy your customers? (reading clubs, author-reader meetings, special theme seminars, festivals/fairs)

7. Are there any other efforts did you make to satisfy the customers besides the ones mentioned before?

8. In your opinion, which factor mentioned before influences customer satisfaction most?
Appendix 2

Questionnaire for customers of Uppsala independent bookstore

Hi, we are graduate students at Uppsala University. We’re doing our degree project about independent bookstores in Uppsala, we hope you could participate. We promise that your answers will be treated confidentially. The gathered information will just be used in our thesis work and won’t be concealed. Thank you for cooperation!

a. How long have you been involved in this bookstore?

b. How do you think about the relationship between yourself and bookstore staff?

Please take a moment to think about your visit this time.

1. What elements related to the ambient conditions/ surrounding environment of the bookstore impressed you during this visit? (Multiple choices)
   □ Music  □ Noise  □ Aroma  □ Temperature  □ Lighting  □ None
   □ Others ________________

2. What elements related to the functionality of the bookstore impressed you during this visit? (Multiple choices)
   □ Book Inventory  □ Bookshelves  □ Reading Areas  □ None
   □ Others ________________

3. What elements related to the design factors of the bookstore impressed you during this visit? (Multiple choices)
   □ Spatial Layout  □ Signs/Symbols  □ Artifacts  □ Plants/Pets  □ None
   □ Others ________________

4. Are you satisfied with the degree of the cleanliness of the bookstore during this visit?
   □ Yes  □ No

5. What elements related to the employees of the bookstore impressed you during this visit? (Multiple choices)
   □ Customer Orientation  □ Credibility  □ Competence
   □ Physical Attractiveness  □ None  □ Others ________________

6. What elements related to the cultural atmospherics (cultural elements that influence your feelings) of the bookstore impressed you? (Multiple choices)
   □ Reading Clubs  □ Author-reader Meetings  □ Special Theme Seminars
   □ Festivals/ Fairs  □ None  □ Others ________________

7. Are there any other aspects of the bookstore gave you deep impressions during the visit besides the ones mentioned before?

8. Which factor mentioned before influences your satisfaction about this bookstore most? (Single Choice)
   □ Ambient Conditions/ Surrounding Environment  □ Functionality
☐ Design Factors  ☐ Cleanliness  ☐ Employee
☐ Cultural Atmospherics  ☐ Others _______________