"Shop Lifting" An Exploratory Study of Jammu City

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Retailers, Stores, Pilferage, Shoplifting, Shoplifters, Employees.	Shoplifting has been a big problem for businesses since the 1950s, when the paradigm transitioned from service to self-service stores. However, until now, this has not been considered a crime. This study attempted to learn about the features of shoplifting, particularly in Jammu City, including the traits of shoplifters and the situation of retail businesses where theft occurs. The study focused on 98 general store retail shops in Jammu City. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The conclusions and suggestions serve as a reference for retailers looking to reduce stealing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 17th century had a significant influence on urban shopping because people were aware of shopkeepers' susceptibility to stealing. Shoplifting has increased from mid of 19th century as the industry shifts from services to self-service concept to manage growing labor expenses (Durston 1996).

Shoplifting" is one of the leading causes of small-business bankruptcies. Smaller organizations experience greater average rates of shrinkage than larger enterprises because they are unable to notice shrinking and take remedial steps, either financially or psychologically. Larger businesses are better able to absorb financial losses. They are financially capable of investing $11,000 in Electronic Article Surveillance system which has been shown to reduce shrinkage (Burrow & Speed 1996; DiLonardo & Clarke 1996).

It also counts as a loss of goodwill for the retailer. Large retail establishments can hire investigators and attorneys to handle the matter; but, for small retailers, going to court means shutting the store and incurring further losses as "No sales" (Canton 1987). Increased competition encouraged businesses to maintain low profit margins on sales, causing them to suffer losses from retail theft. The financial cost connected with unlawful behavior eventually falls on society as a whole.

1.1 The World Scenario

American merchants lose around $12-$26 billion in items each year, accounting for 40% of total stock loss. This causes shops to charge clients a greater markup to compensate the expense of pilferage. Shoplifting losses, along with the expense of additional security, raise average retail prices by two to three cents per dollar. Society pays billions of dollars in law enforcement and judicial expenditures. Stores invest billions of dollars to combat pilferage. Consumers are also affected by shoplifting. Shoplifting is the most prevalent indictable offense (Farrington 1999).

It is regarded as a crime, yet the effects are both tangible and personal. According to Shapland (1995), pilferage causes merchants to lose 2-3% of their sales and 25% of their revenues. US merchants lost between $8-10 billion in 1996 (Hollinger et al. 1996) and (Ryan 1997). Unfortunately, official data aggregate all store thefts, making it impossible to determine the proportion of stock "Shrinkage" due to consumer theft.

1.2 The Indian Scenario

Retailing in India accounts for more than 10% of GDP and around 8% of total employment. Factors such as "Economies of scale", "Profit Maximization", "IT revolution", and "Changing demographics of customers"; combined with the objectives "To serve the Customer with Proximity" make retail the next industry.

The most prevalent difficulty is "pilferage," sometimes known as "shoplifting." According to the Global Retail Theft Barometer (GRTB), the retail industry in India lost Rs. 9K crore due to stealing in 2007, with an average shrinkage rate of 2.90% of sales. India has the world's highest retail shrinkage rate, at 2.72%. According to annual survey data from the Centre for Retail Research (CRR) in Nottingham, UK, shoplifting accounted for 47.3% of retail loss in India, with staff theft accounting for 26.4%. The highest rate of shrinking was seen in clothes.

1.2.1 What is Shoplifting?

It is described as the activity of stealing things from a store. It is the result of necessity, greed, or temptation. With the exception of drug addicts and professionals who steal to resell stolen products, the majority of shoplifters are law-abiding citizens.

1.2.2 Types of Shoplifters

They can be of any age, gender, educational and economical background that falls into following categories:

- Professional shoplifters take valuable things such as clothing, and jewellery.

- Amateur shoplifters: Casual shoplifters who do not intend to steal, but merely take advantage of the situation.

- Shoplifters may have addictions to drugs, shopping, alcohol, overeating, gambling, and other activities. They engage in shoplifting to express repressed unpleasant emotions such as rage or dissatisfaction.

- Needy shoplifters: Some individuals steal due to limited finances. They typically choose basic requirements like as food, hygiene, diapers, and so on.

- Thrill-seeking shoplifters typically operate in bunches. Typically, such shoplifters are youths to satisfy their desire for excitement.

- Absent-minded shoplifters may be in a rush or suffer from memory loss owing to medication, leading them to forget to pay for items.

Another classification of the shop-lifters are:

- Amateurs steal on impulse. Their motivation is desire for the object. Typically, they bring food, clothing, or other stuff that they plan to utilize. They are uneasy, self-conscious, and cautious. Kleptomaniacs steal compulsively anytime they feel the impulse, although they are typically quiet and cautious individuals.

- Juvenile theft is often motivated by a desire for thrills or social prestige. The majority are girls, and they frequently work in groups. They accept things such as albums, clothing, and leisure equipment.

- Professionals are skilled operators with extensive knowledge of their trade. They dressed, spoke, and acted normally, not to draw notice or raise suspicion. They are interested in little, high-value products that can be easily resold. They are quite careful.

- Narcotics addicts rely on stealing for financial support. When desperate, they steal brazenly. Attempting to arrest this person might be perilous due to their erratic behaviour.

- The vagabond steals to meet his needs. They usually carry foods to eat, alcoholic drinks, tobacco products, and clothes for personal use. Alcohol is frequently used by vagrants.

Most shoplifters are unaware that stealing has a greater impact on the individuals who shop within the business than on the retailer itself. Furthermore, they are encouraged because the offense was not reported to the police despite many businesses having signs warning that shop thieves will be punished. Since stores are more concerned in retrieving stolen merchandise and avoiding negative publicity. Retailers only record incidents involving the loss of a costly item. They do not notify because they do not want to publicly punish defaulters (Ocqueteau and Pottier 1996). Managers also anticipate the police will take minimal action (Williams et al., 1987).

1.2.3 Interest Area for Shoplifters

Tobacco products (particularly cigarettes) are the most stolen items in the US and UK, followed by health and beauty products (including analgesics), music Cd's, and apparels with designer labels. The most often stolen products are pricey and in great demand among both criminals and honest customers. Men's apparel and household furniture were found to be less commonly taken, based on goods in the hands of individuals detained for shoplifting. Shoplifting does not follow a consistent trend throughout the various retail sectors.

Table 1: Shrinkage Levels Across Various Categories

Item Type	Percentage	Item Type	Percentage
Accessories	3.36%	Auto Parts and Accessories	1.81%
Crafts and Hobbies	2.25%	Discount Merchandise Chains	1.65%
Supermarket and Grocery	2.24%	Cards, Gifts, Floral, and Novelty	4.70%
Women's Apparel	1.84%	Average Shrinkage Rate in Retail	1.57%
Books and Magazines	3.71%	Home Centre, Hardware, Lumber, and Garden	1.54 %
Shoes	1.05%	Consumer Electronics, Computers, & Appliances	0.53%
Department Stores	1.45%	Entertainment, Media, Games, Video, and Music	1.15%
Children's Apparel	1.44%	Household Furnishings and House Wares	0.68%
Optical	0.54%	Sporting Goods and Recreation Products	1.34%
Convenience Stores	1.17%	Office Supply and Stationery	0.69%
Drug Stores	1.58%	Men's And Women's Apparel	1.92%
Furniture	0.22%	Jewellery and Watches	0.28%
Warehouse Clubs	0.78%	Liquor, Wine, and Beer	1.00%

Source Data: Hollinger, Workplace Dishonesty, Loss Prevention, December 2007, pp. 16-17.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Shoplifting has shown to be the most important problem faced by merchants; nonetheless, it has not been well examined. The literature on the subject is likewise scarce. In reality, just five studies on stealing were published between 1973 and 1989, and they were aimed at explaining theft in terms of costs and benefits. One of the study focused on aspects that influence adult shoplifting behavior.

Another study proposed a motive based on the perceived exhilaration associated with the act of shoplifting. Johnson et al. and Moore identified peer and societal motivations for shoplifting. Some studies have also looked at the economic repercussions of shoplifting on Indian economy. Some researchers investigated the use of parental influence to prevent adolescent shoplifting. An examination of the literature finds a significant absence of data on stealing across various types of retail businesses.

No academics have studied stealing across different types of retail outlets. Carolin discovered that the majority of shoplifters took things because they liked it, rather than for financial motives. Many shoplifters are discouraged from stealing due to security and selling procedures. According to the survey, the majority of shoplifters understand that their actions are illegal.

3. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The study's purpose was to build on past studies on stealing in stores; to provide readers with insight on shoplifting challenges encountered by general store merchants.

Objective1: To examine store managers' attitude towards shoplifting

Objective2: To identify strategies that can be used by managers in dealing shoplifting.

4. RESEARCH APPROACH

A questionnaire having 29 statements was created with assistance from various experienced store managers. The questionnaire was completed voluntarily. Simple random sampling was utilized to select 175 outlets in various parts of Jammu. The poll was performed from January to April 2011. Out of the 175 outlets, 98 full interviews were done. Managers' unwillingness to give information dealing with loss, as well as their time limits, may be the grounds for non-responses.

5. SURVEY RESULTS

Table 2 illustrates the percentage distributions of replies based on outlet parameters. The bulk of the shops are owned and operated by men (72.5%). 40.2% of respondents have an income of "over 55K," with 26.5% rating as the next highest in the range of Rs 41,000 to Rs 55,000. The retail businesses studied had an average of 13.5 workers. Different outlet sizes were surveyed. They ranged from large stores with over 100 employees to tiny, owner-operated businesses with 2-3 employees.

Table 2: Outlet Characteristics

Characteristics	N	%
Gender majority		
Female	27	27.5
Male	71	72.5
Income level of customers		
Below Rs 10,000	3	2.9
Rs 10,000 to 25,000	11	10.8
Rs 26,000 to 40,000	16	15.7
Rs 41,000 to 55,000	27	26.5
Over Rs 55,000	41	40.2
Location of register		
Front of store	18	17.6
Middle of store	57	55.9
Back of store	19	18.6
Department	4	3.9
Note: Average employee size in retail outlets: 13.5; *n*=98		
Total number of employees = 1323		
Source: Primary Survey		

Table 3 shows the distribution of responses to questions on shoplifting. The survey questions presented in this table concern the demographics of shoplifters and retailers.

5.1 Issue One: Layout Design

French et al., stated that layouts may be adapted to decrease stealing. The majority of shops have registers in the center of the store (55.9%).

Table 3: Distribution of Shoplifting Items (n=98)

Do you have a problem with shoplifting?			How many items, on average, are shoplifted per day?		
Yes	61	62.2%	1-3	82	83.7%
No	37	37.8%	4-6	9	9.02%
Are most shoplifters you catch employed or unemployed (*n*=92)			7-9	5	5.1%
Employed	11	11.95%	10 or more	2	2.04%
Un-employed	81	88.05%	Who shoplifts more from your store, men or women?		
What age are most of the shoplifters you catch? (*n*=95)			Men	24	24.5%
Teenage and under	12	12.63%	Women	69	70.4%
20-30	68	71.57%	Both	5	5.1%
31-40	13	13.68%	What is the price of the average items lifted from store? (*n*=96)		
41-50	2	2.1%	Rs 10 or under	2	2.08%
51 +	0	0.0%	Rs 11-30	29	30.21%
			Rs 31-50	40	41.67%
			Rs 51-70	11	11.45%
			Rs 71 or more	14	14.6%
Source: Primary Survey					

5.2 Issue Two: Magnitude of Problem

Of the establishments polled, 62.2% reported an issue with shoplifting. Most stores questioned reported losing between one and three goods each day due to stealing (83.7%). Nearly 42% of those polled lose between Rs 31-50 every time an item is taken from their business. Our poll results support the common viewpoint. The majority of the establishments polled believe that the bulk of the shoplifters they capture are jobless (88.05%). There are several causes for this. First, many shoplifters take money to acquire food and other essentials. 71.57% of respondents said that the majority of the shoplifters they caught were between the ages of 20 and 30. This demographic includes college students, which several merchants have stated is a concern for them.

Two of the five locations studied had universities. College students are more prone than older folks to commit consumer fraud. The next most common age group is teens & under (12.63%). Teenagers are more likely to shoplift as a result of peer pressure or as a means of retaliation against their parents. "Jewelry" is the most commonly stolen item in retailers, while "Cash" is the least. Table 4 provides further information about the stolen items and their sequence. During the investigation, it was also discovered that "jewelry" is most commonly taken from the pocket. Cosmetics are stored in purses or carry bags, whereas gift goods are kept in boxes.

Stolen things vary significantly by age group. The results demonstrate that jewelry is the most stolen item across all age categories, with the exception of teens, who steal stationery first, followed by eatables. People aged 41 and up who steal "Newborn baby care products" or "Easy hide & take away house hold goods".

Table 4: Details on Item Stolen from Outlets

Item Details	Percentage	Item details	Percentage
Cosmetics	21.8	Dailies - Bathroom Products	2.0
Under Garments	5.0	Hair Colors & Hair Care Products	3.4
Nighties	1.0	Personal Care Products	8.1
Stationery	0.3	New Born Baby Care Products	1.3
Jewelry	22.8	Clutters & Hair Bands, Combs	6.9
Electronic Gadgets	0.4	Easy Hide & Take Away House Hold Goods	1.0
Purses	5.4	Eatables – Candy, Chocolates	0.2
Bangles & Bracelets	6.3	Sub Total	97.6
Gift Items	11.6	Missing	2.4
Cash	0.1	Total	100
Source: Primary Survey			

5.3 Issue Three: Prosecution Efforts

Attitudes were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree', to 'strongly disagree'. Table 5 displays the mean and standard deviation of shoplifting attitudes. The respondents viewed shoplifting to be a serious offence, however they are opposed to prosecution, even if they have a prosecution policy. The majority of outlet owner are upset when someone steals from store (mean = 4.64).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Shoplifting Attitudes

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Shoplifting is a significant problem in relation to other problems in your company	2.62	1.46
How do you feel about people shoplifting from your store?	4.64	1.02
To detain a shoplifter legally while avoiding a lawsuit is a difficult problem	2.67	1.67
In your experience, how much does the recession have an impact on shoplifting?	3.03	1.48
How do customers feel about shopping in your store because of the deterrents you use?	1.84	1.18
How successful are the deterrents?	3.92	0.99
The training of my employees in shoplifting deterrents and preventive devices is significant in lowering shoplifting in my store	1.51	1.03
Source: Primary Survey		

Many of the managers polled stated that their companies do not handle cases locally. Another explanation for the inaction could be belief that no severe punishment would be imposed. Responders stated that shoplifting happens at any time. Shoplifting would be a problem whether there was a recession or not. However, one responder stated that more people are thieving luxury products than ever before.

6. INFERENCES

Despite its exploratory nature, the study yielded some notable findings. First and foremost, general store merchants continue to be concerned about stealing. Most managers agreed that stealing is a serious problem, although knowledge and execution of shoplifting prevention strategies are often seen as low. The majority of the managers polled used customer service as a preventative measure. Retail managers may reduce the likelihood of shoplifting by providing excellent customer service. This deterrent also costs less than the others suggested.

General store selling is a people industry. Given the emphasis on personal services, it would appear that excellent training programs must be imparted. Employees must be instructed to be vigilant for possible shoplifting incidents. Structured and on-the-job learning activities are equally essential for effective shop staff training. During the organized training, newly recruited staff learn the fundamental skills, corporate regulations, and information required to avoid stealing. Although some of the study's findings may not apply to all type of retail establishments. While the current study sheds light on managers' attitudes regarding stealing, additional research is needed to have a better knowledge of how the preventive approach should be designed.

7. SUGGESTIONS

7.1 How to recognize shop lifter?

Shoplifting takes a fast hand and a swift departure. Unfortunately, many personnel are unfamiliar with some characteristics of shoplifters. Be aware of persons who:

- Leaves the location quickly.
- Frequently using the restroom.
- Entering the store with some belongings. An arm might also be a useful hiding location for stolen items.
- Wear thick outerwear, baggy clothing, or long skirts during the off-season.
- Behaving unusually, such as pulling at a sleeve, adjusting socks, or stroking the back of the neck, may aid in concealing stolen items.
- Walking behind sales counters or reaching inside display counters.
- Assuming indecision or confusion by picking up and putting down various objects.
- Showing no interest in the articles they enquired about.
- Roaming around and waiting for a friend to shop.
- Keeping one hand constantly in an outer coat pocket.
- Perspiring in a room with normal temperature or a person who is nervous, flushed or dry-lipped.

7.2 Understanding the different "Shoplifting Methods"

The professional shoplifter spends time improving his skills. They use approaches that are appropriate for their individual abilities and the type of stuff they aim to take. They are good planners who understand what they want, where to get it, and how to obtain it. The amateur is not necessarily as astute as the professional shoplifter. His approaches are generally blunt and clear. Always be on the watch for shoplifters and learn to recognize their techniques. Keep an eye out for those who exhibit the attributes listed above as well as the items listed below:

- Carries umbrellas, knitting bags, diaper bags, huge purses, briefcases, paper bags, and booster boxes.
- Garments with split pockets.
- Wears an elastic waistline item, such as a shirt or pants.

- Try-on garments.

- Hooks inside coats, slacks, dresses, or slips.

- Enters store without jewelry or accessories but departs with them.

- Wears a long outer coat.

- Walks toward unattended sections or exits.

7.3 Fight against Shoplifters

Training in vigilance and efficient detection procedures will boost your chances of recognizing shoplifters.

Here are a few more things you and your staff can do:

- Provide prompt and effective customer service to discourage theft attempts.

- Maintain a sufficient number of personnel at all times to prevent shoplifting, which often occurs in stores with low staffing rates.

- Turning your back on a consumer invites shoplifters to take advantage. If you need to use the phone, turn to face your sales area.

- Observe folks who are idling or walking about.

- Attend the shop or department at all times.

- Lock up valuable product or keep it visible to salespeople.

- Avoid stacking merchandise so high that salespeople can't see over it.

- Keep counters and tables as clear as possible.

Arrange merchandise so that customers must pick it up. If it's not arranged this way,

- Moved products from the counter to a container.

- Displayed just one item in pairs, such as shoes.

- Return any unsold item to stock.

- Provide a sales receipt for each transaction to ensure a proper cash return.

- Sales receipts can serve as proof of purchase, therefore discard them.

- Create a warning system to tell staff if a suspect is in the business.

- Secure pricey products near entrances and exits, as well as any open space in front of the business.

- Display only empty packing or place tiny, important objects in glass cabinets for security.

Must have Definite Policies: Adopt a clear shoplifting policy; convey it to staff, customers, and workers; ensure that everyone is aware of it; and last, enforce it. Good deterrent devices may significantly minimize shoplifting.

7.4 Use of Technology as Control Measures

The latest technology makes it difficult for shoplifters to steal things, ranging from display practices such as putting fewer items on show or placing tags on packages to sophisticated electronic monitoring systems. Of course, there is a risk that dependence on security systems can lead to complacency, making firms more exposed to skilled criminals who can figure out how to overcome the hurdles set before them.

Hayes (1996, p. 57) underlines that technological controls are successful. Security managers should adopt a broader framework that recognizes the need of properly trained floor crew. Store staff are the most successful in interfering with shop burglars' techniques due to their ability to produce random, unexpected conduct.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Shop theft is a concern for merchants when it is caught; otherwise, it is simply reported as shrinkage (Shapland 1995). Many merchants appear to avoid measuring shop theft. While merchants do not pay closer attention to the losses caused by items that are prominently exhibited, they will continue to have to factor shop theft into their pricing structures. Higher impact is on the small merchants. The benefits of implementing preventative measures against retail theft must be emphasized by solid statistics on the expenses involved and the savings realized.

Every year, the retail industry loses billions of dollars due to stealing, and the problem is growing more acute by the day. The need is to design an antitheft policy and disseminate it to staff, customers, and workers. Furthermore, shops should become aware with the rules governing shoplifting in their respective jurisdictions. Though the shrinkage rate in India has decreased from 3.20% in 2006 to 2.90% in 2007, merchants must still train their personnel and be vigilant at all times.

Retailers must implement rules to penalize defaulters. There is a need to build a national shop theft information system that would give data on patterns and trends. It is also vital to evaluate the crime prevention techniques utilized by retailers, as well as the tactics taken by police and courts.

It is necessary to determine the number of offenders who conduct these offenses. Theft cannot be prevented just by boosting security and stock protection on the shop floor. We must also foster a self-sanctioning community conscience by sharing information about the scope of commercial victimization and publicizing the direct and indirect consequences of this conduct. The government also has an interest in reducing this crime because of the societal consequences.

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