



*I aim to deepen the bookstore's role as a **community hub** for discussions on race, gender, and equality*

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Find out more

www.kohsie.de



My Story

I am the owner of an independent **bookstore** that champions **diverse literature** and promotes works by underrepresented authors, especially female and minority voices. The bookstore serves as a platform to foster empowerment and combat discrimination by providing literature that reflects a broader, more inclusive perspective. In addition to selling books, the store offers a safe space for discussions, events, and community building. Currently, **two people** work in the business—myself and my husband, who supports the day-to-day operations.



My Motivation

I transitioned into entrepreneurship because I wanted to pursue work that aligned with my passion for literature and social justice. After working for years in the automotive industry, where I often faced hierarchical structures and limited fulfilment, I wanted to create something meaningful. My desire to make a positive impact and work on something I truly care about drove me to open a bookstore. I wanted to offer a platform for literature that empowers marginalized voices, which was lacking in the traditional bookstore landscape. This shift also allowed me to align my professional work with my personal values of diversity and inclusion.



My Approach

My Idea: I officially launched my bookstore in 2021, but the idea had been forming since 2019 when I left my job in the automotive industry. Initially, I was uncertain about my next steps, but after moving to Saxony-Anhalt, my husband's home state, the concept of a bookstore focused on diverse literature took shape.

Research: I took time to research and understand the market for diverse books, realizing that there was a gap in the availability of works by female and minority authors.

Timing: The unique timing of our relocation, coupled with the fact that bookstores were allowed to remain open in Saxony-Anhalt during the pandemic, gave me the opportunity to establish the business during a challenging period.



Challenges

Positioning: One of the biggest challenges was positioning the bookstore in a highly competitive market where online retailers dominate. The concept of the bookstore focuses on niche literature, which makes it both a strength and a challenge. While the book price regulation ensures fair competition, it also means I need to offer a unique customer experience to attract people to the store.

Building Trust: Another challenge was building trust with customers and establishing the bookstore as a knowledgeable resource on diverse literature. Financially, we relied on our own start-up capital, as traditional lenders saw the concept as too niche and declined to provide funding.

Societal Bias: Being a female entrepreneur in a traditionally male-dominated industry like retail, I often encountered scepticism, with some assuming the bookstore was merely a hobby project. Additionally, as a Black woman, I had to overcome societal biases, although this background has also helped build trust in my expertise on literature by Black authors and issues like racism.



Accomplishments

My authenticity as a Black woman and my commitment to promoting diverse voices have become a unique selling point for the bookstore. Customers trust that I understand the literature I carry, especially when it comes to books addressing racism and social justice. This authenticity resonates with customers who are looking for a bookstore that not only sells books but also advocates for change.



What interventions/ support did you receive?

While I didn't actively seek formal interventions like government grants or mentorship, I received invaluable support from my husband, who has experience in running a business. His expertise in accounting and business planning made the process easier. I also benefited from networking with other independent bookstores, particularly with a queer bookstore in Berlin, where I sought advice and discussed the challenges of starting and running a niche business. This informal peer support helped me navigate the early stages of the business and provided insights into creating a sustainable model.



Were interventions specifically for underrepresented entrepreneurs?

Although I did not seek interventions specifically targeted at underrepresented entrepreneurs, I became aware later of organisations like Black Female Business that offer mentorship and workshops. This is something I would consider engaging with in the future.



Describe the impact of these interventions?

The networking and advice I received from fellow independent bookstore owners helped shape my approach to customer engagement and event hosting. Over time, the bookstore has become a recognised space for discussions around diversity and empowerment. The peer support also helped me refine my business plan, allowing me to focus on niche offerings while maintaining financial sustainability. Additionally, the support I received from my husband allowed me to delegate tasks like bookkeeping, freeing me to concentrate on growing the business and curating our book selection..





Future Plans



I plan to expand the bookstore's presence by hosting more community events and offering online sales for customers who are interested in our curated selection of diverse literature but may not be able to visit in person. I aim to deepen the bookstore's role as a community hub for discussions on race, gender, and equality, potentially hosting more author readings and workshops on topics related to social justice. Additionally, I want to collaborate with schools and local organisations to provide educational resources on diversity and inclusion.



What interventions or supports would help you achieve those plans and visions?

To realise these goals, I would benefit from additional funding to expand our physical space and invest in an online platform to reach a wider audience. I am also considering mentorship programs that focus on scaling small businesses, particularly those geared towards underrepresented groups. Further training in digital marketing and e-commerce would help grow the bookstore's online presence and increase visibility. Additionally, I would seek out partnerships with local institutions to co-host events, providing both financial and promotional support to expand our community reach.

Follow Sarah's progress and visit her [website](#)



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