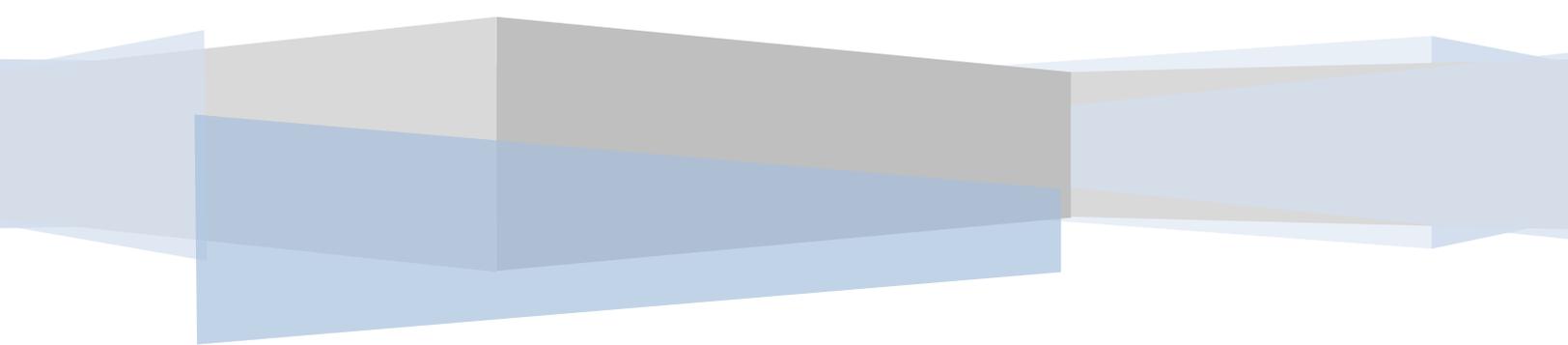




Surveillance Signage

Customer and Shopper Opinions

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Project Background

Retail product theft and fear of theft is a critical issue with numerous popular retail product categories. Retailers want to do their best at deterring theft while simultaneously not having customers feel like their privacy is being violated. This survey was conducted to see whether or not 3 in store signs which indicating the person is in an active surveillance area would be effective at deterring theft while not disrupting a customer's shopping experience. The signs presented can be seen below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The 3 signs indicating a person is in an "active surveillance area"



Project Process

All information was collected in Gainesville, FL from an LPRC StoreLab. In an attempt to further understand signage deterrent characteristics and store visitor perceptions and responses, the LPRC gathered offender and customer feedback about signage in the Gainesville StoreLab location. Offenders were shown each of the 3 signs and were asked if any of the images posed a stronger threat towards a shoplifter. Offenders were then asked how they would react to the sign if it were placed near an item they intended to steal. Both offenders and customers were asked if they had any suggestions to make the signs more noticeable, understandable, and a more credible threat to a shoplifter.

In the second phase of this study, 23 customers were intercepted at the entrance and were shown all 3 notifications. Customers were asked a series of questions inquiring if they found any of the signs concerning to them. A primary interest for this study is if the presence of the sign would change the shopping behavior of customers.

Executive Summary

13 shoplifters and 23 customers were interviewed regarding the impact signage has on their experiences. Each group was exposed to 3 different signs, all indicating they were in an “active surveillance area”. Of the 3 signs, there were two signs with eye images and 1 with a hand image. Additionally, it was of interest to see if the inclusion of the word “thieves” on the sign had a stronger deterrent effect on shoplifters, but didn’t adversely affect shoppers. These signs can be seen below.



Customers and offenders found the sign that excluded “thieves” to be the most noticeable. Many commented the largeness of the word “Beware” on the signs was the best way to grab their attention. Over 50% of shoplifters indicated they would either go to another store or not steal anything if those signs were present in an area where they were trying to steal.

The presence of these signs was welcomed by most shoppers interviewed. Over 85% of respondents indicated they had no issue with any of the signs. Over 80% of customers surveyed thought posting signage would be an effective way of reducing theft. 70% of customers surveyed also felt more secure by having these signs posted in store. Many customers noted the link between increased theft and increased prices, so many customers supported signage as an anti-theft measure. Only 1 customer surveyed indicated the presence of these signs would adversely affect their shopping behavior, but could not offer an explanation as to why.

Summary of Results

- 13 offenders were surveyed to see which of the 3 signs indicating they were in an active surveillance area were most noticeable and most likely to deter them from shoplifting.
 - The “Beware” sign with the eye was the most noticeable. 46% of shoplifters surveyed indicated they found this sign the most noticeable
 - Many commented the size of the text on the word “beware” grabbed their attention the most
 - The “Thieves Beware” sign with the hand was voted the most credible threat to a shoplifter.
 - Some offenders felt like the word “thieves” was targeting them. However a common objection was that most shoplifters ironically don’t consider themselves “thieves”, which lessens the effectiveness of the message.
 - Over 50% of offenders surveyed indicated they would either go to another store or not steal anything if the signs were posted in the area of something they were trying to steal.
- 23 customers were surveyed to see which of the 3 signs they viewed as most concerning to them and if they thought any of the signs were less effective.
 - Over 85% of customers who responded were not concerned by any of the signs.
 - 3 customers indicated they were concerned by the signs but couldn’t elaborate as to why.
 - Over half of the customers indicated they thought all signs did an equal job at deterring theft.
 - Over 80% of customers surveyed thought the signs were effective in preventing theft.
 - 70% of customers surveyed felt more secure by having these signs in the store.
 - Many were able to identify the relationship between theft and increased prices. Thus, many were supportive of the addition of these signs.
 - 96% of customers surveyed said the presence of these signs would not affect their shopping behavior.
 - 1 respondent said it would affect their shopping behavior, but could not specify a reason.

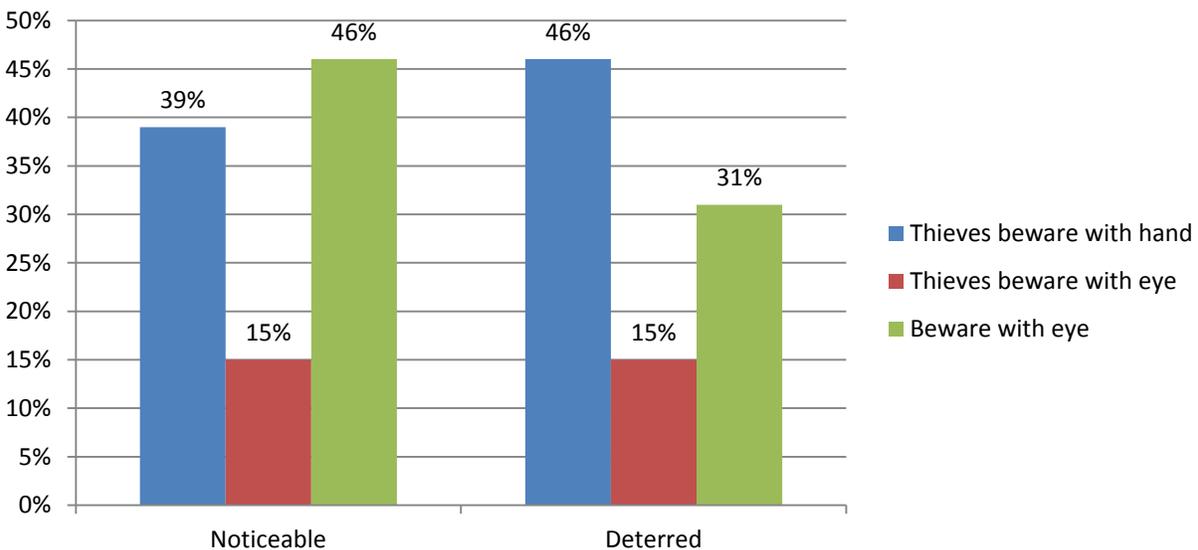
Offender Questionnaire: Which Sign is Most Noticeable/Deters You the Most?

Offenders were presented with 3 signs all indicating the area was under surveillance. Offenders were then asked which one they would find most noticeable and what combination of words/images presented the strongest deterrent against theft. 46% (6) of offenders surveyed found the sign with “Beware” in larger letters was the most noticeable. Many noted the size of “beware” is what grabbed their attention the most.

Conversely, when offenders indicated which sign would deter them, the addition of “thieves” to the sign seemed to have a slightly stronger deterrent effect. Offenders said the sign with the hand was readily recognizable. Some offenders noted since the sign was directly addressed to shoplifters, it made the deterrent effect was stronger.

Common suggestions to make the sign more visible were to make the writing red. Most offenders see red as a cautionary color and will grab their attention more so. 3 offenders also noted the sign could be bigger, even though it was printed on a standard 8.5”x11” piece of paper. Results can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proportion of offenders who found signs most noticeable and concerning by sign.



Get It

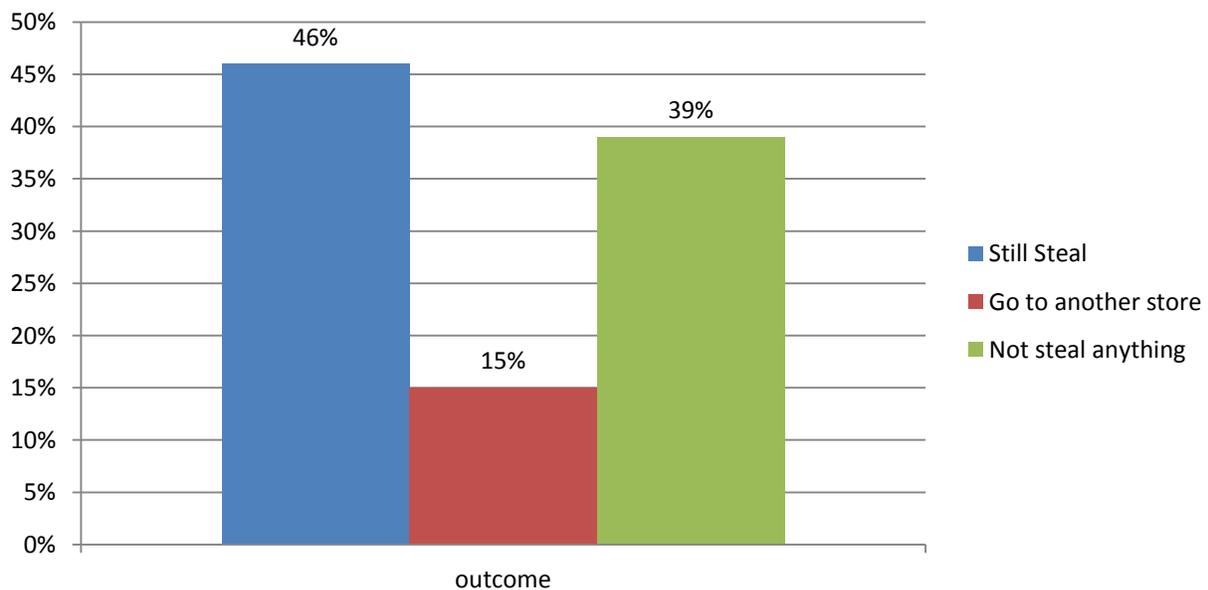
Every offender surveyed could identify the purpose of the signs is to prevent theft. Additionally, all 13 offenders were able to identify that it makes theft riskier by letting everyone know there is monitoring in the area.

Since offenders easily understood the message being conveyed, suggestions to make it more understandable were scant. One offender said making a clearer eye and handprint would assist in making the sign more understandable.

Fear It

The presence of this sign was met with mixed reactions. There was a nearly 50/50 split between offenders who were deterred and those who were not. Many of those who indicated they would still steal the item said they would take the item to an area where the signs weren't present or where they were confident they weren't being monitored. Several offenders who were deterred indicated they would be paranoid if they couldn't find any cameras while the signage was present. A summary of the results can be found in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Offender's decision on theft when one of the signs is in the area of a potential theft target



Offenders had many comments about how this sign could be a more credible threat towards shoplifters. 3 offenders indicated if the letters were in red, this would make the sign a more credible threat. 2 offenders suggested adding “shoplifters will be prosecuted” to the sign. Additional comments were:

- Add a Gainesville Police Department logo on them
- Put that hand in handcuffs
- Have someone in jail in the center of the sign

Offender Feedback Discussion

This quick survey adds more evidence that signage can be an effective theft deterrent measure. The sign which deterred the most offenders was the one that mentioned “thieves” specifically and had the hand. Several offenders had slight trouble identifying they eye in the other two signs.

Many offenders thought the sign could be improved by making the text red. They believe this coloration would make it more noticeable as well as having the added benefit of making it a more credible threat towards shoplifters.

Signage indicating monitoring in progress can be useful when placed in areas of high theft. Signage also can be a cost effective method of theft prevention if it is placed in areas which has a lack of monitoring, such as automotive and paint aisles.

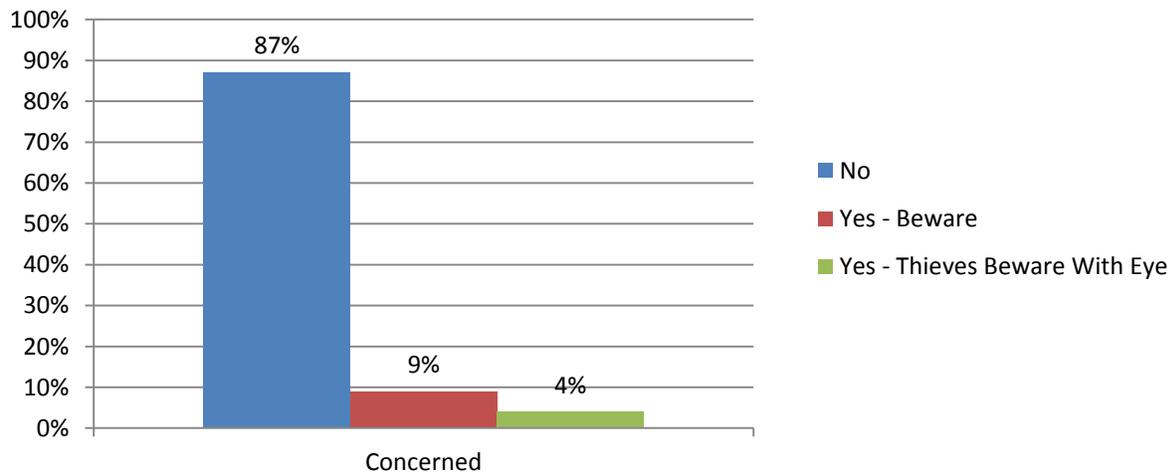
Customer Perceptions of Surveillance Signage

While it is important to discourage would-be thieves from their shoplifting attempts, it is also important to not make the customer feel as if they are being treated like criminals. The LPRC surveyed 23 customers on how they felt about the signage and if the presence of the signs would adversely affect their shopping experience. The sample included 11 males and 12 females from ages 18-73. Caucasians represented the largest proportion of people (52%) followed by African Americans (35%). Customers were intercepted at the General Merchandise entrance at the StoreLab and shown all three signs.

Do Any of These Signs Concern You as a Shopper?

A strong majority (87%) of respondents indicated none of the signs concerned them. Several cited not only were they not concerned, but would be happy to have the signs in the store. Many customers recognize the relationship between shoplifting and increased prices. Only 3 of the surveyed customers were concerned by the signs. All 3 of them chose a sign which had an eye on it but could not expand on why the sign concerned them.

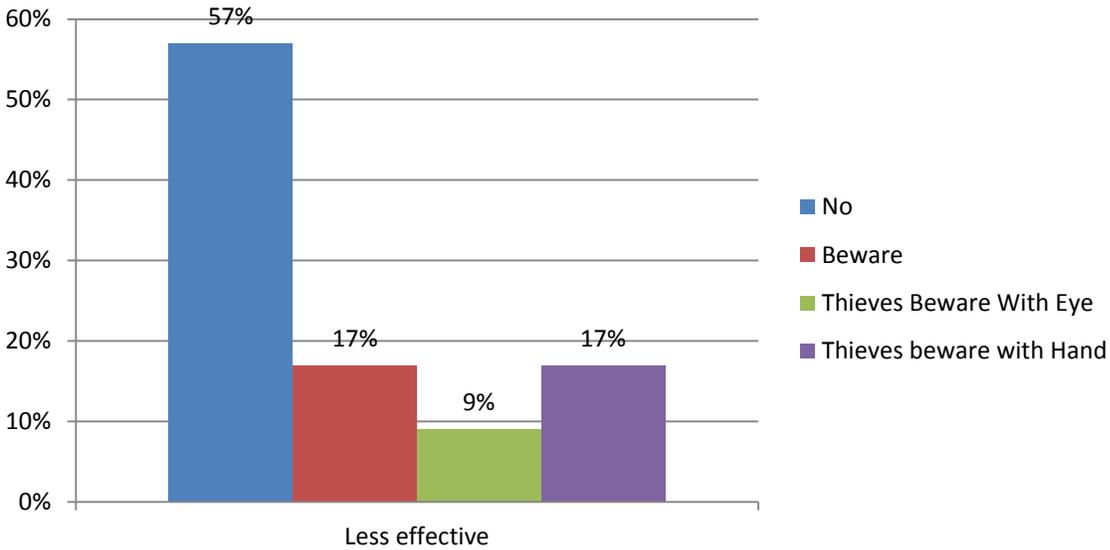
Figure 4: Customer Responses to “Do any of these signs concern you as a shopper?”



Do You Believe Any of These Signs Are Less Effective At Preventing Theft?

Most customers (54%) thought none of the signs were any less effective in preventing theft. 17% of customers thought the Beware sign was less effective because it wasn't addressing thieves. All of those respondents indicated including the word "thieves" made it seem to be more of a targeted sign. 17% of respondents thought the "Thieves Beware" sign with the hand was less effective because the image was less impactful. Just 9% indicated they thought the "Thieves Beware" sign with the eye was less effective, although could not pinpoint why they thought so. A summary of these responses can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Customer responses to "Do you feel that any of these signs are less effective at preventing theft?"

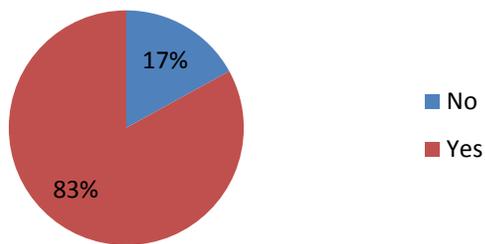


Do You Believe These Signs Are Effective in Preventing Theft?

The majority of customers (83%) believe signage is an effective countermeasure to store theft. Of those who didn't believe the signs would not be an effective theft deterrent, the majority thought if someone is coming into the store to steal, then they will steal regardless of the sign. These proportions are summarized in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Customer reaction do "Do you think the sign is effective at preventing theft?"

Do you think this sign is effective at preventing theft?

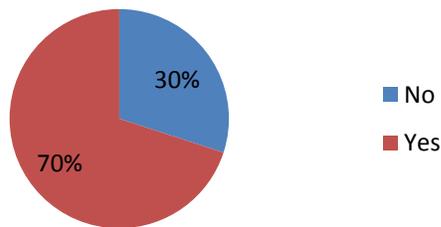


Customer Question: Do You Feel More Secure With This Treatment?

Customers were then asked if they felt more secure by having these signs. Again, the majority of customers surveyed (70%) viewed the signs positively. Frequently, customers said would feel more at ease in a store with low amounts of shoplifting. Those who didn't feel more secure typically indicated indifference towards the sign as it related to their security. No one felt as if they were less secure in the presence of these signs. A summary of these proportions can be seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Customer responses to "Do you feel more secure with the treatment?"

Do you feel more secure with the treatment?

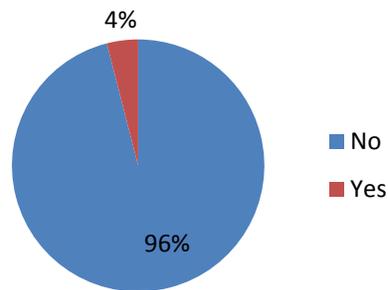


Would The Presence of These Signs Affect Your Shopping Behavior?

Quite possibly the most important question during the introduction of new asset protection measure is "will the presence of this device adversely affect sales?" To gain insight into this question, customers were asked if the presence of the sign affect their shopping behavior. Nearly every respondent (96%) indicated the presence of the signs would not impact their shopping behavior. 1 respondent indicated it would affect their shopping behavior, but offered no elaboration as to why it would. A summary of these proportions can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Customer Response to "Would the presence of these signs affect your shopping behavior?"

Would the Presence of these signs affect your shopping behavior



Discussion

Not only has signage been assessed to be a credible deterrent towards shoplifters, it also seems to have a minimal impact on the customer shopping experience. A strong majority of shoppers (83%) feel adding the signs would be a good anti-theft measure. If these signs are put into place, 70% of customers surveyed indicated they would feel more secure in the store environment. Only 1 respondent indicated the presence of the sign would change their shopping behavior, but all other respondents said it would not.

There was a mixed reaction between both shoplifters and customers as to which sign was the most effective. Shoplifters disagreed about the effect of including the word “thieves” on the sign. While some found it a targeted message towards shoplifters, others commented that most shoplifters don’t consider themselves thieves. However there was a strong agreement by removing “thieves” from the sign, much more attention was drawn to the “Beware” portion of the sign, which grabs the attention of most people. The majority of customers were fairly indifferent to the “thieves” portion of the sign.

When looking at the image on the sign, there seemed to be no clear winner. Several offenders said the eye drove the message home regarding the surveillance. Other offenders also noted the hand had more of a direct relationship to shoplifting. Although over half of the offenders said the sign would have enough of an impact to affect their shoplifting decision regardless of the image.

The addition of signage is an effective anti-theft method and comes with a fairly low cost. These signs can be used to enhance the deterrent effect of CCTV Domes and ePVMs by drawing the would-be offender’s attention to them. Previous research conducted by the LPRC has shown that getting an offender’s attention is an important first step in deterrence. Signs can be posted in almost any area. It is hypothesized the best places to add signage are in areas that experience particularly high theft, have high frequencies of empty package discoveries and areas which have CCTV dome camera “blind spots”.

Appendix A: Additional Methodology

Procedure and Analysis

This was a two-part study designed and conducted by the Loss Prevention Research Council. Offenders were offered a \$25 Visa gift card for their insight. Due to the sampling method used, this study may not be representative of the views of all shoplifters.

Customers were selected after they had entered the general merchandise entrance of a Gainesville, FL StoreLab. Customers gave their preferences on how the signs would affect their shopping experience as well as their views on how effective these signs would be in preventing theft. All responses were kept anonymous.