



ECR Community Shrinkage & On-shelf Availability Group



The 60 Second Guide to **AMPLIFYING RISK IN RETAIL STORES**

A review of the published evidence on how retailers try and control theft from their stores concluded that developing ways to make the would-be offender think they are highly likely to be caught was found to be key in developing an effective strategy.

Shop Theft in Context

- One of the main causes of loss for retailers remains 'customer' theft.
- Shop thieves typically consider the following factors before deciding to steal:
 - ◆ The perceived risk (how likely is it that I will be caught?).
 - ◆ The relative ease (how easy is it for me to do this?).
 - ◆ The potential benefit (what will I get from doing this?).
 - ◆ The likely consequences (what will happen to me if they catch me?).
- Most important is the perceived risk of being caught.
- Opportunistic thieves are much more likely to be put off if the perceived risk is high compared with professional thieves although they also take this into account.
- Deterring thieves is preferable to catching them – it is a much more cost effective and sustainable approach.

Review of Current Interventions

Tagging Technologies

- Evidence is generally positive but most studies lack rigorous and robust methodologies.
- All tags need to be highly visible to be effective.
- Hard tags seem to be more effective at amplifying risk than soft tags.
- Opportunistic thieves are much more likely to be deterred than professionals.
- Professionals remain wary of their use, especially when it is used in tandem with other approaches, such as proactive staff.
- The technology struggles with credibility due to false alarms and lack of response.
- Few customers are concerned about the use of this technology beyond the embarrassment factor if they falsely set off the alarm.

Closed Circuit Television Systems (CCTV)

- Few studies have measured the direct impact of CCTV on retail store losses.
- Results are largely inconclusive although a small study on Public View Monitors and Dome cameras found they were associated with lower losses.
- Its use can make staff more confident to approach customers behaving suspiciously.
- Introducing CCTV may only have a short-term effect on reducing losses.
- Opportunistic thieves are more likely to be deterred than professionals – they will typically try to find ways to 'work' around it.
- A large-scale meta-analysis suggests that CCTV has only a modest impact on crime.

Signage, Product Stickers and Campaigns

- Most studies are very dated – over 25 years old and employ weak methodologies.
- Previous studies suggest they had some impact on loss although a more recent study (2011) did not record any effect.
- Evidence from other research settings suggest they may have an impact, especially when they utilise ideas from Behavioural Sciences, although problems of displacement may occur.

Security and Sales Staff

- Numerous studies conclude that 'people' can play a key role in amplifying risk.
- Store guards can be effective but they need to be mobile and in close proximity to offenders.

- Retail staff offering good customer service can be very effective amplifiers of risk but they need to be made aware of their role and how to do it.
- Both opportunistic and professional thieves regard staff as an effective deterrent, often more so than a wide range of technology-focused interventions.
- Staff can play an important role in reducing the anonymity of thieves; a key factor for some offenders when deciding to commit a crime or not.

Store Design, Layout and Mirrors

- Good store design and layout can be important in enabling other interventions to amplify risk. Equally, poor design can also make offending easier (blind spots etc.).
- Important that retail store staff have good line of sight, especially of high-risk products – avoid high shelving, cluttered spaces, narrow aisles.
- No evidence to suggest mirrors amplify risk – they may simply offer ways for offenders to monitor the movement of retail staff.

Shelf-based Interventions

- Only one study found; showed that a device to slow down the removal of products from the shelf, together with an alert each time a product was taken did reduce levels of loss without affecting sales. Study suffered from short study period and unclear whether results were sustainable over a longer period of time.

Making Risk Amplification Visible and Credible

- Interventions must be highly visible if they are to play a role in amplifying risk.
- Needs to be obvious to the would-be thief that a product is protected.
- Generating visibility, particularly for some interventions such as CCTV, may prove increasingly challenging as they become more ubiquitous. Retailers need to think about how their presence can be made as overt as possible.
- Both retail sales staff and dedicated security employees are regarded by opportunistic and professional thieves alike as a key deterrent – retail staff need to be made fully aware of the important role they can play in amplifying risk.
- Reducing thief anonymity is important – something that can be achieved not only by attentive staff and alert security personnel, but also by smart technologies as well.

- Risk amplifiers need to be not only visible but also credible – thieves need to believe that the risk of being caught is real.

Future Risk Amplification

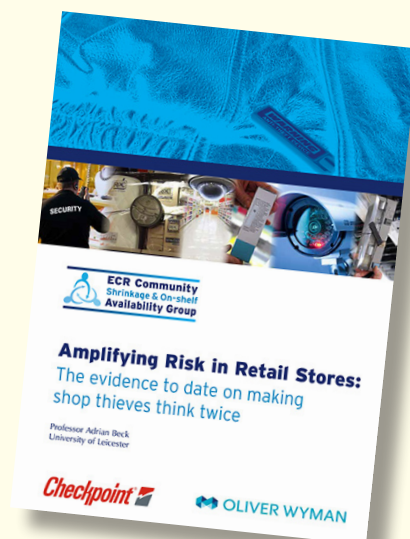
- New intelligence-focussed technologies could play a role in reducing thief anonymity – the store, the shopping trolley, the shelf, the product, the checkout, the car park – could all be locations for communicating with possible thieves.
- The creation of ‘electronic trails’ increasingly created by shopping activities may begin to play a role in generating risk in the minds of would-be thieves.

The Risk Amplification Landscape

The existing evidence base on ‘what works’ and ‘why’ is complex and largely mixed – some things seem to work, others less so – and all interventions are clouded by the context within which they are used. Amplifying risk in retail stores is an important component part of reducing the threat of crime, with success hinging on the capacity of interventions to be visible and credible – both of which are intrinsically linked to delivering an effective shopping experience for the consumer.

Find out more

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To find out more about the ECR Community Shrink Group visit:

<https://ecr-shrink-group.com>

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