

Shoplifting leads to huge losses

Speaking at the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA) Summit recently, national police commissioner, General Riah Phiyega said that the big five retailers incurs huge losses through shoplifting every year.



The CGCSA regards shoplifting as a serious crime that leads to huge losses within the retail sector and has put in place measures to combat it.

James Oosthuizen, head of the Consumer Goods Risk Initiative (CGRI) at the CGCSA said all retailers, regardless of their size or goods they sell are faced with the problem of shoplifting. "We are concerned that shoplifting is currently not taken seriously as it should be. The perception is that one or two items are stolen by desperate people but in fact there are major syndicates operating using 'vulnerable looking' people to steal for them," Oosthuizen said.

Difficult to define

"Thieves can pose as customers and then use the opportunity to steal stock. Losses due to external theft are very difficult to define as syndicates concentrate on certain products which are usually high value as opposed to some items stolen by customers who cannot afford the product." Oosthuizen said the CGCSA welcomed the police commissioner's willingness to work together with business to combat crime in the retail sector.

The CGCSA have set up a shoplifting forum which will assist with this ever increasing problem. The forum is being chaired by the South African Police Services (SAPS) and consists of CGRI members, SAPS representation from their national head office, the National Prosecuting Authority and the Asset Forfeiture Unit. All shoplifting incidents that are of organised nature are being sent to a General from the Detective Service who coordinates the investigations. Regular feedback on progress and discussions on best practices are being field at the forum meetings.

Oosthuizen said that one of the best defence retailers have against shoplifting is reducing the opportunity to steal and increasing the risk of being caught. "Deterring shoplifters is a much more productive and cost effective methodology in

preventing shoplifting than simply relying on apprehending them. Well trained staff can deter shoplifters through direct eye contact and by the way of positive verbal communication skills.

Three objectives

"A shoplifter can be anyone in the store. Studies estimate that one in every ten people attempts to shoplift at some stage. Regardless of the type of shoplifter they all have the same three objectives which are to enter the store unnoticed, conceal merchandise without detection and leave the premises unnoticed," he said.

The CGCSA has developed tips for retailers on how to prevent shoplifting. A shoplifter's actions and characteristics such as eye movement and body language will warn in advance of their intentions. Some of the common characteristics of shoplifters include taking too long to decide what to buy, lingering in one area or wanders aimlessly and also groups that enter together and split up.

Minimising the theft of merchandise by shoplifters requires the implementation of various procedural steps and educating employees about the important role they play in preventing theft. Some of the practical solutions to preventing shoplifting include acknowledging customers as they enter the store. Fast efficient services will deter most shoplifters and always watch the nervous customer who does not want assistance.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>