

Shoplifting

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Shoplifting is a universal phenomenon. It can happen in large departmental stores, and it can also happen in street corner shops. Shoplifting is quite common in the roadside evening businesses as well. www.dictionary.com defines *shoplifting* as “the act of stealing goods from a shop during shopping hours.” Oxford Dictionary defines it “the criminal action of stealing goods from a store while pretending to be a customer”

(<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/shoplifting>).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoplifting> presents a descriptive definition: “Shoplifting is the theft of goods from an open retail establishment, typically by concealing a store item on one's person, in pockets, under clothes, or in a bag, and leaving the store without paying. With clothing, shoplifters may put on items from the store and leave the store wearing the clothes.”

Shoplifting is more prevalent during festive seasons. The common element in all these festivities is massive crowds visiting departmental stores, stores and a variety of shops including roadside hawking businesses. “Sale” prices are announced everywhere. Low price and availability of a variety of goods attract crowds, and festival seasons around the world are seen and felt as the right time to buy goods.

Social prejudice/hatred may assign members of some communities as traditional shoplifters. But this is utterly untrue. Shoplifters come from all communities, and from all economic classes. They come from literate/illiterate and advanced educational backgrounds. They also come from all age groups. No gender can be pointed out as the shoplifting gender. In addition, no region could be specified as the region or ward of shoplifters. However, unfortunately, such prejudices continue and could dominate the thinking of some individuals. It is important that business administrators should avoid prejudices and stereotyping.

Children, for example, in a flower or fruit shop, may carry with them a flower or fruit on their own. It is difficult to describe it as shoplifting. But if the parent appreciates this act, then this becomes a shoplifting act, I believe.

Shoplifting is also a disease found in some individuals. Kleptomania in some people urge them to steal/shoplift items that they really do not need or desire. Kleptomania is a mental health disorder.

<https://www.pricegun.com/shoplifting-prevention/> offers 9 important steps to help prevent shoplifting:

1. Keep a well-lit store. ...
2. Advertise your policies against theft. ...
3. Lock expensive items in cabinet displays. ...
4. Use up-to-date tagging methods. ...
5. Maintain an up-to-date inventory. ...
6. Encourage your employees to be active with customers. ...
7. Clean up. “Maintaining a clean and organized store will attract the right customers. Shoplifters see an unkempt store and know instantly that employees are not paying attention.”
8. Restrict access to dressing rooms. (Toilets)
9. Utilize the right security tools.

Business administrators in companies, and businesspersons and business owners will greatly benefit by reading such materials.

<https://fortune.com/2015/06/05/walmart-theft/> reported that in 2015 Walmart lost through shoplifting and other types of theft US \$3 billion (equal to Indian rupees 222,673,050,000.00 (at the exchange rate of 1 US dollar equal to 73.73 Indian rupees on October 21, 2020). This is equal to 1% of Walmart’s total \$300 billion in sales that year (2025).

A report by Nina C. George in *Deccan Herald*, Bengaluru stated “Retail chains battle shoplifting. Students and women pocket small items and walk away without paying. Every month, stores lose between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh to theft” (<https://www.deccanherald.com/metrolife/retail-chains-battle-shoplifting-722520.html>). This is a useful report with details of objects shoplifted, how some people may train their children to do shoplifting, and some mental health/psychological and labour issues that may be causes instigating shoplifting.

Shoplifting is a criminal offence under Indian Penal Code section 378. Shoplifting is treated as theft. Unfortunately, in smaller towns, shoplifters may be beaten by the shop owners and their customers. In some large stores, it is believed that shoplifters may be threatened and are forced to pay a heavy penalty.

Business administrators should not take law into their hands to stop shoplifting. A lawful and overt due process must be established and practiced.

References

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